

All right. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek, and welcome to summer. We are here. It is fun. It's going to be full of so much joy. You got that card when you came in. Make sure you stay up to date with that. Follow on social media. Go on valleycreek.org. For any information, you can scan that QR code, actually, week by week, for all the things that are happening. So, Kids Summer, Students Summer, Tuesday Night of Prayer, Serve the City, all of the great things that are in front of us. It's going to be a great summer. It's going to be full of so much life, so many good things. We're looking forward to everything that God has for us. We've been in an amazing series called A Different Way, and we have been in that all year long so far. We went through Season 1. We finished up Season 2. When we get back to school, we'll get into Season 3. And we have been learning what it looks like to live as a disciple, to follow Jesus, to be taught by the teacher, led by the master, to arrange and rearrange our life. And so, even though we're going to take a breath, a pause from that, my encouragement to you is this, don't take a pause on training in godliness. Don't take a pause on doing your practice plans. Don't take a pause on growing with Jesus and learning to follow Him. Literally, do your practice plans because some of us are just getting used to running like, three miles. So, don't slow down. Don't go back to just walking to the mailbox on our journey with Jesus. Because from time to time, we take a breath. And as we get into summer, we're going to do that as we get into a brand-new series today called 60 Days of Unfamiliar Promises. And so, even though we've been in an amazing series all year long, we really want to take a breath, a pause, and focus on some of the unfamiliar promises of God. You see, every single year for about the last three or four years, in June and July, we take 60 days to take a breath, to take a pause, and to just focus on something the Lord has asked us to talk about. And so, that's a good thing. Because we don't ever want church to be this thing where we feel like we're rushing through it and having to hurry. We want church to be a place where you can meet with God and experience the rest of God. And so, this summer, we're going to meet with God by talking about 60 Days of Unfamiliar Promises.

Now, you might look at that and be like, "Well, why unfamiliar? What does that mean? Why is that?" Well, let me ask you this, do you know that the Bible is full of promises? Probably yes. Okay. Do you know that there's a specific promise for you? Maybe. Do you know what some of those promises are? Possibly. How about this one? Do you believe the promises of God? That is, do you act as if they were so? You see, some of the things that are in Scripture and some of the promises that we know about, some of the verses we're familiar with, we might know, but we don't necessarily know. We might have a knowledge of them, we might be familiar with them, but in reality, because we don't act as if they're so, they're actually very unfamiliar to us. And so, let me give you an example. Let's think of a verse like, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, who should ever believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Is that a verse that's only sewn into a pillow or on my profile page, or is it written on the walls of my heart? And as I go throughout my life, I think, "For God so loved the world..." for God so loved me, His love is for me. And it begins to shape how we think and how we live. How about this one? "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." You ever see that written on football helmets or on the eye-blacks of athletes when they play? That's a

good one. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. But how about this? Instead of just being written somewhere, what if that guides my thoughts when I go into work on a difficult work week on a Monday morning? "This week, God, I can do all things through You. You are strengthening me. You are building me up. You're with me, and you are giving me your strength." How about this? "The Lord will never leave you or forsake you." You probably heard that one before. Is that one that's just like a button on a backpack or a sticker on a Stanley, or is that one that when I get a difficult health prognosis, I think, "You know what? God's never going to leave me or forsake me. He's with me. He's for me. And so, because He's with me, because He won't leave me, I don't have to be afraid." You see, to believe something is to act as if it were so. So, in reality, if I actually believed those things were true, I would never freak out. I would never try to control my family. I'd never stay up all night letting fear consume my thoughts. I'd never try to do it on my own. I'd never live in crippling fear or shame. If I actually believed those things were true, then I would never live as though they weren't.

And so, many of the most known verses, the most familiar, are actually quite unfamiliar to us because we don't really believe them, because we don't act as if they're so. It's like the more that you're aware of something, the more you have to be reminded of something. So, our hope this summer is that we would know these promises and not just know them, that we would believe them. And by believing them, we would experience life in His name. And not just believe them, we would claim them over our lives and over our families. And by claiming them, we'd be like, "That's mine. I'm taking that. That one's for me." And not just claim them, we would declare them out. We'd speak them out. We'd declare them over our lives as we go places and do things and interact. We would have these verses just coming out of us, these promises of God. And not just that we would declare them, that we would walk them out. And in walking them out, we would experience them in our daily life. They wouldn't just be words on a paper, buttons on a backpack, stickers on a Stanley. They would be realities in my home, in my life, in my school. Our hope is that as we present some of these unfamiliar, familiar verses, we're going to take hold of them for ourselves. So, where do we start then? Where are we going to start? Well, we're going to start by looking at the very place where the promises of God are to be found. We're going to go to Scripture. So, every single week, we're going to look at one, really famous or familiar verse. We're going to revisit that. We're going to kind of relearn it, and we're going to reclaim it for our lives. And we're going to do that every single week, so you're not going to miss any of them. One special promise every week, starting with this one this week. Did you know that there's even verses that are promises about the promises of God? Check this out, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are a 'yes' in Christ, and so through Him, the 'amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God." So good. So, as an act of faith, I'm going to ask everybody at all of our campuses right now, let's declare this one out together, ready? "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are a 'yes' in Christ, and so through Him, the 'amen' is spoken by us." That means He's framing it for you to work for your good and His glory. They are a 'yes' in Christ Jesus. What's the question? The answer is yes.

Now, can you imagine what it would be like as parents if that was true when your kids would come and ask you for something? So, our little girls, when they would come to us and they knew that they were going to ask us for something they should be a little sheepish about, like, "Ah, this is probably like a long shot." They'd kind of come up and be like, "Could we maybe... do you think it'd be okay... if just... could I stay up all night on my iPad?" And then, we would crush their souls once again. But what would it be like if, as parents, when they came to you, you always said yes? Candy for dinner? Yes. Double ice cream? Yes. "Hey, Dad, I was thinking about refi-ing the house and taking the cash out for myself?" Yes. "Hey, Dad, I'm going into 8th grade. Do you think me and my friends could go to Vegas together?" Yes. Okay, now, that'd be a little crazy. I'd be a little out of sorts. Here's what happens sometimes. When we say everything is a 'yes' in Christ Jesus, we often think about everything and anything that we want. The only problem is, is that God's promises are not promises to harm us. And so, anything that I want that's going to harm me isn't actually a promise of God, no matter how much I might want it. And that's where we get confused. One of the promises of God is, "I know the plans I have for you, plans not to harm you, to give you a hope and a future." So, anything that hasn't come to pass, anything that is going to harm us, it may be that it's actually not a promise of God. It's something that I want. And therefore, God is so good, He won't do that to me. He won't give me the things that are going to harm me, but everything that is good and to His glory, they are a 'yes' in Christ. "And so, through Him, the 'amen' is spoken by us," through Him by us, through Him by us. The 'amen,' the agreement. "Amen" is an amazing word. In fact, it's been said that amen is the most well-known word in all of human speech. So, it's the most known word ever anywhere in the history of the world. Why? Because it came from the Hebrew, to the Greek, to the Latin, to the English. It's basically known in all cultures everywhere. I believe that's because the Lord gave us that word so that we could say, "I agree, I believe." And so, by faith, we can take hold of the promises of God. It is spoken by us to the glory of God. It brings glory to God when His children claim His promises, okay? So then, why don't we do it? Why is it a struggle for us? Why is it a struggle to claim the promises of God, to believe in them and to receive them for ourselves? I think it's because of our baggage with the word "promises."

Okay. So, if I put this up on the screen and I had you answer what's the first word that comes to your mind when you think of the word "promises," I wonder what word you'd fill in. Could it be this one? And could it be that we struggle to believe that God has good things for us, good promises for us, because of our history with the word promises? So many broken promises that we've experienced in our life, the time my husband left me and I didn't think he was going to, the time that the person said the secret that I didn't think they were going to tell, the time that the business partner ran on me and took all the money. The broken promises that I think shape a lot of what we think about the word promises. Could it be that the way humans have damaged us with their broken promises has affected the way we think about God and His good promises to us? Can I just tell you, humans will lie to you, humans will break their promises, God won't. Here's what it says, "Not one of the Lord's good promises to Israel failed, everyone was fulfilled." Not one, not the smallest to the largest, not the one way out in the future to the

one happening tomorrow, not manna falling from heaven to sustain you til you're going to defeat giants, and I'm going to give you every place you place your foot, not one, all fulfilled in Jesus. And so, all of God's promises to Israel and all of God's good promises to you will be fulfilled in Jesus' name. Maybe the Lord wants to change the narrative in our mind from this to this, from broken, to fulfilled, from a history of hurt and despair and wondering if it's going to work out. Are they going to lie to me? Is it going to be real? Is it going to happen? All the way through to, the Lord is good and He wants to fulfill His promises to you and I. People lie, God doesn't. And therein maybe lies our problem. Could it be that we've treated God's promises like we treat most everyone's promises? Hoping for the best, kind of expecting the worst, not totally confident it's going to come to pass because we've been hurt so many times before. This is important. God's promises aren't based to just on what He does; they're based on who He is. So, God's promises aren't just based on what He does, they're based on who He is. Most of our promises as humans come with a caveat. The caveat is this, we might not keep them. But God always keeps it because He has no integrity gap, okay? Who He is leads to what He says, which leads to what He does. Many times, who we are leads to what we try to say, which also leads to what we don't do. Another way to put it is like this, he is, therefore what He says, He does. We aren't, therefore what we say, we don't. You see the difference there? There is no integrity gap. On a side note, one of the reasons it's so important to be shaped into the image and likeness of Jesus, to have your character shaped, is because if you are not shaped in character, you will not be a person that keeps your promises, you will have an integration integrity gap. And because of the lack of integration, you will experience disintegration. And your entire life will come apart at the seams. But God is fully integrated. He is, then He says, and so He does. There is no distance between what He says He's going to do and what He does. He is the God of promise. And the promise is not based on His doing, it's based on His being. And because of His being, He is always doing. Because of His being, He's always keeping His promises, because as He says it, it is happening. So, we might think that God is like all the other people that have broken the promises before, He's just not. He's something altogether different. And by the way, we're people in process. And so, it's okay to be like, "Man, a lot of times the people in my life, they're probably going to let me down." That's true, but we're people in process, and we're growing in Jesus' name, and God will never let you down. He is not like that husband that left you. He's not like the business partner that cheated you. He's not like the friend that spilled your secret. He's just not that. He's just not that. Could it be that we've piled God's promises into this giant minivan with all the other things that haven't come to pass in our life? And because of that, we've kind of regarded them as common. Maybe it's like a defense mechanism. We're like, "Oh, it's fine. You know, the things the Bible says and like the things that are in truths and it's fine. They're fine." And I think, I wonder sometimes if we think about the promises of God a little bit like the difference between going to a garage sale or going engagement ring shopping. Ready? Garage sale. "Yep. Have one of those." "No, dime a dozen." "I've seen that before." "That's, no, that's not." "That's kind of cute." "That's fine." "Okay." "And put that to the side." Engagement ring shopping. "Every kiss begins with K." Like, it's like, you know exactly what you're doing. You know exactly what you're looking for. You're trying it on one at a time. "That's beautiful." "Oh, wow." "Ooh,

look at that." "I want that one." "What do you think about this?" She's already, she knows the three C's like cut, clarity... and cuteness, cuteness. She's looking for the cute one. Well, I don't even know. Whatever. She's got it all strategized, right? She knows exactly what she's looking for because it's unique. It's beautiful. It's special. It's not a garage sale. It's not like an old auctioneering house. It doesn't have a bunch of junk all over the place. And I wonder sometimes if that's the way we've treated God's promises. Like they're common, like they're usual, like they're hanging on the wall of my house, or there's some kind of, there's some kind of thing on my pillow or on somewhere an artwork. They're beyond that though. They're not common. God's promises are extraordinary. They're powerful. They're beautiful.

There's a fascinating story in 2 Kings 22. It's a story about a King named Josiah, and they were doing a remodel of the temple in the story. And in the story, they're trying to remodel the temple. And one of the priests is like, "Oh, hey, King Josiah, I found this book while we were remodeling the temple." And King Josiah is like, "Well, what is it?" "We're not totally sure. We just wanted to bring it to you." He's like, "Well, we need to start reading it." So, they read it out loud, and it said the King started weeping and he started tearing his clothes and he declared a time of mourning. Why? Because it turns out the book that they had found in the junk drawer at the back of the temple was actually the law of God, full of His promises. And they placed it in a drawer and they forgot about it. And then, when they started to remodel, they found it. And then, they realized that they treated the promises of God as common, as not special, as not beautiful, as not unique, as not full of a power and promise. And so, that's a problem because what God has made clean, do not call common. What God has created, what He's given, what He's declared over our life, it's not common, it's beautiful. It's profound. It's amazing. They are truths that we can hold on to. They're promises for us. They're extraordinary. They're not knickknacks. They're not wall art. They're not stickers. They're not buttons on a backpack. So, can I ask you, have any of God's promises become common to you in your life? When you hear a verse like, "Surely your goodness and your love will follow me always. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," is that like, "Oh yeah, yeah. I like that one. That's a good one." Or is it like, "What? Surely the goodness and the love of God will follow me through every part of my life? He's always with me and I'm going to dwell in the house of Lord forever in Jesus' name. Wow. That's extraordinary. What a promise. What a gift. How beautiful is that?" Can I just ask you? Has what's familiar bred contempt for what's beautiful? Has the accessible in our lives confused us about what's truly profound and what's sacred? The promises of God are profound and they are sacred. Think about maybe a verse you have up in your house somewhere. Got it at a Hobby Lobby. It's in the hallway. We all probably have something like that. Okay? When you walk by that, here's what I want you to do as you pass by that. I want you to think to yourself, "That's God's goodness passing me by. As I walk past it. He's trying to get my attention." "Surely my goodness and my love will follow you always. You're going to dwell in my house forever." As I pass by that verse, that promise, that word from the Lord, may He get my attention in the form of His promise in my life.

Okay. So, that's kind of where we're at. That's what we've seen as God's promises is part of the reason that the verses that are familiar are actually very unfamiliar to us. But what do we do about it? How do we move forward? Well, every single week in this series, we're going to activate our faith by simply doing this. We're going to claim it, we're going to declare it, and we're going to walk in it. Because that's what I do when I have a promise. I claim it, I declare it, and I walk it out, starting with claim it. I love this. You know what our biggest problem is? We don't actually claim it for ourselves. Listen to these stats for a second. The federal government has \$28 billion in unclaimed funds from class action lawsuits. That's some of yall's money. For somebody, that's the first time you heard me say anything today. I looked at a website one time, and I tried to find out if there might have been any of my money out there, something like if I got included in one of the lawsuits, and then I totally found my name, and I had like 28 cents. So, I didn't claim it. Okay, how about this one? There's almost 2 million bags per year that are left at the airport. That's some of yall's bags. Here's one for you. One half of you who are listening to this right now have gift cards in your wallet or in your purse worth approximately \$187. You're going to want to claim those. See, those are yours, but it's not very helpful if you don't claim them. And the same is true for the promises of God. You must claim them. And what's crazy is you hear those stats, and you're like, "Whoa, wow." I know. How much more for the promises of God? How much more for the things He's given to us? How much more for His Word in our life? "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." Wow. Anything? Anything. But catch what it says. "In my name." Not in my name. In Jesus' name. And by the way, that's another thing that we get confused about. We'll think we set something in motion and be like, "Oh yeah, that's from God." I'm not sure about that because it depends on whose name it's in. It depends if it's in the name of Jesus bringing glory to God or if it's in mine. It's what I want to do. So, I must claim the things that are in God's name, the promises that are already set in motion for me. So, how do you do that? When you come in every week this summer, basically make a decision ahead of time to be like, "I'm claiming that for me. That's mine." I want you to be like preschoolers in preschool. "Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine, mine, mine, mine." Every single time you come in, claim it and take hold of it. To claim something is to take hold of it like I already own it, because I already do. To claim something is to take hold of it like I already own it, because I already do, confidently, boldly, choose ahead of time. "That's mine. I claim it."

And then, once you claim it, we want you to declare it out. Listen to this one, "I give you thanks, O Lord, with all my heart. I will sing your praises before the gods. I bow before your holy temple as I worship. I praise your name for your unfailing love and your faithfulness for your promises are backed by the honor of your name." There it is. His name leads him to His promises. Who He is leads to what He does. So, what do we do? We declare it out. We give thanks. We sing the praises. We praise His name. We speak out the promises out loud. We say it so our mouth speaks it, our ears hear it, so our heart begins to believe it. I speak it so my ears hear it, so my heart begins to believe it more and more and more, over and over and over. That's the cycle that happens when I declare out the promises of God over my life. So, here's a question for you, do you declare more of God's promises or more of Satan's lies? If we could

take a trip in your thoughts and your words throughout the course of a day, would it be that more of what you say out loud, declare, is more of the promises of God or the lies of Satan? And whether those lies were spoken over you or whether those lies are spoken by you, they're kind of all the same thing. The promises of God must be declared out by our lips, for our ears, for our heart. And when we do, we're not just declaring them over us. We're declaring them over our family. We're declaring them over future generations. We're declaring them over our future. We're declaring them over all of those who are far off. And maybe, possibly, most important of all, we're declaring them out to the spiritual realm. And we're saying into the atmosphere, "If anyone's in Christ, they're a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come." And so, kingdom of darkness, I'm a new creation. You don't get to have me. You don't get to have my family. You don't get to have my future. It has no place or part. I'm declaring out the promises of God over my life. Or we're saying stuff like this, "His divine power has given me everything I need for life and godliness to the measure of him who's called me to it." I walk in power. I have the divine power of God. So, spiritual realm, you can't mess with me. I'm protected. I'm powerful through what Jesus has done. I declare the promise over my life. How about this one? "My God will meet all my needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." So, I declare out in the spiritual realm, you can't make me worry. You can't make me be afraid. You can't take it from me. I already have it. He's given me everything I need in Jesus' name. We declare it out, not just to our family, to ourselves, and to the spiritual realm. And as we do, things change. So, we must claim it. We must declare it.

And finally, we got to choose to actually walk in. I will listen to what God, the Lord, says. He promises peace to His people, to His faithful servants, but let them not turn. Let them actually walk in it. Let them actually walk it out. Let them actually move forward by faith. You see, our beliefs drive our behaviors. And so, as we walk it out, we're showing what we actually believe. I don't do parkour, which is like ninjas jumping off buildings, because I believe in gravity. The reason I don't drink gasoline is because I believe it's expensive and because I would die. So, to believe something is to act as if it were so. So, if I walk it out, if I believe that promise, "My God will meet all my needs," then I'll walk it out. And here's how I'll walk it out. When I'm considering my finances, I'm not going to scramble around worrying like a chicken with my head cut off, and running to whatever the next job is that I need to have, even though it might completely blow up my family, because I'm going to walk out the confidence that God is going to meet my needs. I'm not going to carry worry into every budgeting conversation. I'm not going to make drastic decisions during really difficult moments, because I can't turn back to folly. I have to walk forward by faith, because I'm walking forward confidently knowing that I don't walk alone. I walk with Jesus. I walk with the people of God, and I have the promises of God in my pocket. I'm taking them with me. So, we're going to claim it. We're going to declare it, and we're going to walk it out, starting with the verse that we're starting off with, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are a 'yes' in Christ. And so, through him, the 'amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God." Can I just ask you, would you take a moment, read that verse, and would you take it for yourself? Would you choose to just claim it? Thank You, Jesus, for Your promises, through You, spoken by us. So now, I just want to ask you again, by

faith, to declare them out, as we all declare it together, all of our campuses, let's do it again. Speak it out into the spiritual atmosphere, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are a 'yes' in Christ. And so, through him, the 'amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God." Let's go. And now, may we walk in it all summer long. May we believe that God's unfamiliar promises are not only becoming familiar, they're becoming known, they're becoming believed, and that we can claim them, declare them, and walk them out in Jesus' name. One more for you. This week's reading plan, "Abraham believed the promises of God, and he was strengthened in the faith, and gave glory to God." He was strengthened in the faith, and gave glory to God. So, may the same be true for us during these 60 days of learning about some of these unfamiliar promises. Would you go and pray with me? So, thank You, Jesus, that it is a yes and amen. And thank You, Jesus, that we're setting ourselves up by faith to receive all of these promises, and that they will come to pass, and that they are already a yes, because You are who You say that You are, and You do what You say You will do. I declare just a beautiful, fun, joyful summer over us as these Scriptures come to life, as they awaken us as a church, as they begin to fill up our minds, and our conversations, and our homes, and our commutes, and our routines, as Your promises take over every part of our life. I declare that we would receive them by faith, and we would believe them by faith, and we would begin to act as if they were so, because in Jesus, they are. So, thank You, Lord, that we can count on You. Thank You that anything we ask for in Your name will come to pass. Thank You that it is a yes. Thank You that Your hand is tipped towards us, and it's tipped in our favor. So, may we live our lives like people that believe that. May we live like people that believe that the greatest promisor in the universe has already given us everything we need for our life. He's spoken it out, and we're going to receive it by faith. So, thank You, Lord, for Your Word. Thank You, Lord, for Your promises. They are beautiful. They're extraordinary, and we value them like they are that. We love You, Jesus. In Your name, amen. Amen.