

Alright. Well, hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. Hey, wherever you're at, why don't you join me as we welcome in all of our campuses together. Hey, my name's Dave. It is so good to be with you. And I am so glad that you're here. See, we're having a great summer at Valley Creek. There is life here. There is joy here. And we are in the middle of an incredible series. It's called 60 Days of Unfamiliar Promises. See, for the last couple of weeks, we have just been talking about some of the promises of Scripture that I think we know, right? The ones that we see kind of all over the place. Maybe we see them posted like, up on a wall on a poster. Maybe they're stitched on the back of a pillow. Maybe we even take them and we create like, wallpapers out of them for our phone. But see, I think what we're learning is that even though we're familiar with some of these promises, see, maybe, just maybe, we're not quite as familiar with them here. Right? In our heart or our spirit, where they really matter the most. And so really our hope this summer is that we would just forever change how we view these promises, right? We hope that the next time you see them, the next time you hear them, that somehow we would have just like, shifted the narrative of what they actually mean, because at the end of the day, they're incredible promises. See, they're incredible promises. They're beautiful. They're powerful. And it's God's heart that we would live as if they're so. And so what we've been saying each week, that in order for that to happen, we really have to do three things. We've been saying that we have to claim it, we have to declare it, and we have to walk in it. See, first we have to claim it. We have to reach out and grab a hold of these promises and actually declare that these things actually belong to us. And not just claim it, but truly declare it, like speak it out with our lips. We want our ears to hear it so that our heart and our soul could ultimately believe it. And then once we've claimed it and once we've declared it, well, then we get to walk in it. See, we've been saying that each week, we actually want to take a step and activate our faith, truly walk in the promise so that the realities of the promise can actually be reflected in our everyday lives. And that's kind of where we've been. And you might have guessed it.

Today, we have another great promise for you. In fact, I would say that today, we have one of the greatest promises from one of the greatest teachings from the greatest teacher who's ever lived. You might even say, we have like the most famous promise from the most famous teaching from the most famous teacher of all time. I would even say it's the most influential promise, again, from the most influential teaching, from the most influential teacher ever, or really, if I were to say it another way, dare I say, perhaps, it's the most powerful promise, from the most powerful teaching from the most powerful teacher who's ever lived. See, today's promise is Matthew 6:33. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." And I think by now you guys kind of know the drill. So let's go ahead, all of our campuses, let's declare this out loud together, ready? "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Great job, now let's do it one more time, like with everything we got, ready? "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Okay, we know that one, right? See, I think sometimes we shorten it up, we say things like, "Seek first and all will be added." And see, I think we love this one, right? We love it, we quote it, we say it to one

another, and what's not to love? Like, who doesn't want the promise that all things will be added. I think a lot of times we could actually look at this verse, and it's almost like we look at it like a formula of finally getting the things like, we truly want, right? The things that we think that we've maybe earned, the things that we deserved, kind of those deep down desires of our heart, right? Some of the things like maybe that nice house, maybe that new car, maybe that six-figure salary, maybe that picture-perfect, Instagram-ready life. Again, all the things that we think that we really want, that we really need. And I think a lot of times when we look at this verse, it's like just racing through the first half just to get to the end, right? We almost look at it, it's like a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Let's grab ahold of that for ourselves. But then I think sometimes reality starts to set in. Maybe it's that spirit speaking to our heart inside of us. And it tells us that's probably not really what that means.

And see, one of the things that I think has been helpful in this series is the way that we've kind of gone back a little bit, where we've looked at the context of where these promises come from. And when we do that, what it does, it actually helps us to interpret them appropriately, but more importantly, it helps us learn how do we ultimately apply this to like, our life, right? And see, this promise, it actually comes from what's called the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe you've heard of it. The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of teachings from Jesus Himself. It's why I can stand up here very boldly and say that it's the most important promise from the most important teaching from the most important teacher of all time. And really, see, the Sermon on the Mount is commonly believed to be the most widely read passage of Scripture. You actually find it in the book of Matthew, it's chapters five through chapter seven. And here's the thing, not only is it just the most widely read, it's actually the most studied, it's the most contested, it's the most quoted, it's the most debated, and it's the most written about talk or sermon of all time. And really, it's not even close. See, it really is the greatest teachings from the greatest teachers. And if we want to be followers of Jesus, I think there's an invitation to become students of it. See, it's in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus like takes understanding and He flips it on in of what it means to be blessed. It's in the Sermon on the Mount where He teaches us about life in the kingdom. See, really what it is, in a way, it's kind of His summary of like the whole Old Testament, and ultimately what it now means to be human, and it's kind of odd, isn't it? See, this promise itself, if you look at the full run of the passage, it almost will feel like it's out of place. In fact, if I can, let me just take a second, and I'd love to read a portion of it with you. See, this is, again, Jesus teaching. He says, "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, about what you'll eat or drink, or about your body, what you'll wear. Is life not more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow? They do not labor or spend." Goes on to say, "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly father knows that you need them, but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. And all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry

about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." So there you go. Five times in about 10 verses, Jesus tells us basically, don't worry. Like, don't worry about your life. Don't worry about what you're going to eat, what you're going to drink, what you're going to wear. And He gives us these different examples. He talks about like, the birds in the air, the flowers of the field. And basically He tells us that the Father, He takes care of these things. So He really does summarize what He's saying is, the Father knows that He has like – that we have needs and desires in life. And even though we see people like, chasing these things their entire life, they run around trying to get them, what He's saying is, it basically doesn't do you any good. See, really, it only does two things. At worst, or I'm sorry, at best, it's just a waste of time. But at worst, it actually causes you to have worry. And, like I said, it's kind of odd when we look at this promise, and really where it comes from, it almost is like it fills out a place in the run of the passage. Jesus, He's going on and on, teaching us about the topic of worry. And then He just kind of shoves this promise right there in the middle of it. Yet maybe, see maybe, it's right where it needs to be.

See, again, I mentioned that the Sermon on the Mount, a big part of it is teaching us about life in the kingdom. And I don't know if there's many things in this world that have a greater opportunity to rob us from a kingdom life than worry. And maybe you've noticed like worry is everywhere right now, right? Like you look all around, you kind of see it everywhere in a way, it's kind of like we've just learned to embrace it where it's almost become kind of the fabric of our life. I think a lot of people even look at it almost like it's an identity of sorts. Okay, what do I mean by that? Well, you hear it, right, all the time. We say, oh, you know, I'm just a worrier by nature, right? I can't help but to worry. It's just kind of the way that I am. And it's almost as if they're just saying that worry is the normal reaction that we're supposed to have. And I think in a way it kind of makes sense because again, when we look around, there's a lot in this world to worry about, like if you're a parent, if you have kids, we worry about their safety. We worry about their friends. We worry about their mental health. We worry about what they're like looking at and the things that they're listening to or if you're somebody who follows the news, well then that means you're probably worried about this upcoming election. You're probably worried about things like inflation. You might even be worried about this whole A.I. thing and whether or not it's going to end up taking over the whole world. Or if you're a student, maybe you're worried that like, half the summer is almost over. No, I know, boo. Maybe you're already starting to think about the fall. Like you're thinking about the friend groups and going back to class. Or maybe it's that you worry about your health, your family, your loved ones, your work. Maybe you worry that you just worry too much. See, the point is, like it's hard not to worry and no one's immune from it. Worry is just one of those things. It tends to like, seep into our hearts, in our minds. And it really doesn't matter who you are. And here's the thing, when it does, it destroys our quality of life. See, worry is one of those things that it can impact everything from like your relationships to your health. It's something that slows you down. It like, steals your momentum. It robs your dreams. And maybe worst of all, worry kills your joy. And I think the reality is God knew that this was going to be a struggle for us.

In fact, the reason I say that is when you read through the Scriptures, you're going to actually find the topic of worry referenced more than 300 times. Like, that's a lot. So God knew it was going to be hard. And in fact, the word for worry when used in the Scripture, it typically refers to one of two things. See, oftentimes it speaks to like a tightening or a narrowing. So what does that mean? Well, it means that worry actually narrows your thoughts. It like, gives you tunnel vision where all that you can see is the problem that's in front of you. And then other times, it doesn't just narrow your thoughts. It's actually used in a way that it means to like, rip to pieces. It rips things to pieces. It's actually where we get the phrase "worried to pieces." And what it suggests is that worry, when it gets inside of you, it has a way of tearing your mind and your heart to pieces. So you put those two things together and what does it tell us about worry? Well, it tells us that worry consumes our thoughts and it takes any measure or level of peace that we have in our spirit and it makes it fall to pieces. So can I ask you today, what are you worried about? Well, like when you came in here, right? I'm sure there's a lot that was going on in your life. And I don't know, maybe it's your marriage, your kids, maybe your health or your finances. Again, maybe it's that summer's almost half over. You're already starting to feel the pace of life picking back up. But really, what is it that you are worried about? Because I think we all have something. And maybe a better way to ask that question is like, what's the thing that's keeping you up at night? When you're laying there what are the thoughts that are just like circulating in your mind because honestly if you're anything like me I'm sure it's cost you countless hours of sleep. See I'm going to get really just open and transparent with you guys. Worry is something that's deeply personal to me. And it's been part of my journey, right? It's been part of my story and my struggles, on and off, throughout most of my life. And in fact, I could like, look all the way back to when I was a little kid and I would worry about like, simple things, right? Like going to school, being called on in class, friends groups. I can even remember back to the time when I was about six years old, my older brother was diagnosed with diabetes. And see I didn't know enough at the time to ask questions, so what happened is because I didn't really understand it, I worried for years about what that actually meant for his life. And then I got older like I got into high school, and I'd start to worry about things like sports like, would I be the one on the field that would make a mistake that would ultimately cost the team. And in high school I'd worry about where I was going to college, and what I was going to major in, and what I would end up actually doing with the rest of my life. And now that I'm an adult it's just like new opportunities to worry. They just kind of keep on coming, right? They don't want to stop. But see, looking back kind of with a different perspective, I could actually laugh at a lot of those things now. I could see that they were kind of pointless. That it was kind of just a waste of time and even honestly, real time, like, I could actually laugh at myself for how much time I've spent worrying about this message which if you haven't caught by now is focused on a passage where Jesus tells us not to worry. So there's times where I can laugh at myself, but there's also times where it's been really hard, right?

See I've kind of learned through my journey that I'm kind of what you call a chronic over-thinker. I actually heard somebody use that term last week and I'm like that's it, that's me, right? I could take something and I could just sit there and spin on it kind of just about forever.

In fact if you know the movie Infinity War, do you remember that scene where Doctor Strange is sitting there and he's kind of doing one of these numbers, I can't quite do it, but his head and his body's like bouncing around all over the place? See, what he's doing is, he's using the time stone to actually look at the 14.605 million alternate outcomes for the impending battle that they were about to have with Thanos, only to find out that there was only one outcome where they were actually successful. Okay, that's like me on a typical Monday morning just thinking about the week ahead. It's like me, I'm sitting there going like, okay, the meetings, and the places, and the people, and the projects, okay, all of it, only I don't have the time stone to know the one right thing to do. So it just kind of sits there. It piles up and it weighs me down. So basically what I'm saying is that, hey, worry has not been my friend. So if you've been there, I get it. Right? It's insatiable. It's irrational. There are honestly times in my life where I have been so caught up in worry that it hasn't just cost me moments. It's honestly cost me seasons. But here's the thing that I've learned on my journey. See, worry was never meant for the human heart. Yes, amen to that. God does not intend it for me, and He certainly does not intend it for you. And although at times I think we could feel helpless towards it, here's what I want you to hear. See, worry is actually a choice. It's a choice. If it wasn't a choice, then Jesus wouldn't tell us repeatedly not to do it, okay? And I think one of the things that's important with worry is that we begin to see it more as a symptom rather than a cause. Okay, what do I mean by that? Well, when we sit here and we say things like, oh, I can never do that, I'm just, I'm like, too worried. Okay, in that case, you're actually treating like, worry as the cause that's creating other symptoms in your life. But if we could actually flip that thinking, if we could begin to look at it as a symptom, well, then what it allows us to do? It allows us to get below the surface of the worry, to actually look at the root of what causes it in the first place. And here's the thing. See, the ultimate root of worry is fear. See, really, that's all it is. We've said this before, right? Worry is fear of the future. And here's the thing. We know from Scripture that fear, it doesn't come from God, right? God's love. We know that perfect love drives out fear. So if fear doesn't come from God, well, then it tells us it has to come from someplace else. It actually tells us that fear comes from an enemy. The devil, who seeks to kill, steal, and destroy, right? It comes from an enemy whose native language is to lie.

So what I'd like to do just real quick, I'd like to kind of talk through some of the lies that worry tells us. And then once we do that, we're going to jump back into that promise so that really, we can understand what it is that we can do about it. So here we go. The four lies of worry. And really some of this, it's been adapted from other work, but as I've studied the topic, it's been really helpful for me. So I wanted to share it with you. But anyways, the first lie of worry is that worry tries to convince us that something bad is going to happen, right? When something lives out in the future like worry does, it's really easy to assume the worst and to play out all kinds of negative scenarios in our mind, but did you know? Did you know that there have actually been recent studies that have been done that show that more than 90% of the things we worry about, they never happen? I think that's fascinating. More than 90%, right? More than 90%. That means that statistically speaking, the thing that you're worried about most likely is not going to occur, and if you're sitting there, but like, yeah, bro, but what about the almost

other 10%, right? That's still right, right? It is. I'll give you that. But remember in that passage, right? Jesus said, don't worry about it. Really, there's nothing that we can do about it anyways. And we've been learning for the past couple of weeks that even when the storms do come, and they will, that God still works with them for our good. So again, even science has a name for this. They actually call it the redemptive twist. I thought that was kind of a cool name. And how it works is, see, research has shown that most often, our most painful seasons, the things that we consider the storms of life, they actually end up creating the community, the connection, the growth, and the meaning that we end up being the most thankful for. Right? So if anyone's ever been on the backside of the storm, and they have the proper perspective, they know that that's true. So again, don't automatically believe the lie that something bad is going to happen. And even if it does, trust that Jesus, He's going to give you what you need to overcome it. Okay?

So lie number two. The next lie that worry tells us is that the more I worry, the better my chance of avoiding it. Right? See, worry, it wants us to believe that if we worry about something long enough, then there's a better chance that it's actually not going to happen. But the truth is, worry has never prevented anything. See, worry has never once changed something for good. Worry has never once paid a bill. Worry has never made you healthier. Worry has never helped you pass a test, and it has never helped you heal a broken relationship. See, planning might, right? Prayer, definitely, but not worry. Man, all worry does is it robs you of your presence, and it convinces you to fixate on the future so that it can ultimately take from your today. See, I think one of the things that we need to remember is just like fear is different from discernment, so also is worry different from concern. See, worry is actually something that's passive. If you're a worried person, you're going to look at a possible problem, and you're actually going to do nothing about it because you're so busy being worried. Okay? But again, concern is just the opposite, when a concerned person sees a potential problem, and they act. See, worry paralyzes, but concern it spurs you to action. So hear me, if you see a potential problem, if there's something that you know that you can do about it, like do it. See, when you take action, what it does, it actually pulls that thing like into the present, which is out of the realm of worry, because again, worry can only persist in the future, and it allows you to move forward in it. Right? So while worry is bad, concern is good, concern is actually part of what it means to be a good steward. And remember, stewardship, it's one of the ways that we glorify God.

Okay? The next slide. Worry likes to convince us that we can't help but to worry. Again, this one goes back to like treating worry like it's an identity. Right? It wants us to believe that we're helpless, that we don't really have a choice in the matter, that we're just prone to it, or that we're just born that way. But remember, anyone who is now in Christ has been born again. Right? Old is gone, new is here. It's why Scripture tells us, "As he is, so we now are," like in this world today, and here's the thing, Jesus never worried about a thing in His life. So you might have a genetic bent to it. You might actually be prone to it. We have certainly all been raised

up in a culture that is saturated with it. But ultimately, the truth is worry is a learned behavior and it can be undone.

And then finally, worry tries to convince us that by worrying, we can control the outcome. So if you're here with this last week, we talked a lot about things like trust and control and where they rightfully belong. But see, worry, it tries to convince us that ultimately we can solve every problem on our own. See, but at the end of the day, we know that our peace, it actually comes from admitting that we're not God. He is, right? See, we're never meant to carry the things, the weight really that worry puts upon us, but Jesus can. See, Jesus can carry what's worrying you because he has already carried what was meant to kill you. Let me say it again, right? Jesus can carry what's worrying you because he has already carried what was meant to kill you, right? It was the punishment that brought us peace, it was upon Him. And see, when we talk about things like worry, I think what happens is we instantly think like, what do I have to do about it? Like, what's my kind of three-step plan to resolve the worry and the tension in my life? And while there's a place for that, it just can't be our only approach because when we do that, what we're doing is we're attempting to do it in our own strength, in our own flesh, and it just doesn't work. See, truth is, it takes something greater than ourselves to walk in freedom from worry. And that's why, more than any solution, God ultimately wants to give us a Savior, right? He wants to lead us into a relationship, a personal and intimate one with His Son. Why? Well, because God knows what we ultimately need.

See, all that worry was ultimately just to bring us back to this place, right? Back to this oddly placed promise and what we said was the greatest and most influential sermon of all time. And as we sit here and we look at it, we have to ask the question, okay, then how does this help us with our worry? Well, remember I said earlier that worry is a choice, right? And I think really what Jesus is pointing out here is we could choose one of two things. We can either choose to worry or we can choose to seek first. Right? We've been talking about the promises of God. And one of the things that we have to keep in mind is not all promises are actually the same. See, this promise is a little bit unique because it's what we call a conditional promise. And really all that means is that before the promise can be manifested in our life, that there's actually a condition that we have to fulfill, right? It's saying that it's not enough just to claim it and declare it, but we actually have to begin to align our life with it. We have to begin to walk in it in order for the breakthrough to be experienced. And in fact, you've heard us say this. It's kind of like, when we say we have to be willing to point our feet in the direction that we ultimately want our heart to go, and just like we said, this verse, it kind of feels out of place in the run of the passage. Well, I think sometimes when we try to use this promise in the midst of our worry, well, it could feel out of place as well, right? It could feel a little clunky at first. It could feel like it's not really doing much in the moment. And I think what happens in those cases, we end up trying to negotiate with God. See, instead of walking out the realities of the promise, we actually end up trying to flip the order. And we say things like, oh, but if you just give me this first, well, then I'll seek. "Hey, God, if you just answer this promise for me, well, then I'll follow." And if we don't negotiate, well, then what we end up doing is we manipulate.

Okay, do I mean by that? Okay, well, we know it's God's heart to provide, right? Well, I think sometimes we come in here with a need in our life and we worship Him in the hopes that He'll give us the provision that we're actually looking for. See, I think if we're really honest with ourselves, sometimes part of our problem is that we actually value the promise itself more than the promisor. But again, Jesus says it doesn't actually work that way with this promise. We actually have to get the order right. And more than that, we actually have to have pure motives in our life. And hear me, Jesus, He loves to give us with His hands, so long as He knows that what we're ultimately after is His heart. So, the condition of this promise is to seek first. See, if we're not after His heart, He knows that the things He wants to give us, they're going to actually crush us because we don't have the character ultimately to sustain it. So, again, the condition, seek first.

Okay, but seek what? Well, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. And I think that phrase, His kingdom and His righteousness, that's one that we often wrestle with as well, right? They're kind of both bigger theological words. And in an attempt, I think, sometimes to help us understand it, we use even bigger theological words. And all we end up doing is actually complicating it more. So, what I'd like to do today, I just want to give us a really simple translation of what this really means, to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. See, all it means, just make Jesus the center. Center of what? Well, like the center of everything, right? Make Him the center of your marriage, your parenting. Make Him the center of your work. Make Him the center of your thoughts, your future, your dreams. See, it's saying, make Him the center of your life. Ultimately, it's saying, put Jesus first and He'll take care of the rest. And really, it's the same thing that we've been talking about all year. This is just another invitation to rearrange our lives around Him, right? His ways, behind-the-scenes and on-the-spot. Put Jesus in the center. See, ultimately, it's saying that if we let Him be our one thing, right? The one thing that we look at and focus on. If we'll take all that energy that we put into worship, or excuse me, into worry, and instead put it into worship. If we just let Him lead us and choose us, lead us and ultimately choose to be obedient, well, then it means the promise will ultimately be realized in our life. And I think another way that you could actually think of what it means to put Jesus in the center, what does it mean to seek His kingdom and His righteousness? Well, when you hear kingdom and righteousness, just think God's goodwill for your life, right? And where do we find God's goodwill for a life? Well, again, we find it in Jesus. See, the only reason that the kingdom is even present is because the king has come, right? So, if we want to learn about what His kingdom is or what His righteousness means, well, we just look to Him. Jesus is what makes the kingdom what it is. It's why John 17, it tells us, "Now this is eternal life," right? "That they may know you." See, what that tells us is that like the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, it's not just this future reality, this far off place that we hope to end up when we die. It's actually experienced in the here and now, again, in knowing Him. In fact, if you really like, study the Bible and specifically talk of the kingdom or the heaven, of heaven in the Bible, what you come to realize is that most often it refers to the direct and immediate availability of God. The direct and immediate availability of God. So, think about that for a second and then take something like the first line of the Lord's prayer, right? "Our father in heaven." Okay, what it

would suggest is maybe a better way to say that would be, "Our father who's always near." See, again, the kingdom is not just a place or reality. It's a person who can be known and it's ultimately a person who wants to come and make his home with you.

In fact, I love how this verse says it, Ephesians 3. It says, "Then, Christ will make us home in your hearts as you trust him." And when that happens, it says that your "roots will grow down into God's love." God's love, the very thing that displaces fear and worry in our life, and it will "keep you strong." Like, man, I think that is so beautiful and yet so profound. And if you really take that and you put it into the context of what we're talking about, it's basically saying that we don't find the strength to get rid of worry in our life by trying really hard not to worry, right? It's saying that we don't find the things that we long for by chasing after the things that the world pursues. Instead, it says that when we put Jesus first, when we Him the center of our life, well, then we'll realize that in His presence, we already have everything we truly need, right? It's His presence that puts everything else in its proper context and perspective. So seek first His kingdom and make Jesus the center of your life. And practically, like, what does that actually look like? Well, it just means that no matter where we're at, no matter where we're going, really in everything that we do, our constant invitation is to keep Jesus in view. Right? We're to constantly be looking for Him in all things, like the big and the small. The extraordinary and the mundane. See, He wants us to see Him in all things. And when that happens, man, the promise will be fulfilled. It's why He says this. He says, "I love those who love me and those who seek me, find me." Those who seek, find. Sounds familiar, right? It's almost like a bonus promise for the day. But when I read it, if I'm honest with you, I can't help but think to myself, like, how often do I just miss it, right? How often do I just, like, walk right past the presence of God in my life? Like, here's God working. Here's God moving. Here's Jesus showing up in my life yet again. And here I am just walking right on by. See, I think what happens is we all get stuck in this place where we often don't see Him in the birds in the air and the flowers of the field. And again, that goes back to things like worry. See, what happens is worry keeps us so focused on the future that it robs us of being aware of God that's in the today, right? Instead of having eyes to see Him, He ends up feeling distant and sometimes even absent. Okay, so what do we do with that?

Well, for me, that's when I like to turn to what I call the gospel of "Where's Waldo?" I'm kidding. There's still only one gospel. But do you remember the series of children's books that were focused on the question, Where's Waldo? Right? He was kind of that nerdy looking guy. He wore glasses. He had kind of a striped shirt, goofy hat, who would ultimately hide himself in the pages of the book. And we were challenged to kind of find him, right? I actually heard a pastor speaking about this recently. And I thought it was brilliant. I thought it was a really helpful analogy for helping us to realize that God is often closer than we think. And again, the way that that book worked, right? We had this guy, Waldo, who was supposed to be on every page, but he was hidden, right? He was especially hidden to the untrained eye. So, you really had to be willing to look for him, right? You had to look for him amongst all the things that were on the page that were intended to hide him and to ultimately distract us. But then if you

persisted enough, ultimately you would find him. You'd have this sense of joy and accomplishment. And then you would like, turn the page, and there'd be an invitation to do it all over again. See, part of the point of the book was actually about developing your capacity to track him down. So, the way that it worked was each page actually got progressively harder and harder. See, if it were too easy, right? And there was just this like, giant image of Waldo's face on the page. I don't think anyone would have bought the book. In fact, you know what they would have called that book? They would have called it, "There's Waldo," because like, there he was. But again, that's a bad book. Nobody would have bought that book, because there was no mystery. There's no adventure in that, right? See, it turns out it was actually the difficulty of finding him that ultimately drew you in. And to find Waldo, right, it took patience. It took practice. Most of all, it took intent. Like you actually had that want to do it. And there were people that persisted, and they found him. And yet, there were sadly people that just gave up. And really, what made part of it hard – part of what made it hard to find Waldo was the fact that he was just like, so ordinary looking, right? It was all the other things on the page that actually had the likelihood to stand out and to really rob you of your attention, kind of the way that things like worry and the desires of life consume us now. But eventually, you would come to the last and hardest page. See, the last and hardest page was ultimately full of counterfeit Waldos. See, they would be tiny little imposters that look just like the real thing. The only difference was there'd be like one detail that was off, right? Maybe it was that the real Waldo was missing a shoe or something. So, honestly, you could be like looking right at him and not even know it. Okay, again, I think that's a great picture for what it looks like to make Jesus first, right? For what it looks like to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness in the midst of our worries and the things that distract.

You see, the world we live in is full of counterfeit Waldos, and they are desperate to take our eye off of the real thing. And that's why we're to let every day, every moment of our life be just like another page, right? See, just like Waldo, Jesus, He might feel elusive, but He's not absent. And the ease with which Jesus is found, it could actually vary from page to page or season to season, but ultimately that's because He has various ways of drawing us to Himself, right? He wants us to learn to see Him both in the extraordinary but also in the mundane, right? To come to know His face so thoroughly that it stands out even amongst the counterfeits of this world. And when it does, well, then that's when the promise is fulfilled, right? That's when we're given the "all things," because we're no longer chasing after the wrong things or consumed with the worry in life. See, if I can, let me try and just pull all this together this way. See, we started today talking a little bit about the Sermon on the Mount, right? The greatest teaching from the greatest teacher of all time. And what I didn't tell you about the Sermon on the Mount was there was actually two groups of people there that day. You had the crowd, but then you also had the disciples. See, it says both were interested in Jesus. I'm sure both came with worries and problems that they were looking for help for. And both were ultimately amazed with what Jesus had to say. In fact, it even says that both somehow knew that what He spoke, it was truth and that He did so as one who had authority. But see, in the end, it's the crowd who cry out, "Crucify," at the end of Jesus's life. Okay, two groups, both heard the promise, but only one

group's life was changed. Why? What's the difference, right? See, disciples are people who used to be part of the crowd, right? They're used to be part of the crowd, but now they've committed to putting Jesus first, right? They're the one who decide not just to claim, not just to declare, but to actually walk in the promise so that the blessing could be activated in their life, right? They're the ones who decide that they must have what this man has to offer, so they choose to make Jesus the center. And see, now we get to decide the same thing. Right? Are we going to be the ones who try to negotiate with Jesus, maybe try to manipulate Him into getting the things that we really want? Or like the disciples, are we going to be the ones to trust this simple invitation to just seek first?

See, come on, if you can, why don't you say the promise with me one more time? Here we go. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." See, I said earlier that we can't wait to get to the end of this verse, right? To the part of the promise where all things are added. But really, the more I sit on it, see, the more I'm beginning to realize that the real gift, it's in the journey itself, right? It's in the front half of the verse. It's in the seeking. It's in the putting Jesus first. It's recognizing that Jesus, He isn't just our forever destination. He actually is our real-time reward, right? See, the gifts of Jesus in our life, they're helpful, but they ultimately pale in comparison to who He is. And in a way, I think it's kind of the irony of this whole 60 days, right? See, it's realizing that every one of His promises, including the promise of a worry-free life, are ultimately promises that are fulfilled in Him. So seek first His kingdom and make Jesus the center. Go close your eyes and let's pray. So Jesus, I just thank You that You're here with us today. I just speak it out that Your presence, it really is the greatest gift. And again, let us never make it more complicated than that. And specifically, Jesus, I thank You for this promise that we can actually live a worry-free life, that we don't actually have to chase after the things that the world pursues. And that in Your presence, we actually have access to all that we could ever ask, want, desire, or imagine. So Jesus, today, I just declare that we will be a church that chooses to make You the center. Alright, we're going to be a church that chooses to make You first. We will be a church that chooses to seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness. And when we do that, Jesus, we choose to grab hold of the truth that in You, in Your presence, all promises are ultimately fulfilled. Jesus, we love You. We glorify You. And it's in Your mighty and precious name we pray. Amen!