

Well, that was just fun getting to worship together all the same time, all the campuses. And we've been in a series called 60 Days: Songs of Life. Can I just tell you what I think God is doing? I think he's been singing new songs over our church and into our church and literally placing a new song in our mouths. In fact, I really sense strongly that as the series has taken off and we've been in it together, there are some people that are experiencing a completely different, like, life, and reality, and emotions, and personhood than they even did four weeks ago, because God is literally taking away a song of despair and he's replacing it with a song of praise. And he's taken away songs of lies and he's replacing it with songs of life. And so I just want to declare that over our church right now. And so let's continue to speak to each other with hymns, songs, and spiritual songs, singing and making glad music to the Lord, truly creating an atmosphere full of faith.

And I want to invite you to take out this card. You got one of these when you came in. Take out this card. We're going to take a moment and just have some time for reflection. And the thing I want to encourage you on is we just don't spend enough time in life of just slowing down, stopping for a second and just trying to hear from the Lord and let him speak to our heart, and let him speak to us about things that are really, really important. So I got a few questions I want to walk you through. I'm going to ask you to grab a pen and get ready to write some of these down. And I ask you to plan to know that the Lord's going to speak to you. He wants to speak to you and he wants to give you an opportunity to listen and hear him and then write it down and value his voice. And so here's just a few questions I want to lead us through during this time. Grab a pen, grab your card. And here's the first one. As we go through songs of life, what do you need to grieve? Look at this verse out of Psalm 88. "My eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, Lord, every day; I spread out my hands to you." What do you need to grieve right now?

Another way that we say this is what do you need to lament? There's an entire book of the Bible called Lamentations, taking time to take stock of what has been lost. This one's not a fun one to try to answer. Honestly, I think we're horrible at answering a question like this. I am. I'll just say it out loud. I am sometimes and I believe it's hard for us because we want to keep moving forward into the next thing. We don't want to feel the pain or sit in it. Can I just tell you, God is in that with you, in your grief, in your loss, in your sorrow. What do you need to grieve? Every day we call to you, Lord. We spread our hands to you. We're open-handed, open hearts.

To help you on how to think about it, these are the things that -- these are the things that are so painful you don't want to write them down, but you really should. These are the losses that are so deep you kind of don't want to talk about it. These are the things that maybe you've tried to bury but the only problem is, if you bury them, you bury them alive. What do you need to grieve? The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. We mourn with those that mourn. Here's the next one. What do you need to pray for? What do you need to pray for right now? Psalm 17, "I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer." Can I

just tell you, God hears your prayers. The only question is, have you been praying them? So what's on your heart? What's on your mind? What do you need to pray for?

Your family, our country, your future, the next generation, reconciliation. Come on, what do you need to pray for? We've been meditating every day for five minutes on a psalm. That is a form of prayer. It's part of how we're building the prayer muscle in our lives. What's God placed on your heart? Grab a pen, write that down.

I think we often downplay how powerful prayer really is. I don't think we have a full understanding of making that connection, speaking with our good Father, speaking on behalf of people, talking to him about what's on our heart, and what that does, and what breaks through when the people of God pray. It's amazing what happens when the prayers of the righteous people are powerful and effective, and how God moves among his people, and how he changes things. What do you need to pray for? The next one is, what do you need to be thankful for? We're having a celebration weekend. We're spending time to just live with a spirit of gratitude. What do you need to be thankful for? What do you need to thank God for specifically?

Check this out. In Psalm 7, "I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord most high." God, we just choose to sing you praises. We thank you for every blessing that comes down from our Father above. You are the giver of every good thing. What do you need to thank God for? For your people, maybe for your health, for God's presence. I felt very specifically somebody needs to thank God for God as a provider. I wanted to say this word out, kind of just tell somebody in here, your employer that -- the place that you work is your employer. God really is your provider. And so no matter what you're facing, the uncertainty of this next season, just thank God. Thank you, God. You're my provider. You give me everything I need. Everything I have comes from you.

Thank God for our church, for the people here, for a place that you can go to to worship, to experience a Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled and life-giving culture. Thank you, God, for that. What else? It's amazing what thankfulness can do to start to change your heart and your mind. It awakens you. It opens up your thoughts. It literally renews your mind away from the things of this world and towards the things of the Kingdom. What do you need to be thankful for? So much to thank God for. I want to really encourage everybody, as we come in to a time of rest this next week, don't miss a chance to be reflective.

Don't miss a chance to take a moment and spend the time with the Lord. Don't miss a chance to write down some things that you think he's speaking to you or some things you sense in your spirit. Writing it down helps bring it to life in your heart, in your mind. It helps make the connection. Take a chance to reflect on the goodness of God all this week as we get some time of rest. And now we want to transition into another time in our service together, and that is to a time of communion. So at all of our campuses, all of our teams can come and start to distribute

communion together. This is always a special time together as a church. And communion is for anybody who has placed their faith in to Jesus. And so as we begin, I know you heard on the news this week that Roe v. Wade was overturned, and I want to take just a moment to speak to that and talk about it. And I want to just make the connection on how much what's been happening over the last 48 hours reflects what we've been talking about in Songs of Life.

See, during the Songs of Life series, we said that the Psalms are full of all the real things that real people really experience. All the prayers, and the pain, and the praise that goes up to God. And so we've seen those -- we've seen those a lot in this last season. Prayers. There's been people that have prayed for this decision for years of their life. They've prayed, they've fasted, they've served. And so today we just want to honor everybody who prayed for life. We want to honor everybody who took time in their life to say, "I want to see God break through in this area." There are some people literally in our church that have prayed for this for 50 years. And so those are the prayers of righteous people. For the pain side of it, I want to take a moment to speak to that. For some people that are listening to this and for people even within our church family, the decision itself sparked a lot of loss and grief in your own heart and maybe even a sense of shame.

And so very specifically I say to you, let the God of hope fill you with his hope. May the great healer start to heal your heart and bind up the places that feel broken. For the praise part of it, God is good. And God is good even when the world is not. And God is a God of life even when the world brings death. And so part of why we celebrate this is because we celebrate life, because we praise him for our lives, for the value that he's placed upon us. You see, every single person is made in the image and the likeness of God. And God is a giver of life. And so part of the reason that the sanctity of life is so important is because Jesus thought it was so important that he came and he gave his life to us. He laid down his life that we might live.

And so Satan comes to steal and kill and destroy, but Jesus has come that we would have life, and have it to the full. And so it is for certain that God is a God of life and he calls us to be life-giving life-givers. And so I believe by faith, Valley Creek, that that's going to be a continued calling for us, the church, to be a life-giving people in this time. You see, that's who Jesus is. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." In Jesus was light and that light was the life of men. Jesus calls the things that are not as though they are. He brings life from dead things. So we'll continue to be a church that is life-giving. And we will continue to be a church -- we already had been a church that is raising up generations of hope carriers, hear me, no matter what the cost.

So thank you, Jesus, for your life. Thank you, Jesus, for what you've done. And even that we take communion today, we recognize that everything comes from you. Thank you, Jesus, that communion is a reminder that you're Lord and we're not, and that your kingdom reigns above the kingdom of this world. So even when we don't understand it, when it doesn't make sense, and when things seem like they're just falling apart at the seams, we know that your kingdom

reigns supreme. So go ahead and take the bread out right now. Hold that in your hands and just remember that Jesus looked at his disciples and says, "I am the bread of life that those that feast on me will live." He said, "This is like my body. It's going to be broken for you. I'm going to be broken so that you can be brought back to life. And so every time you take of the bread, do it in remembrance of me." Let's take it together.

In the same way, he took the cup, he said, "This is a cup of a new agreement between God and man for the forgiveness of sins. No longer is your life going to be based on what you've done or how you've performed or what you've brought to the table. It's going to be based on what I've done on my forgiveness, on my finished work." So Jesus took the cup and said, "Every time you drink of it, remember the new promise, the new agreement, the new covenant between God and man." Let's take the cup together. So Jesus, thank you that you are Lord, that you are enthroned, that you reign supreme, that you're above anything in this world, any of our thoughts, any of our opinions about it. You, God, are above it all.

And so even now, as we took communion today, we remember that you are seated on your throne, that you're seated on the throne of our lives as followers, and that you are King Jesus. Then we'll just take – we'll take time over these next few weeks and months to remember we're good. King Jesus is on his throne. He did everything he needed to do to finish the work, and so we can rest in that. May we rest on you today, Jesus. Thank you for who you are, for what you've done. In your name.