

Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad that you are here wherever you're joining us from. We're glad that you're here with us today and you know what? We are glad that it is finally September, because that means we made it. We survived the summer of 2020. I think this is going to be a summer. We will never forget. In fact, the entire year is a year that we will never forget. We have never walked through a year like this before. I mean, 2020 has brought challenges and hardships, but you know what? It's actually brought some lessons with it too. And so today we want to start a brand new series and it's a series called along the way. What's God been teaching. You see, we want to share with you some of the lessons, some of the things that God has been working in us and teaching us along the way.

And if I were sitting with you in a coffee shop today, we would sit down and I would lean in and say, man, what has God been teaching you this year? What lessons have you learned along the way? And if it took you a second to try to collect your thoughts, maybe I would just ask you this. Well, what have you seen? Cause we've seen a lot of things this year. We have seen a lot of pain and sorrow. We have seen a lot of statistics and news and thanks to shelter in place. We have seen a lot more of the inside of our home than we ever cared about. Seeing we have seen some strange things, become new norms, like social distancing and, and face coverings. And all of the things that we've seen may have. It's not been good. It's not been encouraging.

And I would go so far as to say it has not left a single person untouched. Wouldn't you agree with that? I mean, I know I've been impacted. I have been impacted by what I've seen. I've seen my husband's workplace go through salary reductions and then furloughs and then lay offs. I see the impact on both of my kids. I have two seniors this year and I have seen all kinds of once in a lifetime opportunities go by. I've seen it impact my 80 year old parents who were kind of alone and a little bit scared because they can't be with their family. And I have seen something that I could never have imagined in my wildest dreams. I have seen the campuses of Valley Creek church go quiet for months. I mean, our worship centers were substantive. Just like the one that I'm in right now that every week, man, we have joy and laughter and we have celebration and praise is going out to Jesus.

And now they're all sitting quiet and silent and empty for months. I mean, we've, we've seen a lot in every area of our life. It feels like it's been impacted. What was familiar has become foreign. What were things that we went to for comfort have now become uncomfortable. Everything that we thought was so certain is all becoming unknown. And I started to realize something from what I was seeing, the things I was seeing around me, the devastation and the chaos that I was seeing around me was starting to impact the inside of me. It was starting to get into my mind and think about my choices and how I was living, what I was seeing. She was impacting how I was living. So along the way, this is a lesson that I have learned. I have learned that we live by faith, not by sight.

We live by faith, not by sight. Now this is a lesson I'm learning. I can't say it as a lesson that I learned. Cause it's not a one and done learning to live by. Faith is something you do. As long

as you live. If you are a living, you are learning it. And some of you right now, you may be tempted to check out on me cause you're thinking, yeah, yeah. I live by faith, not by sight, but hold on a second. I'm going to ask you something. What does that mean? We really, what does it really mean? See, I think faith is a word that we hear a lot. Maybe it's even a word that you use a lot, but I don't think we fully understand the depth of its meaning. Faith is sometimes overused and it's under defined. It has an over expected concept, but it has an under appreciated value.

We throw it around so flippantly. And when we say things like, Oh, keep the faith be a person of faith. Don't lose faith. There was a guy in the eighties that even wrote a song where you gotta have faith. Remember that one, but what's it really mean? What does it mean for you? Faith? It's the lifestyle of the kingdom, fully focusing and fully believing in fully trusting on God, in his higher thoughts and his higher ways. It is so much more than these catchphrases we use. Have you ever been struggling with something and maybe one of your friends said, Oh, it'll be fine. You just need to have more faith. You just need to have a bigger faith. What is that? It's like, they're saying having faith is this passive posture to solving a problem. Faith is not a passive posture at all. When you are believing for, and you're reaching for more of the kingdom of heaven to bring it on the kingdom of her, that is a productive posture.

It is productive in our lives is productive in our hearts. It's also not a Pollyanna posture where you're just throwing these lofty words up to promises that God never even made. I think it's like this faith is kind of like a helium balloon and it rises, but it's tethered. It's anchored in scripture. So if we really want to know what it means to live by faith and we have to understand what faith is. And so we need to go to scripture when it's tethered and let's find out what the definition is in Hebrews 11, it tells us faith is the confidence in what we hope for and the assurance of what we do not see confidence in what we hope for assurance of what we do not see. Now, this verses messed with me for a really long time. And let me tell you why I get the first half of it, confident in what we hope for.

I am so confident. I hope the pandemic ends tomorrow. I am confident. I hope I get to go out on a date night with my husband to get, I am confident. I hope that my kids get back into their senior life. I am super confident in what I hope for, but it's the second part of the verse. Sometimes I'm not really sure if what I hope for is actually the outcome of it. It's what I miss sometimes. And it starts to rob me of my faith. But this is what I've learned. I have learned that living by faith means that you have to have faith in God for the outcome, not faith in the outcome itself. Now she's gonna say that again. Living by faith means that you have to have faith in God for the outcome, not have faith in the outcome itself. Let me tell you how I learned that specifically along the way, this past year, back in March, when we had to make what was a really hard decision to close our campuses for our week in services, that was a hard decision.

And man, I was really disappointed because I'm a people person. I love being around people. You are my people. I love seeing you every week. I love seeing your faces and hearing your

stories and championing you and meaning your feelings and your family. I was really disappointed, but you know what? I was confident. I was so coveted. I was at the school a couple of weeks. It will be that it will be so fine. A couple of weeks came and went and we weren't able to come back together. And so then after that time started to pass and what was my disappointment? It started to turn into concern as really concerned. I was concerned about you concerned about the church, but then I got super confident that we would come back in April. I knew it. We are going to, I'm so confident we're going to come back in April because that's when Easter was.

And as you know, Easter came and it went and we weren't able to come together. And on the Monday after Easter Sunday, can I just tell you I was so grumpy? I mean, I was just grouchy and I was irritable and I was edgy and I'm thinking, what is wrong with me? It's Monday after Easter Sunday. And all of a sudden I started to realize, I think that this paint dynamic is really starting to take a toll on my faith. And so I came back to this verse and I was like, okay, I need to focus on what I'm sure of. What am I sure of? I am sure that Jesus building his church because the word says, so I am sure that we are a family because the Bible says, so I was sure that Valley Creek is rooted because we've done that together.

I am sure that God gave us a word at the beginning of 2020 to live set apart. I am sure of these things. And so I changed the way I prayed. I started to pray, Lord, I am confident that you will build your church and I am sure you are good. And that's what I prayed every day. I started to pray, Lord, I'm confident that you will build your church. And I am sure that you are good. And it took a hot minute, but slowly after a couple of days and a couple of weeks, I started to feel like my faith was rising up. As I was making this prayer, I started to feel my faith began to rise. And this is what I learned. It's not always about the thing we're praying for. It's about what God is doing in us through the thing we're praying for.

So can I ask you a question? What's God doing in you right now? What is he doing in you right now where you are in this pandemic? Is there an area where you are so confident in what you're hoping for that maybe you just, you can't see that outcome and that's where you're struggling. Because right now it is really tempting to live by sight. It really is. But when we live by sight, then all of a sudden that site becomes our reality. And that reality drives our belief. And when we live our life by sight, letting that drive our beliefs, that's when things get really crazy. And that's when our lives just get whacked. Look at Romans eight, it tells us this, this is the mindset focused on the flesh fights God's plan and refuses to submit to his direction because it cannot, it cannot the mindset that is focused on the flesh, the mindset that is focused on our site, the mindset that is focused on the wrong thing, fights God's right thing, because he has a right thing.

Even in the midst of your circumstances, he still has a plan. He has a plan for you. And he has a plan for me, but if we can't see it, then we cannot align with it. So we can't live our lives out of focus. So you say, okay, well then what do we do? How do we do that? I think we can learn a

really great lesson from Mark chapter eight. There's a situation in Mark eight where there's a blind man. Now we don't know much about this blind man. We don't know his name. We don't know how his family, what he did. We didn't even know how long he had been blind, but there was a blind man. And he had some friends and his friends wanted desperately to get him to Jesus. And when they did, they begged Jesus, will you please just touch him?

Why, why was it so important for these guys to get their blind friend to Jesus? And for Jesus to touch him is because these guys had learned somewhere along the way. They had learned to live by faith and they had faith in Jesus for their friend. So that's what's going on. Let's pick it up right now in Mark chapter eight, it says he took, we're talking to Jesus. He took the blind man by the hand and he led him outside the village, huh? Outside the village. Okay. I don't know if this man even knew Jesus, we don't know that. But if he didn't, do you understand how much faith it would take for a blind man to let a stranger take him by the hand and lead him into an unknown area. That takes a huge amount of trust, but he did it. And you know what?

Sometimes I think Jesus wants to take us by the hand. And I think he wants to lead us out of these familiar places into an unknown surrounding, because he wants to do something in our lives, in that place. But too often, maybe we don't have the faith to trust him this man did. He had the faith to trust him. Let's see what happens when they go there. It goes on to say that when Jesus has spit on the mayor's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asks, do you see anything? Okay? You have to, you have to just kind of get the vision of this. Appreciate it here. You've got a man blind man, following a stranger to an unknown place. He gets out there. He spits on his face. I don't think that's what that man was expecting. I don't think that's what his friends were expecting.

I don't think that's what the disciples expected, but we need to catch this when Jesus is doing a miracle in our lives, the method, and maybe something that we don't expect. And it may even be something that's unpleasant. I don't think that man thought it was very pleasant. And we may not think that it change up in our school or being separated from our loved ones or all these restrictions that we're living in. I don't think that we think those are very pleasant, but could it be that God is doing something bigger that he's in the middle of doing something bigger because that's what was happening with this man. He was doing something bigger after he spit in his eyes, he touched him in the man, got his sight. He looked up and he said, I can see, I think people, they look like trees.

I can see it was amazing. I mean, one touch from Jesus and this guy had his vision. I mean, he didn't have 2020, but what he had, it was so much better than what he had before. If Jesus offered you something, it was better than what you had before, but it wasn't complete. Would you, would you be satisfied with that? I mean, really think about it. If he offered you something that was less than complete, would you settle for that? Because I think that we do this. I think we do this all the time. I think that Jesus wants to give us so much, but I think that we settle

because we just want to get just enough to get out of our pain. We want to get just enough to get out of our uncomfortability. We want to get just enough. We'll say I got sick.

I got baptized. I go to church, but that's not all, there's so much more. What about the abundant life that Jesus wants to give us? What about the abundant vision that he had? He had so much more for this man and Jesus. Wasn't going to let him settle for anything less than all of it. Let's see what continues to happen. Once more, Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened. His sight was restored and he saw everything clearly once more. And then he could see once more. And then his eyes were open. See with Jesus, there is always more, but we have to stay to receive it. This man did. I mean stop and think about it. What did he cut and run after that first touch, he would have lived with as a tiger life with this fuzzy tree people vision.

And he would think this is as good as it gets. His partial vision would have prevented him from having his full faith, but that's not what happened. Stayed. He stayed and we have to stay circles that we keep talking about that we're trying to get everybody to get into and get involved. And we do. We want everybody to get into a circle. And when you get in that circle, stay because that's, Jesus is going to give you more. We have to stay in that marriage through a hardship. We have to stay dedicated to that online class. We have to stay focused on Jesus, even while we're still in it. If we stay, he will keep touching. He wants to give us more. He wants to reach out and give you another touch today. Can you, can you believe that? Can you receive that? Or maybe you're in a place where you're saying, you know what?

Jesus is like so far away, like he's just out of sight. I can't even see him. He may feel like he's out of sight, but he is never out of your reach because the Bible says that he will never leave you and he will never forsake you. And there's always more, there is more courage. There is more confidence. There is more peace. There is more love. There is more comfort with Jesus. There's always more when we return, he releases and there's all ways more, but too often, I think we settle. We settle for just enough faith to get us through the emergency, but we don't have the long faith that gets us through endurance. I think we have the faith for like a glimpse of heaven, but we don't have that deep faith to contend for the deeper things. But along the way, this is what I've learned.

Living faith. It is living by sight, but it's living by the sight that Jesus gives us. Living by faith is living by sight. But it's living by the sight that Jesus gives us because when we have his vision, it's no longer human vision. It's a heavenly perspective. And it helps us see things that otherwise we would not be able to see check out this first and second Corinthians. Let me try to show it to you this way. It says we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God. Not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, not crushed. We are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, not destroyed. What this verse is saying is that we have a treasure and it's power from God. We have the ability. We have a treasure to be able to see with his vision.

And when we do what we see is different than what he sees. Our vision says, we're hard pressed. His vision says, but you're not crushed. Our vision says that we are perplexed, but we're his vision says you're not in despair. We see persecuted. He sees not abandoned. We see struck down, he sees not destroyed. Can I ask you today? What do you see? What do you see it? Is there a place in your life that maybe he wants to give you a different perspective, a different vision, because you can see it. You can, if you have placed your faith in Jesus, if you have trusted him as your Lord, you can see it. You have to choose to believe that you can see it. And maybe today you're saying, you know what? I know I do believe, but I don't believe that's actually okay. There was a guy in the Bible that was saying the exact same thing.

He was literally in the middle of a crisis. I'm in a life crisis. And he went to Jesus asking him for help. And you know what he said, this is literally what he said to Jesus. He said, Jesus, I do believe that helped me overcome my unbelief. I do believe, but I don't. I do have faith, but I don't. I did get one touch, but I need more. What Jesus did for that man is he did help him overcome his unbelief by giving him the grace to believe. And today he wants to give you and me that very same grace to believe, but we just have to stop and ask him for that grace along the way. And you know what? He is not disappointed in our honesty. In fact, I think there's so many times when he's just waiting for me to get on his so he can meet me right there in that place of my own disappointment.

And I'll tell you, he has done it over and over this past season, he has shown up for me in those places of disappointment and I have chosen to believe, and then you, what? I'm blessed because of it. Look at what Luke one says. It says blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her blessed you and I are blessed when we believe that God will fulfill his promises. He does his part. We do ours. Our part is to believe his part is to fulfill his promises. He's the one that takes care of everything. When it's out of control. If we trust in ourself to fix it, when it's out of control and we're having faith in ourself. But if we trust God to fix, what's out of control, then we're having faith in him. And then we're living by faith.

And I know right now, I know it still feels like there's a lot of things that are out of control, but you know what? We can still be encouraged. We can, we have an encouraging word and it's coming from a source that you probably won't expect. Look at first, Peter Peter says, be truly glad. There is wonderful. Joy ahead. Even though you must endure many trials for a little while, who would have thought Peter, Peter's coming in clutch for you and me bringing us some encouragement in the middle of this. He's saying, Hey guys, there's not just joy. There's wonderful joy. That's awaiting you. So hang in there. Don't run, stick with it. Hang in there. You can do this. You've got this. And yeah, you're still going to have to endure some trials for a little while. Not forever and not longer than you can stand just for a little while.

And in that little while, then we can go back to Jesus as many times as we need for a fresh touch of grace, for a fresh filling of belief, we can go back as many times as we need. And

sometimes that's important because that little while can still be scary. It can still be scary. And the reason is because the enemy of our faith wants us to walk by sight. And so he baits us with fear. He will bait you and bait me and make us fearful. And what he does is he puts that bait right on the hook of a what if, what if I lose my job? What if somebody in my family gets sick? What if my child falls behind in this virtual learning? What if, what if, what if, what if Jesus says, Hey, Hey, stop, stop Mark five stop. Don't be afraid.

Just believe don't be afraid. Just believe. Believe in God's goodness. Believe in his plans. Believe in his purposes. Believe in his power. We just have to believe. And sometimes if you're like me, you're saying I know, but sometimes I just want to understand. I know if that's you and you want to understand, I am right there with you. And I want to understand too. But if we relied on our own understanding, you know what we would miss God's faithfulness. And even yet, he still takes care of that too. He gives us understanding, you know how by faith, by faith, we understand by faith. We understand. Let me wrap it up by this. I think that my favorite part of that story and Mark for us, what happens after the man has his fully restored sight. When he has his fully restored site, his Jesus vision, he can see it all clearly.

Look what happens after that, Jesus sends him home. He sends him home and you have to understand why that's so important to remember where he was. He was in an unfamiliar, new surroundings. He was outside of the village. If he didn't have sight, he wouldn't be able to find his way home. Can I ask you something? And this COVID season and all these strange surroundings, have you lost your way home? Because home is where we find peace and rest comfort home is the father's heart. And that's what our hearts are drawn to. And Jesus is the one that takes us there. So maybe today you say, I believe, but you need some grace to find your way home for that unbelief. Maybe you need to find your way home to stay in that marriage. Even though it's hard, parents, teachers, educators, maybe you need the sight of Jesus to help you find your way home as you're navigating the school year.

And if you've lost your job, babies need to go home and let the father comfort you and assure you. He's got you. And he's got a provision for you. We just need to trust that Jesus will help us walk our faith. He will love us and he will lead us until we find our way home. Living by faith, not by sight. That's the lesson that I'm learning. And maybe it's a lesson he's inviting you to learn to. If so, let's just turn our heart back to Jesus today. Let's go back for that second touch. Let's not settle for anything less than everything he has to give. Let's help others find their way home too. And let's keep growing as we're all learning our lessons together along the way when you close your eyes with me. So Lord, I thank you. I thank you, God that you give us lessons and you love us. And you care for us, Jesus, that you are the one who guides us and protects us. And through your spirit, you lead us home. So today, wherever you are, I pray God that you would just reach out. Whoever's listening to this. Would you just stop and think of that one area? Where do you need faith? Where do you believe that you need help overcoming that unbelief? Where is that space? Would you just think of that right now? Just identify it even what you just

"Help My Unbelief" | Along the Way
September 6, 2020 | Pastor Becca Reynolds

vision yourself, putting it before the Lord. Thank God. I just need another touch from Jesus. Give me a touch. Be fully restored my sight and my belief and my faith. You, because you are good of that. We can be assured. So thank you, Lord. We love you. And we pray in Jesus name.
Amen.