

Alright. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. I am so glad that you are here with us today. Wherever you are in the world and whatever is going on in your life, welcome to our online service. And I know this hasn't been the easiest of seasons. I know there's been so much coming at us, so much unknown, so much change that it's filled so much of our lives with anxiety, and stress, and worry, and fear. And yet, in the midst of all of that, can I just remind you today that God has promised to meet all of your needs? That His divine power has given you everything you need for life and godliness. In other words, God has promised to give you everything that's essential. In fact, that's why we're in this series called The Essentials, What Do I Really Need?

It's a great question for us to ask in this season as so many of the non-essential things have been removed from our life, the things that we could control, the things that were convenient, the things that were comfortable. In a lot of ways, they've been removed and we've been left with asking ourselves this question, like what do I really need? What is essential in my life? And we've had all these self-appointed experts declaring what's essential and what's non-essential. And yet in the midst of all of this, I really believe that this season is a gift because so many of the non-essential things have been removed from your life to make space for what's really essential.

And as we stop complaining about the non-essential things that have been removed, it gives us the opportunity to give thanks for the essential things that have always been there. And so what we're doing in this series is we're just taking a look and we said that if you look at the Bible from Adam and Eve all the way to the second coming of Jesus, from Genesis through Revelation, there are five essential things that all of us need in our lives.

And they're really simple, they're just the grace of God, the Spirit of God, the word of God, the people of God, and the mission of God. That if we want the life that God offers us, we have to build our lives around these five essential things. This is what we really need. And we've just been kind of walking through these one at a time. And today, we just want to talk about the word of God. And what I've told you is in this series, it's the essential. So it's just kind of simple. It's just kind of letting the word of God in a sense stand for itself. Like the word of God, the Bible, the Scriptures, the breath of God, the words of life, grace and truth, living and active.

Truth in the midst of a world that is full of lies. You see, what's so interesting to me about the word of God is that if we're honest, I think a lot of us, we would say, oh yeah, this is really essential. Like I really need the word of God in my life. And yet if we looked at each other's lives, our lives wouldn't really say that same thing, would they? You see, if you want to know what's really essential to your life, just look at your life. What we do is we all build our lives around what we really believe is essential. This is why you won't find civilizations in the desert or in the middle of the ocean or in the arctic. Why? Because we have to build our lives around things that are essential like water, and food, and shelter. Well, the same is true with the other

things that are essential in our lives. If you want to know what you really believe is essential, look at your life because what has captured your heart will become the focus of your life.

And the word of God is essential. It's essential because it defines truth in a world full of lies. Like have you ever stopped and asked yourself this question, like where does your view of life come from? It's a really good question we should all ask ourselves. Like where does your view of life come -- where do your opinions and your perspective -- where does your belief system come from? Because let's be honest, you got one. You probably got some really strong opinions about the government. You've got some perspective about politics. You've got a view about humanity. You've got some thoughts about the economy, your finances, or what you value. Well, where do all those thoughts and those perspectives -- where do they come from? Well, for all of us, they kind of come from the same place.

There are four things that I would say our view of life -- experiences, circumstances, people and media. If you just think of the average person, this is where our view of life comes from, our experiences that we have in life. And as we have those experiences, they become future expectations of what we think will happen again. Circumstances, the circumstances of our life in a lot of way become the narrative or the framework through which how we view the rest of life. People, you always end up thinking like the people you spend the most amount of time with. And then media, music, and messages, and movies, all those washing over our minds, over time will create the view we have of life. And this is why two people who grow up in the same home can have a completely different view of life because their experiences, circumstances, people and the media they choose to engage with may be completely different.

And while all these things are real, they don't necessarily define truth. What defines truth is the word of God. The word of God defines truth in a world full of lies. And so the question I just want to ask you is this, do you look at the word of God through your experiences, circumstances, people and media? Or do you look at your experiences, circumstances, people and media through the word of God? It's the word of God that defines truth in every other area of our life. And in this season, we have had so much media trying to tell us so many different things that I think we need to go back to the essential of the word of God and let it define truth in a world full of life. And so what we're going to do today is something different, something we've never done before. I'm just going to read you some Scripture.

We're just going to let the word of God be the word of God, and we're just going to take some time. And what I want to do is I actually want to read for you three chapters of the Bibles. Now, I know for some of you may be thinking, man, I've never read three chapters of the Bible in the life. That's okay. Here's what we want to do. I just want to speak the word of God over your life. I did this a few weeks ago with our staff, and it was incredibly powerful because all so used to a verse here and a verse there that we forget that there is this larger narrative in the story.

And so I just want to encourage you for a moment, can you just get comfortable, wherever you are, like come on, shake it off, kind of sit down, get comfortable, open up your heart, open up your mind, I want to ready you John 15 through 17. This is Jesus at the end of his life, his final words with his disciples. So they're about to go in this really hard time. Everything Jesus says is very relevant and applicable to us. And I just want you to kind of listen with your heart to the word of God through the Holy Spirit.

And so can you just almost in a way envision Jesus sitting with you in your house or in your room or wherever you are right now. Kids, this is Jesus talking to you. Students, this is Jesus talking to you. Adults, this is Jesus giving you some truth in a world full of lies. So get comfortable, lean in with me, and focus and listen, Jesus speaking. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me, I in him, he will bear much fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I called you friends, for everything I have learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

"They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they

have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. It will put you out of the synagogue. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills, you will think he is offering a service to God.

"They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

"He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me again."

Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying." Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'? I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices.

"You will grieve, but your grief will be turned to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

"Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. "I came from the Father and entered the world; and now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

"You believe at last!" Jesus answered. "But a time is coming when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart for I have overcome the world."

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

"For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the beginning of the world.

"I have revealed you to those you gave me out of this world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. And so I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name

you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of this world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for all of those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and I myself may be in them."

This is the word of God. If you believe it, if you receive it, and if you apply it to your life, you will be blessed. The question is, is that enough? Was what we just did enough? And if not, why?

Why are the words of Jesus at the end of life speaking to us not enough? See, this is essential. And if it was hard to listen for three chapters of Jesus' words at the end of his life, we've got to kind of examine our own life because we listen to hours and hours and hours of media that tell us all the world's perspective. So it shouldn't be hard for us to just listen to three chapters of Jesus and have that be more than enough for us. You see, those were the words of Jesus to you. And if you just look at these verses, the words I have spoken to you are spirit and they life. What you just heard was spirit and life for you.

Next one. "The word of God is living and active." It's alive and it's active. We don't work on the Scriptures. The Scriptures work on us. We put them inside of us and they change us from the inside out. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every

good work." You just literally breathed in the very breathe of God as his word was spoken over your life. And it equipped you for every good work. It equipped you to live a life of truth in the midst of a world full of lies.

Roll the next one. "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." His word shows you your next step and the direction that you're going. In a world full of unknowns and chaos and crazy, God's word is what shows us our next step and where we're headed.

Go to the next out. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." God's word in our heart keeps us from sin. And remember, sin isn't doing bad things. Sin is missing the mark. It's missing the life that God has for you. It's his word that helps know truth and know what this life is really all about.

"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." In other words, just like bread is essential for your body, the word of God is essential for your soul and your life.

One more for you. "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." There is a supernatural power when we humble ourselves, hear the word of God and obey it, actually apply it to our lives.

You see the word of God is essential. I know there's a million reasons why we don't engage it. And those reasons are real. Got a lot of things going on in our life. We're busy, we're overwhelmed, we want to just kind of numb and shut ourselves down, and flip on some Netflix, jump on Facebook. Oh, I think we get overwhelmed and we're like, I'm not really sure how to do it or where to even get started, and all these different kinds of things. And while that stuff is real, there is a measure faith that just says, I want to build my life around this. I may not understand it, I may not get it, I may not know fully how to read it, I may be busy and overwhelmed and broken in my life, but just like I need water, and shelter, and food, I build my life around that physically, I need the word of God in my life, and I want to build my life around this.

And as you will just reading it, and engaging it, and applying it, and obeying it, it becomes essential in your life. It starts transforming you from the inside out. Today may be one of the most pivotal services you have ever been a part of. Because it brings you all the way back to this reality, that what we need is not a sermon that's funny with illustrations and stories. What we need is the word of God in our lives, that it is essential. And as all these non-essentials things, activities, and events, and gathering, and programs, and all kinds of things in your life has been removed, it's made space for what is essential to help frame your perspective so that you can live a life of truth in a world full of lies.

In fact, this is why Jesus says, last verse, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." The reason so many of us live so much of lives in bondage is because we allow our experiences, our circumstances, other people and the media to determine our view of life. And Jesus tells us to let his word, his truth be our view of life so that we might live free. May the word of God become essential in your life, in my life, and in our church. May we pick this up and move forward together. And may Jesus' words be enough.

So Jesus, thank you so much for the word of God that is living and active, that is God-breathed, and is supernatural and powerful. Thank you that a word of God once spoken continues to be spoken. And you promised it will accomplish your purpose in our life. So thank you Lord today for the privilege of us just breathing your words and speaking them out over our lives. God, I just pray right now against the condemnation, the voices of accusation, the voices of insecurity, all the things that try to keep us turned down, keep us from your word, the barriers that get created.

In your name, we tear them down. And we say by faith, we say your word is essential to our life. And may your word be our truth in this season and the ones to come. We love you, Jesus. In your name, we pray, amen.