

Alright. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek online. Wherever you are in the world today, I am so glad that you are here with us. We are one church that's currently meeting online carrying the hope of Jesus to thousands of locations. We are a movement of hope for the city and beyond. And this past week was a great week for our church. Because of you and your generosity, we were able to give more than 2,000 pairs of brand new sneakers for students in need. Because of your generosity and your willingness to be missional in the midst of this difficult season, we were able to partner with our school district to bless those students with hope in Jesus' name. And so for every person that participated, let me just go ahead and say thank you. That's what being a movement of hope for the city and beyond is all about.

And then we kicked off Circles this past week.

And we had an amazing experience at all of our campuses for men, for women, for students and Tuesday Night Prayer. And man, let me just encourage you, when you are ready, come and join us because God's doing some amazing things as we engage in Circles even though we can't come to weekend services and sit in rows.

And then last week, we kicked off a new series called The Essentials. What do I really need? And that's a really good question, isn't it? I think in this season, all of us are kind of confronted with having to answer this question because so many of the things that were comfortable and convenient, the things that we could control were removed from our lives. And we're hearing all this talk about what's essential, what's non-essential, and all these self-appointed experts have arisen in the world to declare what is essential and what is not essential. And as time keeps going by, you hear people saying things like this, like, man, I just need sports to start again.

I just need my kids to go to school. I just need a vacation. I just need the economy to start. I need to go out shopping. I need a movie. I need some dinner. And while all those things are great, they're not really essential, are they? You see, if we're honest which other and we kind of start thinking about it, we all just kind of want to go back to what life was. But so much of what life was wasn't really essential, was it?

I mean if we're honest, before this whole corona virus season, a lot of us, we run the hamster wheel of life. Like we took all these activities, all these events, all the things the world told us were essential, we added them into our life and we started running faster and faster, and the faster we ran the more exhausted we became and less progress that we made. And we strive, we struggle, we earn, we achieve, we perform, we do, we grind, and we get weary and we get tired, it goes faster and faster and faster and faster and faster.

And then all of a sudden, just like that, the wheel stopped. And it didn't stop because you and I stopped. And if we're honest, we don't have the courage to stop it, we don't have the courage to get off of it. No, no, this whole pandemic season stopped the wheel for us. And all

the things we could control, all the things that were comfortable, all the things that were convenient were removed for us, and we've been left asking this question, what do I really need? What really is essential? What is non-essential in my life? And as all that's been happening, whether you realize this or not, that is actually a gift from God for you. I actually think it's a once in a lifetime opportunity where the hamster wheel of the world has stopped. And God's giving you an invitation to examine your life and decide, do I really want to keep going where I'm going or do I want to go in a different way? And could it just be that God was the one who stopped all the non-essential things in life to make room for what was essential?

And if we're honest, we've spent a whole lot more time complaining about the non-essential things that have been removed than we have giving gratitude for the essential things that have always been. I mean, come on, if you're -- if I'm honest, I spend a whole lot more time complaining the non-essential things that have been removed, instead of giving thanks for the essential things that always have been and always will be there. And that's what this series is all about. You see, Philippians 4 tells us, "My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." I know this doesn't read how we want. We want it to say, my God will meet all your wants. But that's not what it says. It says, all your needs according to the glorious riches in Christ Jesus. It doesn't matter what's happening in the world around us. God promises that in Jesus, He is giving us everything that is essential. So the question is this, have you been grateful for the essential things that haven't stopped even though so much of the world has?

And what I don't want you to misunderstand for me is, non-essential things, they're good. They're good things. In fact this next verse tells that, "Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father." Every good thing in your life is a gift from God. The problem is when a good thing becomes the main thing, it becomes a bad thing. The problem is when we start treating non-essentials like they're essential, that's a bad thing. And so before you just jump back on the hamster wheel of life as the world is trying to fire it back up, it would be a good idea for you and me to decide and define what are really the essential things in our lives. What are the things that we really need? And if you look through Scripture, all the way from Adam to the 1st Century church, from Genesis to Revelation, you'll discover there are five things that are essential in all of our lives, the grace of God, the Spirit of God, the word of God, the people of God, and the mission of God.

This is essential if you want the life that God offers you. Grace of God, Spirit of God, the word of God, the people of God, and the mission of God. And so the question is, are you building your life around this? Because this is what Scripture tells us is essential for the life that God offers us. And what we're doing in this series is we're just kind of taking each one of these and walking through it. And this series is a little bit different. Now, I'm just kind of telling you that upfront. This is a teaching series. We're using a lot of scriptures to talk about the essentials because guess what, the essentials speak for themselves. There's not a fluff, there's not a lot of extra, it's kind of like this is essential, now what do you want to do with it? And last week, we

talked about the grace of God. And this week, we're just going to talk about the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is one of the most essential things in your life.

The Holy Spirit. The presence of God. God with us. The gift of Himself. The presence of God is the greatest privilege of your life. That out of all the peoples of the earth, God has chosen you to not only carry but release His Spirit in the world around us. This is why King David when he messes up, the first thing he says back to God basically is, do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. This is so interesting. This is King David. And he messes, he messes up bad, and what he says is, God, please don't take your Holy Spirit from me. He knows how essential this is in his life. He doesn't say, God, don't take the kingdom from me, don't take my finances, don't take my influence, don't take -- no, no, don't take your Spirit. Can I ask you a question?

Do you have that same spirit in your heart? God, what I want more than anything else is You.

Or how about Moses, when he's leading the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land, and here's what he says to God, he says, "If Your presence, if your Spirit does not go with us, then do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that You are pleased with me and Your people unless You go with us? What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" Catch this, Moses preferred the desert with God to the Promised Land without God. Moses understood that what really mattered was not where you were going but who you were with. And He knew that if you didn't enjoy God where you were, you wouldn't enjoy God where you're going. And so can I again ask you a question? Like are you more concerned with where you're going or whom you're with?

Like have you enjoyed God in this season? It's an interesting question, isn't it? I think a lot of us think, well, I'll enjoy God when the circumstances change. No, no. Like the whole reason God gives us the Holy Spirit is so we can enjoy Him regardless of what's happening in the circumstances around us. And I love what Moses says about the Spirit. He says, look, God, we need your Spirit because it is a declaration that you are pleased with us and it distinguishes us from all the other people on the earth.

The very fact that the Holy Spirit is in your life is a declaration that God is pleased with you, that God dwells in you, that you are holy, that you've been made right with Him, that you are set apart by grace for the good of others and the glory of God. It distinguishes you in every way, shape and form, and you never have to wonder what your identity is ever again. You see in Jesus' day, one of the interesting things that shepherds would do is they would mark their sheep.

They would take a knife or an awl and they would do some kind of notch or cut or slice in the ear of their sheep to distinguish them, to mark them as belonging to that shepherd. So as all the sheep interwove with each other, they would know which sheep belonged to them. Well,

do you understand you have been marked by the Spirit of the living God, that you are a sheep belonging to the good shepherd? This is why Ephesians 1 says, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." The Spirit of the living God literally marks you, that you now have been raised from dead to life, you're a new creation, you belong to God. The set-apart Spirit now lives in you, which means you are set apart. The Holy Spirit lives in you, which means you are now holy.

And so it doesn't where you wonder, where you go, what you do, you have been marked by the Spirit of the living God belonging to the good shepherd. This is why 1 Corinthians tells us that, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God?" He says, hey, the Holy Spirit doesn't dwell somewhere in the universe, doesn't dwell in a temple or a building made by man. No, no, the Holy Spirit dwells in you. And if the Holy Spirit lives in you, it means you are holy, and God is pleased with you. And you've been set apart from all the other people on the earth. The Holy Spirit left Jesus at the cross so he will never have to leave you. I mean, come on, it's kind of like the difference between visiting somebody and actually moving in. If you think about it for a second, if you go and visit somebody's house and you go into their house, man, if you ever walked into somebody's house and it's just like gross, it smells, it's dirty, it's disheveled, everything needs to be changed and cleaned and it's just kind of nasty, you know what I'm talking about?

I remember one going to visit a guy who needs prayer and I went in house, his house smelled so bad that after being in there for like 20 minutes, I thought I was going to need some prayer because of how -- I mean it was just nasty. And he had no idea. I mean you visit somebody's house, it just kind of is what it is. And you kind of don't have authority or the ability to do anything about it. But if you move in with somebody, all of a sudden you've got some authority. And you start to be able to say things like, hey, you know what, like this garbage has got to go. And we got to clean this up and we're going to move some things around. And this is outdated, and this needs freshened up. And we're going to kind of set this up like this. That's the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit doesn't just visit you and show up and leave. No, no, he's moved in. And he has come to change you from the inside out.

To show you the smells and the gross and the broken and the dark that you're not even aware of and say, come on, we're going to move some of that stuff out, and we're going to bring this thing to new life in Jesus' name. This is why this next verse, I love it, it says, "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power and you will be changed into a different person." The moment the Spirit of the living God comes inside of you, he literally changes you from the inside out. We don't change ourselves, he changes us. And changes how we think, how we talk, how we act, how we live, and how we believe in Jesus' name. He is essential to your life.

I mean, do you remember the story of when Jesus got baptized? It's one of my favorite passages in Scripture. Jesus, he's 30 years old, he's beginning his ministry and he gets

baptized by John the Baptist and he goes under the water, and he comes up. Father speaks from heaven, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And it says, "The Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove."

It doesn't say the Holy Spirit was a dove. It says the Holy Spirit came upon him like a dove. And that gives us a great picture. I mean, just imagine with me for a moment if right now a dove just kind of flew down and landed on your shoulder. At first, you'd probably be pretty startled because most of us are probably inside right now where we're watching. But imagine if it landed there, like all of a sudden, you got this dove. Like that would change everything, wouldn't it? It would change how you move. It would change how fast you go. Every step you take, you would be thinking about the dove, you'd be focused on the dove, you'd be aware of the dove. The dove would change everything. That's a great picture of the Holy Spirit coming into our lives. When he comes into our lives, it should change everything. It should change our focus and what we're aware of, and how we move and what we do. And could that just mean what Galatians 5 tells us, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Let us walk aware that the Spirit of the living God is with us. You see, the question is not, is the Holy Spirit with you. The question is, are you aware that he already is? I mean when was the last time you acknowledged the Spirit of the living God in your life? You see, I think if we're honest with each other, the Holy Spirit is often the most ignored person in our lives. And when was the last time you talked to him? When was the last time you submitted to him? When was the last time you surrendered to him? When was the last time you moved with him or allowed him to convict you and change the direction that you were going? When was the last time you just enjoyed him? When was the last time you acknowledged that the God of the universe doesn't live in some church building, but dwells in you?

It's really hard to do that on the hamster wheel of life, isn't it? Or maybe that's why God has allowed it to stop. You see, this is why Jesus tells us, he says, "But I tell you the truth, it is for your good that I'm going away," talking about the cross and the resurrection, "because unless I go the counselor or the Holy Spirit will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." He says, hey, it's better for me to go so the Holy Spirit could come. He says the Holy Spirit in you is better than me standing next to you. And that's why we can still be one church right now because the Holy Spirit is in all of us wherever we are uniting us together. And what Jesus was telling the disciples, he's telling, he's saying, hey, the Holy Spirit's coming, and he's going to be your guide. He's going to guide you through the mist of the unknown of life. He's going to come and he's going to be your counselor. He'd going to give you wisdom and help you work through your issues and your problems.

He's going to be your comforter. Not like that blanket guys that your wife doesn't let you use, that's on the bed. No, no. He's there to actually comfort you, to encourage you, to help you in your pain, and your grief. He's going to be your advocate. He's going to be looking out for you when the world is against you. He's going to point you to Jesus. He's going to reveal truth

to you. He's going to empower you with the impossible. Come on, in this season, are you aware of that reality? Like you're not alone in your apartment right now because the Holy Spirit is with you. And you're not by yourself in that marriage that's falling apart because the Holy Spirit is there to counsel you. And you're not alone and trying to make all these decisions about what life should look like because the Holy Spirit is there to guide you and give you wisdom. And when you're facing that impossible thing, the Holy Spirit is there to help you do the impossible. Come on, he is essential to our life.

And if that's not enough, if it's not enough that the Holy Spirit helps us understand salvation and then sanctifies us, changes us into different people and leads us forward in life, he also offers us the power and character of Jesus. Like check out this next verse, it says, "I tell you the truth," this is Jesus talking, "anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father." Catch that. I know some of you are thinking, yeah, uh, no. Like I can't do what Jesus was going, let alone even greater things than that. But this is Jesus talking. And he says that, "I tell you the truth," which he doesn't lie, and so every time he says I tell you the truth, he's like, hey, hey, hey, catch this. He says, I'm going to go and the Spirit is going to come and guess what, you're going to be empowered to do this life with my character and my power. And it's like, but how is that possible?

Because Jesus did everything he did on this earth as a Spirit-filled man. Jesus is a hundred percent God, he's a hundred percent man. But remember, he left his divine power behind when he came to this earth, born as a baby in a manger. So he was a man filled with the Spirit of the living God, and did everything by the power of the same Spirit that's in you. This is why Acts chapter 10 says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth," anytime you see things like Jesus son of man, Jesus of Nazareth, it's talking about Jesus' humanity, that he's like us but without sin. "Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who are under the power of the devil because God was with him." Catch it, it's saying Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit and that's how he had the character and the power that he had. He was a man in right relationship with God filled with the Spirit of God.

Well, last week we talked about the grace of God, which means you are a man or a woman now in right relationship with God. The only question is this, are you open to being filled with the Spirit of God so you can walk in His character and His power? You want to talk about essential. I mean come on, check this next verse out. But the fruit of the Spirit, fruit of the Holy Spirit, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. I would submit to you that this stuff is pretty essential. This is what we want in life. Tell me one relationship in your life that's going to work without this? Tell me one day that you're going to enjoy in your life without this? And where does it come from? It's the fruit of the Spirit. And just like you can't grow an apple in your hand, you can't grow love in your life.

Just like you can't grow an apple in your hand, you can't manufacture joy in your life. It's a fruit of the Spirit. The same way that fruit comes from a tree and we're not sure how it all works, it just creates, well, guess what, all of this comes from the Spirit. We're not sure how it all works, but when we submit and surrender to him, these things start to effortlessly bloom in our life, the character of Jesus.

And not only does he offer you character, he offers you power. Look at this next verse, "But you will receive power," Jesus talking, "when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses." The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave, he says, comes on you and you receive that same power. You say, power to do what? Power to heal the sick. Power to raise the dead. Power to preach the gospel. Power to be anointed so the work of God can flow through you.

Power to bring the Kingdom of God to this earth. Power to flow in the supernatural. Power to have wisdom for an encounter with this world. Power to be a hope carrier in the midst of dark places. The same Spirit, the same power that raised Jesus from the grave is alive and well in you, in me today. He gives us the character and the power of Jesus. Come on, you want to talk about essential. That's why these next two verses say this, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God and do not quench the Spirit. Don't grieve the Spirit. Like he's trying to produce the character of Jesus in your life. Don't try to do it on your own. Don't offend him. Don't go against him. Why? Because he's there to try to effortlessly produce the character of Jesus in your life. So don't resist him and don't quench him. Don't stop the flow of his power, like a kink in a hose.

Don't allow your heart to be kinked. Let his spirit, his power flow through you into the world around you. Come on, could it just be -- could it just be that the church of Jesus has no security in its salvation identity, sanctification, change doesn't walk in character or power because we treat the Holy Spirit as a non-essential to our life? Could it be that we don't know who we are, that we never really changed, that we don't really have character and we have no supernatural power because for some reason we have decided that the Holy Spirit of the living God is a non-essential to our life? And you might say, well, no, he's essential to me. But then the question is this, then are you living in such a way, and acting in such a way? Are you moving with the dove in a way that's aware of it, submitting and surrendering to him?

Come on. Let me pull this whole thing together. Look at this, in the last days, today, kind of end of time, in the church era, while we're waiting for Jesus to return, God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams, even on my servants both men and women I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophecy." Catch this, in today, the day we live, the last days, God promises He is going to pour out His Spirit. You don't have to do anything, you just have to receive it by faith in Jesus' name. And I love it, it says, "If you're young, if you're

old, if you're a man or a woman, and you're a servant of God, then the Holy Spirit has been poured out on you so you can prophecy, have visions and dreams.

If you're young, if you're old, if you're a man or a woman, and you're a servant of God, then guess what, the Spirit is there to give you a vision, to help you see what can be in the midst of what is. He's there to give you a dream, a dream about seeing the Kingdom of God come to this broken and dying world. And he's there to help you prophecy, to have such a relationship with God that the supernatural life flows through you into the world around you. That my friends is essential. And I know some of you, you're sitting here and saying, okay, that's nice. It's good theology, that's a lot, yup, I know. What do I need to do? Just like last week, receive. God says, I will pour out my Spirit. If He's pouring it out, then all we have to do is take the lid off our life and let it flow in. Like a cup going under the water, all we have to do is allow ourselves to receive that which He offers.

This is why you see the disciples over and over and over again be filled with the Spirit. It's not a one-time event. It's a lifestyle. Just, God, fill me up fresh. Holy Spirit, I invite in today. Holy Spirit, will you fill me up from the innermost to the outermost? Holy Spirit, I open up my life to you by faith, would you come and dwell in me and overflow? See, here's what I think. I think the Holy Spirit is inside of us, but he's buried so deep under all the non-essential stuff, all the activities and events and the things of the world. He's buried under all these non-essential stuff. And in this season, by his grace, God has removed all that non-essential stuff to allow the Holy Spirit to come to the surface, so you can be aware that the great privilege of your life is that you are carrying the Spirit of God on this world, that the presence, the person, and the power of the Spirit of God dwells in you today.

Could it just be that we've been spending so much time complaining about the non-essentials? That we've forgotten to give thanks for the most essential thing that will never leave us nor forsake us, the Spirit of the living God who has come to empower you and change you from the inside out.

And so here's what we're going to do, we intentionally changed our service order up today because we wanted to start by talking about the Holy Spirit so that now we can by faith respond to the Holy Spirit. So we're going to take just a few minutes and we're going to worship, and the worship team is going to come out. And what I want you to do right now is maybe even, will you just close with me wherever you are.

And can you just stop for a moment and just become aware that the Spirit of God is here. That he's not somewhere way off in outer space. He's not in a building made by man. He's right here. And he has come with his gentleness, and his kindness, and his compassion and his care, and his character and his power to change or transform us from the inside out. You see, the reason that a lot of the times at the end of a message ask you, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you is that's what really matters, is the voice of God in our life shaping, and changing, and



leading, and guiding, and transforming. And so what is the Holy Spirit trying to say to you today?

What is he trying to get your attention off of and get your attention on to? You see, if you've never put your faith in Jesus, today is the day to say, Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross for me and rose again from the grave to forgive my sins and raise me to new life through the power of the Holy Spirit. And so I receive the Holy Spirit today.

And for those of us that maybe have walked with God for years and the Holy Spirit has been buried in there and we've forgotten about him, or we haven't acknowledged him, and we've ignored him, we haven't been filled fresh, well, maybe right now, can you just open yourself up and say, Holy Spirit, I invite you to come and fill me afresh right now, from the inside to the outside. Spirit of the living God, I receive you by faith.

Come and fill me until I overflow. May I become aware of the gift of your presence in my life. So Holy Spirit, come and fill this place, change the atmosphere and do that which only you can do. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.