

Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek online. Wherever you are in the world, I am so glad that you are here with us today. Come on, let's just give each other a big welcome. Wherever you are, we miss you, we can't wait to see you again soon. But we are glad that you are here with us today. We are a Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving church. We are a movement of hope for the city and beyond.

And I'm glad you've gathered together online today because in the midst of everything that continues to happen in the world around us, we need to keep gathering around the truth of God and allowing His word to shape our perspective, the condition of heart, the things that we are focused on. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So we need to keep hearing God's words so that we have faith in the midst of this world around us. And we're in a really significant series right now called 167, Activate Your Faith Where It Matters Most.

And what I love about this series is I'm pretty much saying the same things to you that we've been saying for the last 10 years, but because you're at home, you're hearing it in a different context, which means you get to hear it in a different way. You see, there are 168 hours in a week. Seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 168 hours. And most of us are used to one hour a week of church and then 167 others hours that if we're honest, our faith is not often active.

You see, I think so many of us, we're used to gathering in a church, coming to a campus, but that's the extent of our faith. That's the borders or the boundaries. We leave Jesus at that one hour and then we go out and do the 167 on our own, our way. And this whole quarantine season, I think it's revealed that to us. I think if we're honest maybe we've left our faith behind more than we care to admit. And what I've been saying to you in this series is it's really easy to have a big faith when you're around other people with big faith. It's easy to look fruitful when you're around other fruitful people. It's easy to look like you're following Jesus when you're surrounded by other people who are following Jesus. Like it's easy when you come into a campus to turn your attention to God. But the real question is, can you activate your faith in the 167 of the rest of your life?

You see, the gathering is meant to be a catalyst of your faith, not the extent of it. And the analogy that I've used in this series is that it's really easy to look like a championship player when you're on a championship team. You kind of show up to the game, you put on the jersey, you sing the fight song, you stand on the sidelines, but that doesn't make you a championship player. A championship player is determined by how you practice and how you train and your willingness to get in the game, and it's time for a lot of us to have a championship faith, to get off the sidelines and into the game, to take some authority, to take some ownership, to take some responsibility of our spiritual life, to move to this place where we're like, man, count me in, I want to activate my faith because you can't abdicate your relationship with God.

You can't delegate your faith journey, and you can't have a mediator in between you and Jesus. In fact, I love this verse, 1 Peter, it says, "But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord." In your

heart, if Christ is Lord, then guess what? Your faith is going to be active, not just in the one, but in the 167. Because whatever is going on in here will ultimately be what's going on out here. And if we're going to activate our faith in the 167 of life, one of the places we have to learn to activate it is in work or school.

You see, today I want to talk about activating our faith in work or in school because guess what, that's a big part of our lives. Like if we're honest, most of us we spend somewhere between 40, 60, 80 hours a week or more at work or at school.

That's like 25 to 50 percent of your week. And yet most of us think our faith on Sunday has nothing to do with work or school on Monday. And so we live this fragmented lives, these compartmentalized lives, this disintegrated life where we put everything in these little boxes, and we've got our faith over here and our family over here, and then work over here, and hobbies over here. But we're not meant to be disintegrated, we're meant to be a holistic person with a holistic life with faith in every part of our life.

Like come on, do you really think that Jesus doesn't care about 25 to 50 percent of your week? And as we go through this today, students, every time I use the word work I want you to think of school because in this season your work is school. And the question I want to ask all of us is really simple, and it's actually a really significant question. Like why do you work?

Ain't that an interesting question? And don't you think you should have a good answer to that? Like if you spend 25 to 50 percent of your week working, you probably should know why -- like why do you work? I know some of you are sitting there, you're like, well, man, it's pretty obvious, like because we have to? Or because everyone else does it? Or because I need to make money to take care of me and my family? Or I work so I can be significant and successful and have achievements. All those are great answers, but that's not why you work.

You see, you work because you are created in the image and likeness of God. And the first thing we discover about God in the very first line of the Bible is, in the beginning God created. The first thing we discover about God is, God was at work. God was a creator. God was innovating, bringing order to chaos. And He made us in His image and His likeness, which means work is hardwired into the DNA of humanity.

In fact, check this next verse out. It says, "The Lord God," this is in the very beginning of creation, "took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Before the fall of man, before the fall of Adam and Eve, God made them and He created them to work. To work, to live a life of purpose, a life of meaning, a life of partnership with God of ruling and reigning with Him. It is in our DNA. It is in the fabric of humanity. We were created to work, to live a life of purpose and meaning with God. And you know it's true. This is why little kids when they wake up in the morning, the first thing they do is they get to work. You

say, work? Yeah, work. They start to create and draw and play and build and make things all on their own.

And this is why older people, no matter what stage of their life they're in, they do things like garden and create that perfect lawn and make all kinds of amazing baked goods and get into arts and crafts, why? Because whether you're 2 or 92, in the DNA of who you are as a human being, you are created to work with God. Not just to do a job, but to bring the kingdom.

In fact, look at this next verse. I love this, Genesis 1:28. The first thing God says to humanity. "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it using all its vast resources in the service of God and man." In other words, God says, hey, I have given you the privilege of working with me. Now, break it down. Be fruitful, live a life of productive beauty, bringing things to the fullness of their potential, multiply, reproduce the life of God in you into the world around you, fill the earth or your area of influence, like your job with the knowledge of the glory of the goodness of God.

Subdue things, bring order to chaos, and hope to despair, and love to hate, and use your resources to accomplish God's purpose in the lives of men. That's what you are created and called to do, to work with God, to bring His kingdom on this earth.

And if you're a student and you think, what does that have to do with me? Everything. Be fruitful, you're in a season of bringing your life to the fullness of potential. Multiply, we want to see the life of God reproduced in you. Fill the earth, or fill yourself with the knowledge of the glory of the goodness of God. Subdue your flesh by the Spirit of the living God. And use everything you've got to discover God's purpose for your life. Come on, it is time to activate our faith in the 167 of work and school.

You see, I know a lot of us, here's what we think, is we think work is part of the curse. We think work is part of the fall of men and that's why we have to work. But that's not true. Before Adam and Eve fell, we were created to work. Work was very good. And yes, Adam and Eve fell and they sinned, and they broke everything including work. And so thorns and thistles grew up and things got harder and they got difficult. But guess what, Jesus came to restore all things including work. That's why he wore a crown of thorns on his head to take the curse upon himself, to give us back a life of meaning and a life of purpose, a life of significance.

In fact, Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works." Like we are God's work. His work is us and now He has created us to do good work, which He prepared for us to do.

In other words, Jesus is our creator, our sustainer and our redeemer. And he's given us back a life of purpose and meaning, and removed the toil, the meaningless, the futility of what the

curse brought into work. He gave us back the redemptive purpose of bringing the kingdom of God on this earth wherever we go. We have got to activate our faith in the 167.

I mean do you remember the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is an interesting guy. He's a tax collector, a sinful guy. Not the best guy. And one day he has this encounter with Jesus. And after this encounter, he invites Jesus into his home because the first place you activate your faith after you meet Jesus is in your home. And while they're having this meal together, all on his own, Zacchaeus stands up and he says, "Look, Lord, here and now I give half of everything I have to the poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything I'm going to go find them and pay them back four times the amount."

In other words, all on his own, Zacchaeus stands up and he realizes that my faith is now a part of my work. That my faith now dictates how I work. It changes how I view what I'm doing every single day. It completely changed how he did his job and how he did his work. And I love what Jesus says right back to him. He says, "Today salvation has come to this house." He says, today, salvation has come. When Zacchaeus gets that his faith is now a part of his work, Jesus says, salvation has come.

You see, we have such a limited view of the word salvation. We think salvation is praying a prayer so we can get to heaven someday. No, no, no. Salvation means to save, to heal, to make whole and deliver. And what Jesus came to do was to make us whole, to integrate our life so our faith is in all of the 167 and deliver us from a life of meaninglessness, from a life of purposelessness, from a life of toil and strife and struggle.

He came to save us and give us back kingdom work and kingdom purpose. And I know some of you you're probably sitting there and you're thinking, well then, why is work so hard? Well, you have to remember that the kingdom is already but is not yet. It's now but it's then. It's here but it's there. See, we have been saved, we are being saved, and one day we will fully be saved. And so we are in the process of the kingdom is now and more of it is to come. And so now we work with Jesus to bring his kingdom into this world.

And the problem for so many of us is we think salvation has nothing to do with our work. We see the one hour a week as the sacred experience and the 167 as secular.

But come on, man, nothing could be farther from the truth. Remember, identity determines behavior. Who you are determines what you do. And the question I would ask you is are you sacred or are you secular? You're sacred. In Jesus, you are holy, you are righteous, you are a new creation, you're filled with the Spirit, the kingdom is in you, you've been anointed by God. And if you are sacred, then the work you now do is sacred. It's holy, it's righteous, it's anointed, it's filled by the Spirit of the living God. Your 167 is sacred because you're sacred. You see, your work doesn't determine who you are, who you are determines what kind of work you do. Work does not determine your identity, your identity determines how you do your work.

Jesus' work on the cross changed your identity. He made you forgiven, and righteous, and holy, and blameless, significant, successful, worthy. So we don't have to spend our lives trying to work or do jobs to get all this. That's who we already are. And now because that's who we are, it changes how we do our work. And our work now becomes sacred in Jesus' name. So in a sense, what we have as followers of Jesus is restful work. We rest in the finished work of Jesus and we're a part of bringing his kingdom to this earth in this time, in this place, in our generation. In fact, that's why we have a Sabbath, one out of every seven days we rest to remind ourselves that our work doesn't determine who we are. We rest in Jesus' work and who we now are in him changes how we do our work. Come on, are you with me on that? Your work is not secular.

Like do you really think when you leave the church building and the church campus on Sunday and go back out into -- do you really think like the Spirit then doesn't go with you to your work? Do you really think the kingdom doesn't then go with you to your work? Do you really think the promises of God don't go with you to your work? Of course, they go with you. You can't separate them. So it's sacred work that you've been privileged by God to do.

You see, we have to separate job and work. Job is a temporary assignment. It's the task. It's literally what you're doing with your hands. But work is kingdom calling, its purpose and its meaning. Your job can change a million times throughout your life, but your kingdom work never does. A job is a temporary assignment that allows you to do eternal kingdom work. A job is the world inviting you in through the skills of your hands so that you can now share with them the hope of your heart.

So don't live down to how the world views work. Live up to what God says is true in the kingdom. You see, I love this graphic that we use all the time. The kingdom of God is a movement of hope. You've been called by God to be salt, light and leaven to bring taste to a flavorless world, light to darkness, to make all things rise to be a hope carrier. You're the church, the people of God and you go in these places every day and you have work. You might be a parent where your work is to raise up your children in the ways of the Lord. Maybe you're in education, your work is to help people become who God created them to be. You might be in healthcare, your work is to bring healing and wholeness. You're in business, your work is to serve people with services and goods. You're in government, your work is to create order and peace so people can pursue their destiny. You're in media or arts or music, your work is to make beautiful things and tell stories of faith, hope and love.

Sports, you're all about helping people learning to work together. Technology, innovation. And we're all a part of the church bringing the family of God to the fullness of who we're called to be. And that work is sacred. Why? Because God loves when children grow up in His image and His likeness. God loves when people come who they were created to be. God loves when people experience health and healing and wholeness. God loves when people are served.

God loves when people have order and peace. God loves beautiful things. God loves teamwork. God loves innovation. We have to change our mind. You see, all I do is sweep floors. Well, guess what, God loves clean floors. You see, all I do is make food. Well, guess what, God loves good food. You see, all I do is manage people. Well, guess what, God loves well-led people.

You see, all I do is landscaping. Guess what, God loves weed-free gardens. We got to change our mind. We need a theology of work. The problem is we bought into the American definition of work, which says, get 9 to 5, work to get to the weekend, retire as soon as you can, make the most amount of money for as little amount of work as you possibly can. Do you understand that's demonic? You say, whoa, bro, I ain't ready for that today. It's demonic. Why? Because Satan wants to trick to not doing kingdom work because he doesn't want to give up all the areas where darkness rules and reigns. He doesn't want you to activate your faith in the 167. You see, there's a really interesting story that many of you probably know and familiar with in the Bible, the story of the prodigal son. And we're all very familiar with the son who takes his father's inheritance, blows it and comes back, this whole restoration.

It's a beautiful story. But there is an older brother in the story that's often not talked about. And while all this is happening, he's outside in the field and his pouting. The party is going on for his restored brother. And I just want you to look at this verse, "The father comes out to get his son." And here's what the older brother says, "Look, all these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders." Is that what work feels like to you? All these years you've been slaving, toiling, struggling, striving, feels like it's meaningless and purposelessness, working for the man, all those different -- is that how you feel? Because that's how he felt. "I've been slaving away and yet you have never given me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends." In other words, it's never been fulfilling. It's never been fruitful. It's never been purposeful.

And yet the father says back, "My son, you are always with me and everything I have is yours." Here's the interesting part. The son feels like he spent his life slaving away for his father. And the father stops and says, you are always with me. And what that reminds us is that it doesn't matter what kind of work you do. If you don't invite the father into it, it will never be fulfilling. And it doesn't matter what kind of work you do, if you invite the father into it, it will always be fulfilling. You see, we're not slaving for God, He's inviting us to work with Him on His kingdom, bringing His life to this dark world. And you say, okay, well, then what does an active faith look like in the 167? Well, the same thing that we've been talking about all through this series.

An active faith is being aware of His presence. Can I ask you, are you ever aware of God at work or at school? Do you ever invite Him in? Have you ever given your business to God? Have you ever given your job to God? Have you ever said, God, I give You my apron. I give You my tools. I give You my classroom. I give You my business. Are you ever aware that He is with you? Because if you're aware that He is with you, it changes what you do. Are you more

conscious of Jesus and his agenda or your own agenda? Do you ever receive his grace at work? A grace for your failings when you mess up? A grace when you're self-condemning and you don't think you're good enough? A grace when you can't handle your boss or your coworkers anymore? A grace to not be a workaholic and to turn it off and go home and rest in the finished work of Jesus? Do you ever seek more of God at work? Do you ever ask Him for wisdom and solutions and divine insight and creativity, and say, God, what do you want to do in this situation or in this scenario?

Do you submit to His lordship? In other words, do you do things His way, with His truth and His character? Even though everyone else is doing it like that, do you do it God's way? And then do you engage in His mission? Like do you see the reason that you're at that job? It's not to do a job, but to bring the kingdom. Does your faith do this at work? You see, I love this next verse that really kind of pulls it all together. "Whatever you do," whatever job you have, "work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for man." Can I just ask you a question and just say, is this how you do your work? With all your heart is for God? And I know some of you, you're going to say, yeah, but bro, you don't know my job and you don't know my boss, and you don't know how hard it is. I hear you.

But just so we're clear, he's writing this to Roman slaves. To people who've literally been enslaved. And He's saying, I know, but whatever you do, do it with all your heart as working for the Lord. Like do you go to work and do it with character and integrity, faithfulness and commitment? Do you honor your boss and treat your coworkers with respect? Do you come early and stay late? Are you different than everyone else? Because you're not there to do a job like everyone else. You're there to bring the kingdom in Jesus' name. And you say, well, that's just one verse. Well, let me go ahead and give you a second one, "So whether you eat, drink or whatever you do," whatever job you have, "do it all for the glory of God." Do you do what you do for the glory of God? See, I know we all want the world to change. There's so much animosity and fear and anxiety and stress about everything in the world right now. And we want everything else to change.

We want everyone else to do things different, and to act like this, and to change that, and to resolve the -- all this -- that's fine. And I hear you. But the real question you have to ask is before you're worried about what anyone else does, do you do what you do for the glory of God? Before you want someone else to bring the glory of God, do you bring the glory of God? Like have you done the whole coronavirus quarantine, work, chaos season in a way that glorifies God? It's not what you do, it's how you do it. Any work that is done with faith, hope and love is good work. It doesn't matter if you don't have a job, if you quit your job, if you've got fired from your job or if you retired from your job, you still have kingdom work because you can't quit, be fired or retired from the kingdom calling on your life, to make disciples, bring the kingdom, be fruitful and multiply in Jesus' name. Are you with me on this?

You see, let me try to pull it all together real quick. There's a story, the parable of the talents, that Jesus tells us that kind of illustrates what the kingdom of God looks like. And he says, "A master comes and takes three of his servants. And he gives one guy five talents, a sum of money; one guy two; and one guy one. And he tells them, 'Go put these to work.'" He says, "I'm going to go away but I'm going to come back and ask you to give an account for what you did." And so they go to work. The guy with five turns it to 10. The guy with two works hard, turns it into four. The guy with one is afraid so he buries it. And then after a while, the master comes back and calls them to account, and brings them in, and says, tell me about your work. And the guy with five steps forward and says, 'Lord, I took five and I turned it into 10.' 'Well done good and faithful servant. Come share in your master's happiness.' The guy with two steps forward, 'Look, Lord, I took two and I turned it into four.' 'Well done good and faithful servant. Come and share in your master's happiness.'

The guy with one steps forward and says, 'You gave me one and I was afraid, so I buried it.' He says, 'You wicked and lazy servant. Take it away from him and give it to someone else.' I think that story is so profound for the 167 of our work in our life because God has empowered you to work in His kingdom, not striving, not struggling, not to become someone, but because you already are someone, He's given you breath, and life, and gifts, and talents, and time, and energy. The privilege of your life is that God has entrusted you to bring His kingdom to this earth in this time, in this place. And one day we will give an account to God for our work. Again, you can have a million jobs in your life, it's not about the job, it's about the work underneath it of bringing the kingdom in all those areas. And I think many of us are like the last guy, we've buried our kingdom purpose in the ground.

Out of fear, out of worry, out of anxiety, or just out of American view of work, of 9 to 5, get to the weekend, retire as soon as you can, make as much as you can for as little work as you can do. And one day we're going to have to give an account to the Lord for that. And it's not too late, dig it up, pull it out, I don't have a job, I have a kingdom calling. And I've been empowered in the 167 of life to work with God, to bring His kingdom on this earth, in this time and this place.

You see, there's this awesome little story of President JFK, walking through the NASA space station, before we put a man on the moon. And he saw a guy over on the side and he was mopping a floor. And he walked over to the man with a mop and he said, what are you doing? And the man mopping the floor looked right back at the president and he said, I'm helping put a man on the moon. And I love that.

He saw what he was doing as a part of something bigger than himself. He wasn't just doing a job or a task, he saw the heartbeat of what he was a part of. The question I want to ask you is this, if I came to you and said, what are you doing? How are you going to answer that question? Are you going to tell me about the job and the tasks, and the frustrations, and the slaving, and the boss you don't like, and the coworkers that bug you, and the you're better



than this, and you should have had that corner office, and why they didn't they give you -- are you going to answer like that? Or are you going to literally say, I'm a part of bringing the kingdom of God to this earth? I am a part of a movement of hope for the city and beyond. You see, Matthew chapter 9, last verse, Jesus says, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." If you've been in church, we read this verse, and what it often is used as is that we need more church volunteers to do church work. That's not what Jesus is saying.

He's saying there are so many opportunities to bring the kingdom of God to a broken, dying, lost world. But not a lot of people are willing to activate their faith in the 167 of work or school. Come on. It's time to move past doing a job to doing some kingdom work in Jesus' name. We have a really good, Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving one, we need a Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving 167. We have a Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving church. You need a Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving work in Jesus' name, with the Father, not for the Father, as a beloved son, not as a slave or as a servant, but a son who's been empowered to bring the kingdom to this earth in this time, in this place.

We are the world's answer to the cries and the pain, and the brokenness. We're the answer for the world's pain, sent by God and it's time to rise up and activate our faith. So will you close your eyes with me? And let me just ask you today, I know that's a lot of maybe renewing your mind, changing your thought process. But what does the Holy Spirit want to say to you? It's time to change the way we think about what it is that we're actually doing.

And so maybe right now in your own way, we can just -- can we just activate our faith together? Like could you just invite God into your work? If you own a business, could you maybe say, God, I give you my business. You're the CEO, you're the president, you're the leader. If you work in a classroom, could you maybe just invite God into the class, say, God, I give you my classroom. If you're raising children, invite God into your home and into your family. If you're a salesperson, invite God into the sales. If you're in art and music, can you invite God into the creation? Like right now, can you just invite God in to whatever job you have and go to a deeper purpose and meaning, so you can do kingdom work with him.

So Lord Jesus, right now, I just pray that you would stir up our faith, that you would help us renew our minds, repent, change our thinking about what work and school are all about.

And that we wouldn't go every day and do a job according to the world's ways and the world's standards, but we would wake up every day and say, today is the day I've been empowered by my Father to bring His kingdom to this earth, through whatever job or assignment I may have. And may I do it all for the glory of the Lord, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.