

Well, hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. I am so glad you are here with us in our special online service, wherever you are in the world. And I know so many of us are ready to be done with this whole online thing and get back to our campuses, to be together, which is a great thing because there is something supernatural and powerful when we gather with one another. And this week, we shared with you the announcement of when we are going to come back to in-person gatherings.

And if you haven't had a chance to check that out, let me encourage you, go on our social media, go on our website, get up-to-date with where we are because we're going to wait a few more weeks so we can go back with a whole lot more freedom because we're not a COVID-focused church, we're a Jesus-focused church. And I am so grateful for the leaders of this church and the way they lead us to follow after Jesus with everything that we've got. And over these next few weeks, let me just encourage you, keep leaning in.

Like keep engaging online. Don't pause your faith just because we are not gathering at the buildings. And then pray. Pray for our church and our serve team members that are getting ready now to serve you and our city with safety and excellence. And then engage. Participate in the things that we're starting to roll out, especially this in-person opportunities like groups and serve the region and so on and so forth. Like God is doing some good things right now. Don't miss it. In fact, I really want to encourage you that if you missed the last two weekends of our service, please go back and watch those online. Those are probably the two most important messages that we have had since this whole COVID season started. Because you see, we're in this series called 167: Activate Your Faith Where It Matters Most. And this is a really important series for our church.

In fact, even if we could gather at our buildings today, I still would wait and do this online because I need you to hear this series from your house. And I know some of you, you might be thinking, 167? Well, what does that mean? Well, there are 168 hours in a week, 7 days a week times 24 hours in a day, 168 hours. And if we're honest, a lot of us are used to one hour of church a week and then 167 other hours where maybe our faith isn't really active.

You see, what I think this COVID season did was it revealed and exposed a lot of the realities of where we really are in our faith journey. Like if we're honest, I think a lot of us we've left Jesus at the building. That the extent of our faith was that one hour a week in a gathering and then we just kind of left him here. That was the extent of the boundaries and the borders of our faith. But He doesn't want to be one hour a week, He wants to be a part of your 167.

You see, it's really easy to get excited about Jesus when we're at the gathering. It's easy when you walk in and people are there with a big faith and worship, and everything's prepared and people are serving you. It's easy to look like you have a big faith when you're around other people with big faith. It's easy to look like you're fruitful when you're around other fruitful

people. It's easy to look like you're following Jesus when you're around other people that are following Jesus. But what about the other 167 hours of your life?

And I think as we've been removed from each other over this season, a lot of things have been brought to the surface, a lot of things have been exposed. And what I want to remind you is that the gathering is not a substitute for your faith, it's a catalyst of it. The one hour a week we come together is not supposed to be the extent of your faith, it's supposed to catalyze you to move forward with God the rest of the week. And so it's time to take some authority.

It's time to take some responsibility and some ownership 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. You got to activate your faith where it matters most right where you are now. In fact, I love this, Colossians 2, it says, "So then just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continues to live in him. Again it's great that you've met Jesus, but now continue in the 167 of your life to live in him. Why? Because faith is not an event, it's a lifestyle. Faith is not a gathering, it's a relationship and a journey that we go on. And if we're going to activate our faith in the 167 of our lives, the most important place that we need to activate our faith is where you are right now, in your home.

I mean I want you to think about this for a second. The place that you spend the most amount of time in a week is your home. Your home is a place of rest. It's a refuge. It's a place of safety. It's a place of authenticity and vulnerability. In fact, I would submit to you that you are your most authentic self in your home. Why? Because in your home, there's no one to perform for, there's no one to impress, there's no one that you're trying to show a different side of you. You're the most authentic vulnerable you. Like in your house, you will say things you don't say anywhere else. You will do things you don't do anywhere else. You will act in ways you don't act anywhere else. Why? Because it's the most authentic you. It's who you really are. Whatever it is in your heart will always be revealed in your home. And so if we want to know who you really are what your faith is really like, we just got to say, what does it look like in our homes? Because it is impossible to follow Jesus without inviting him home.

You see, I love what Joshua -- the great leader of the Israelites, the guy who led the people of God to take over the Promised Land. I love what he says, he says, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. He's kind of at end of life, he's led the people, and he looks at all of them, and he says, hey, "Choose for yourself this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua looks at all the people and he says, hey, you know what, I don't know about all you all, you're going to have to make your own decision for yourself. But let me be real clear about me and my house, and family, we will serve the Lord. In other words, God is going to be the focus of our home, is going to be the centerpiece of our home, is going to be invited into our home.

I don't know what you're going to do, but I can tell you what we are going to do. And what I love about Joshua does is he takes authority. He takes ownership, he takes responsibilities.

He says, I don't care what the world is done. Let me tell you what my and my family are doing it. And so can I ask you a really pointed question today? Who have you chosen to serve in your home? Like who's the center? Who's the focus? But does everything in your home revolve around? Like who do you serve in your house? Is it sports? Is it education? Is it work? Is it a hobby? Is it an activity? Or is it Jesus? Like what in your home has the focus, the attention and the affection of the hearts of your family? You see, it doesn't matter what everyone else chooses, what matters is what do you choose? In fact, if you think of the Israelites, when God was setting them free from 400 years of slavery, he tells them, "Each of you is to go and take a lamb and bring it into your house."

They were supposed to bring a lamb into their own home and take the blood of that lamb and put it over the doorpost of their house to rest under the finished work of God from the death and destruction of the world. And I just want to tell you, it didn't matter if their neighbor brought a lamb in. It didn't matter if their boss brought a lamb and it didn't matter if their friend or their teacher or someone else in their extended family and -- no, no. It mattered if they brought a lamb into their house and rested under the goodness and the grace of God.

And the same is true for you and me. It doesn't matter what anyone else does. What matters is have you brought the lamb of God, Jesus, into your home? And do you rest under his finished work in your home, in your family, from the death and the destruction of this world? You see, I know right now we look at the world around us and everything feels broken. It's chaotic and there's hurt, and anger, and pain, and all of this stuff.

And we want to see change out there. Like we're desperate for things to change out there. And we want it to change out there, but we forget that change always starts right here. That in the kingdom of God, change always starts from the inside out. It's never outside in. It's inside out. That's why Jesus says, the kingdom of God is like leaven. You put a little bit in a lump of dough, from the inside out it starts to take work and change everything. And that's true of the kingdom with us when God changes our heart, it changes our home. When our home start to change, our neighborhoods change. When neighborhoods change, cities change. When cities change, nations change.

In fact, this is why the whole narrative of Scripture is the story of the Father building a family for himself. The family is the building block of society. It's the cornerstone of which everything else works. Living with the Father as beloved sons and daughters, inviting God into our homes where we are the most authentic, vulnerable versions of ourselves.

This is why people like Peter and Matthew and Zacchaeus, one of the first things they do after meeting Jesus is bring him into their home. This is why John 1:14, Jesus says -- talking about

Jesus, Jesus the Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. When he came, he didn't come to the temple or the synagogue, no, no, no. He came to our homes. He came to our families. In our neighborhood to change us from the inside out because that's how the kingdom works. So the question then is, what does it look like to have an active faith in the 167 of your home? And that's really a great question. I mean like you start thinking about it, it's like, okay, well does that mean I got to like have like a verse on the wall in my home or a knickknack or a trinket with some like little scripture on it?

Or a couple of crosses? Like what does it mean? Well, when Colleen and I first moved here like 15 years ago, I'm from Buffalo, she's from Chicago. We met in Colorado. So when we came here, we had never seen anything like the, what word do I want to use, like American Christianity, Texas version, okay? Like we had never seen that. So we got here and it was like culture shock. Everywhere you go, there would be like Christian music in shops. And people had little fish on their cars. People wearing like Christian t-shirts. You go to people's houses, they'd have like walls of crosses and Bible verses and knickknacks. People would say things like this, like bless your heart. We thought people were blessing us. And it took us a few years to figure out, actually they were making fun of us when they would say that. So the question is, is that what it means to activate your faith in your home? No, it's -- what Jesus is talking about in this next verse when he says, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

It doesn't matter what you say, what matters is the positioning of your heart. It doesn't matter what you hang on your walls, it matters how you turn your heart and who and what you invite in. And so to activate your faith in your home is really the same thing that we talked about the first week of this series. An active faith in your home looks like this, being aware of His presence. Can I just ask you a question, in your home, are you ever aware of His presence? Do you ever talk to Him and listen to Him and become conscious of Him and acknowledge Him? Do you ever act in different ways realizing Jesus himself has been invited into my home? Same way if your neighbor came over, you would be different? Are you ever different because you're like, Jesus himself is here. Having an active faith in your home is receiving his grace which means when you fail, do you go to him for forgiveness? When you need comfort, is he who you turn to? When you need something, is he the one that you reach out to and rely upon in your own home?

It means that you're seeking more of him. Can I ask you, in your home, do you ever engage the Scriptures? Do you ever pray in your house? Do you ever turn on worship music and let it flood the atmosphere of all the rooms of your home or your apartment or wherever you live? Do you ever confess and repent? Do you ever seek more of God in your home?

And then an active faith in your home is submitting to his lordship, which means we obey him whether we like it or not. We follow his ways even though we don't get it because we want to walk in the ways of God, not the ways of this world. And then it's engaging in his mission which

literally means that your house, your apartment, your bedroom, whatever you have authority over, you see that as an outpost of the kingdom of God to bring his mission of heaven to earth in world around us. This is an active faith in the 167 of our homes. So my question is this, is this what it looks like in your home?

Does your home look more like the world or more like the kingdom of God? And if you say, well, I don't know what does the kingdom of God look like? Does your home look more like the world or like the one hour a week gathering we have together where we're Jesus-focused and Spirit-filled and life-giving? An active faith in your home is simply praying this verse, "Your kingdom come, your will be done in my home," because your home is on earth right now, "as it is in heaven." See, this has been really heavy on me this week as I've been thinking about a lot of things. Like I want my children in my home to grow up, I want them to see me engage the Scriptures more than they see me on my phone. I want my kids to see me worship more than I worry.

I want my kids to see me live with more faith than fear. I want my kids to see me bless people more than I curse them. I want my kids to see me honor and submit to the authorities around me more than I rebel against them. I want my kids to see me have more hope than despair. I want my kids to experience more of the kingdom of God in my home than the world in my home. And I would bet the same is true for you. And so the question we all have to just ask ourselves is, is are bringing more of the kingdom or more of the world into our -- what are we creating space for? What are we allowing? What do we want? Because a faith that doesn't work at home does not work. Remember, our theme for this year is set apart. It doesn't just mean you, it means your home. Your home should be set apart by grace for the good of others and the glory of God. Set apart from this world, for this world, by God, for God.

Like it's got to be different from the world around us. And I think it's so interesting what Jesus says when he says, "The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. But I have come that they might have life." We're familiar with this verse, we've heard it before. Here's what I want you to think, in your physical home, I would bet you take authority and responsibility to make sure no one physically can come into your home to steal, kill and destroy. You have locks. You might have a security system. If someone you thought was going to steal, kill or destroy. You would never let them -- you take authority and responsibility over your home physically. Okay. So why don't we do this spiritually? Do you understand that when you open up pornography in your home, you are inviting the kingdom of darkness into your home to steal, kill and destroy? When you watch dark and demonic movies, you are inviting the kingdom of darkness through technology into your house to steal, kill and destroy?

When you fill your home with music that glorifies the dark things of this world and praises them and uplifts them, you're filling your home, you invite in your home -- you're inviting Satan to come into your home to steal, kill and destroy. When you talk and act and think and move and respond to life like the world, you're literally inviting someone in to steal, kill and destroy. We

have got to start taking authority over our homes, not just physically but spiritually in saying, in the name of Jesus, you have no right or authority here. I've invited Jesus into this house. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Darkness, demonic, you must go. But we got to take authority in the 167. Are you with me on this? Now, I know this might be a lot and some of you are like, man, you're kind of stepping on my toes.

I'm trying to help you be free, and activate your faith so that you can invite Jesus who wants to bring life. And so real quick, let me just give you one verse each for the main people groups that live in our homes. First one is parents. Parents, real quick, here's what I want to say to you. Parents, here's what I want to say to you, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Parents, you have been tasked by God to disciple your children, to raise them up in the ways of the Lord. It is not the church's responsibility. It is your responsibility by God to impress upon your children the ways, the character, the life of Jesus and talk to them, train them, develop them in your home.

The problem is you can't impress something upon someone else until it's first been formed in you. Like taking a stamp and pushing it into wet clay, until that stamp has first been formed, you can't impress anything into that clay. And until the character and the life of Jesus and the ways of God have been shaped and formed in us, we're unable to impress them into our children. And whatever has been shaped in you is what you will shape in them. Whatever is in your heart is what you will pour in their heart because you can't put something in their heart that you first don't have. And I know we can look at this generation and be disappointed and discouraged and why are they so different? And why this and why that?

Well, could it be, they're wet clay and we're not impressing upon them the things of God. And maybe it's because they never got impressed upon you by your parents. And so this is your moment in time to draw a line in the sand and say, I'm breaking this off in Jesus' name. God, come form in me your way so I can impress them upon my children. Because if we want the world to change, we got to wake up and start impressing the ways of God on our children in our homes. And so the question that I would just ask you is this, are you more worried about your kids' sports or their spiritual life? Are you more worried about their education or their spiritual life? Are you more worried about their popularity or their spiritual life? Are you more worried about their finances or their spiritual life? Your responsibility is not to bring them to a one hour a week gathering. Your responsibility is to bring the kingdom of God into your home.

And if you say, bro, I got no idea where to start with that, then just go back to an active faith that receives His grace, seeks more of Him, and becomes aware of His presence. Journey with us, this is what we're doing. But you can't impress on them what isn't first been shaped in you. So that's parents.

Students, "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with a promise. Honor your father and mother. In your home, in your family, your parents have been given authority by God over you. You say, my parents aren't worthy of honor. They're worthy of honor because God says they're worthy of honor. And your generation wants to change the world. You've got this big faith, you're the hope carriers. You stand against all injustices. You want to see -- and I genuinely believe that's the calling on your generation, but it starts at home. Kingdoms starts in and works out. It's not outside in, it's inside out. And I've been talking to a lot of our young adult leaders and asking them, how do we raise up your generation?

And they keep saying to me, just tell it to us like it is. Say it strong. Don't dance around it and be nice. So here's strong, okay students? If you want to change the world, then activate your faith at home. Don't talk to me about changing the world out there until you honor your father and mother right here. Why? Because this is faith in your home and what God asks of you.

Okay, husbands and wives, here's the one for you. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. In other words, submit to one another, come under each other, love each other, outserve each other, as if you were doing it for Jesus himself. Don't give what you want to give, give what they need. Love them in ways they're asking to be loved as if you were doing it for Jesus himself. Model that to your children if you have them. And then single people, here's the one for you. Paul in his beautiful passage about singleness, here's what he says, "Live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord."

In other words, if you're single, take authority over your life and your home to go after Jesus with everything you've got. Don't chase the world. Don't chase a marriage. Chase Jesus with everything that you got. You see, every one of us -- go to the next verse -- must choose for ourselves whom we will serve. Because every one of us has something in our home that has the affection, the attention and the focus of our heart that we've given authority to, that we serve, that we pursue with everything that we've got. The question is this, just is it the right thing?

So let me pull it all together with this. There is a great story of Mary and Martha, two sisters. And one day they invite Jesus into their home. Jesus comes and he sits down. And Mary sits at his feet and she just enjoys him.

She listens to everything he says. She talks to him. She's aware of him. She's engaged. She's just locked in on Jesus in her home. And all the while she's doing that, Martha is scurrying around, focused on doing all these other things. And Martha is getting angry and bitter and frustrated. And she kind of lashes out at Jesus and Mary. And Jesus stops her, he's, whoa, whoa. He says, "Martha, Martha, you're worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. And Mary has chosen that thing. And it won't be taken from her."

In other words, he says, Martha, I'm here in your home and you are not enjoying me. I've been thinking about that the whole week. The question is this, are you enjoying God in your home? Or are you so busy serving someone or something else but you're not even really aware that he's there.

Like have you enjoyed God during this coronavirus quarantine season in your home? It's what I've been trying to lead you to every single week. Taking that same technology that we used often allow things to come and steal, kill and destroy and pivot it and use it to bring the presence and the goodness of God into our home, to just enjoy Jesus in our living room, in our bedroom, in our kitchen, in our den, in our apartment, and whatever space that you have. Because if you don't enjoy God in your home, you really don't enjoy him anywhere else. And a faith that doesn't work at home doesn't work. And I'm sure today as I'm sharing some of this with you, some of you, you could feel -- you could start feeling condemnation.

Some of you, you probably want to turn this off about 10 minutes ago. Some of you are sitting in a room right now with other family members, and there is a guilt and a shame coming upon -- listen to me, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. You don't have to go from one hour a week to 167, but go from one to two, and two to three, and three to four, and at some point in time, take some responsibility and ownership to say, I'm not where I want to be, but today is the day I'm starting to move forward in Jesus' name. God, activate my faith in my home.

And if you're sitting there, and you're thinking, yeah, but you don't my -- like I got -- I want Jesus in my home, but my husband doesn't or my wife doesn't or my kids don't or my parents don't or my grandparents or my aunt, no, whoever you live with. Okay. You take authority over what you can take authority over. You take responsibility over what you can take responsibility for, whatever space is yours, whatever heart you have, you say, Jesus, as for me and my heart, and my life, in this space that I can control, we will serve you.

And you will demonstrate and declare the kingdom of God to the rest of your family by the way you live. Come on. We have an amazing Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving one, we need Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving 167. We have an amazing Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving church. I so desperately want you to have a Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving home. And it comes by simply inviting him in and say, today, I choose for myself and my family that we will not serve the things of this world, we will serve the Lord.

He is welcome here, he is wanted here, his kingdom is honored here. And I believe that as I change and my family changes and my home changes, that is the greatest gift I can offer to a hurting and broken world because kingdom change starts inside out.

And so here's what I want to invite to do if you feel comfortable. I'm going to invite you to pray with me to invite Jesus into your home. And I'm going to invite you to kneel. You don't have



to do this if you don't want to, but as a sign of honor and humility and submission to Jesus, the King of the kingdom, the Lord of all lords, the God of the universe. This is a sign of respect and honor and it's an invitation.

And if you feel comfortable doing this, I would invite you to kneel. If you can't do that or you don't want to, that's okay. Maybe you just open up your hands and would you just pray with me and let's invite Jesus into our home. So maybe in your own way, can you just say, Jesus, I invite you in. I invite you into this house, into this apartment, into this place that I call home. I invite your kingdom to come and your will to be done in any and every area of this place that I call home. God, I invite Your grace, Your goodness, Your protection, Your love, Your life. I invite you in and say, today, I choose -- I choose to say, "As for me and my house, I take authority and responsibility and ownership and say, from this day forward, Jesus, we will serve you."

"And we thank you for the gifts of sports and education and work and hobbies and activities and the amazing things that you have blessed us with our lives. But those are not our gods. We refuse to serve them. We refuse to follow them. We refuse to allow the world to come in physically or spiritually through any and every door and window into our home. We say nothing is allowed to come and steal, kill and destroy because we've invited you Jesus, the King of the kingdom, into this place."

This moment right now may be the most important moment of your faith journey during the entire coronavirus season if you take authority and responsibility to say, "Jesus, as for me and my house, we will serve you. Would you come activate my faith in the 167 of my home, and my family? Whether I'm a mom, a dad, a husband, a wife, a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, single, a grandparent, an aunt, an uncle, Jesus, activate my faith in the 167. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.