

“The Most Important Year”
November 21, 2021 | Pastor Jason Hillier

So Jesus has done profound things among us in 2021. The move of the Spirit, the words he's spoken to us, the life that we've experienced here, it's been amazing. And so from time to time, we want to take a moment and look back so that we can move forward. We want to take a moment and look back at what Jesus has spoken so that we can move forward into everything that he has for us. We started this year by saying 2021 was going to be the most important spiritual year of your journey. You're going to have to face this year like you've never had before, leaning into Jesus, knowing that if we missed this year and everything that God wanted to do.

It'd be really difficult to look back 10, 20 years from now and wonder what happened. What happened to my journey with Jesus? My spiritual journey on, you know, following Jesus? And so that's what made this year so incredibly important. You see, at Valley Creek, we don't want to just be hearers of the word, we want to actually respond to it and do something with it. We don't want to have like a word spoken over us and then let it lie. We want to receive it over and over again. We believe that when a word of God is once spoken, it will continue to be spoken and God will continue to move that word until its completion in our lives. In fact, as we prepare to just do a recap of an amazing 2021, you see, ready? We only got 40 days left in 2021. Forty days left in the year. So as we prepare to recap all that God has spoken among us, I want to read out of Proverbs 4. This is starting at verse 20. It says, “My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for their life to those that find them and health to one's whole body.”

Pay attention to what he says. Don't let it move out of your sight for there is life to those that listen and receive it and hear it, and then move forward with that word in their hearts. There's life for them and there's health to one's whole body, not just this body, this body, all the Valley Creek family. And so in 2021, we had about five significant series, only five all year long. And that's because they were so big, so significant we need to really spend some time on each one. So last week, we had a chance to respond to the Ancient Future, which was an amazing response weekend. God moved in a profound way. It was awesome to see what he did during that time. But this weekend, we're going to get a chance to go in reverse order and take a look at each of the other four major series of which the Lord has spoken to us. We value His word in our life. We value His voice in our church families.

So in reverse order, going back through the major series of the year, check out this three-minute recap of the Build series.

Build, becoming a dwelling place for God. Build, it's time to build the relationships that matter most. It's time to rebuild the relationships that matter the most. And it's time to become a dwelling place for God. And the dwelling place of God is when His family is in relationship with one another. He says you're like a living stone and he's bringing you together with other living stones, stacking you together on Jesus as the chief cornerstone, and in Him you become

a holy temple. We become a holy temple in which God himself chooses to come and dwell among us.

And I think it's so profound that He says you're living stones, not bricks. Why? Bricks are all uniform. They're all exactly the same. They're a dime a dozen, same color, same shape, same size, same everything. No, no, you're living stones. Stones are different sizes, different shapes, different colors, different backgrounds. Stones have gone through different experiences to be shaped in the actual shape that they are. They're alive and they have been formed over time. And when you bring stones together with all these different colors and shapes and sizes, together submitted to the lordship of Jesus, they become something that is supernatural in Jesus' name. You have more in common with a believer sitting on the other side of the room right now that you've never met than you do with your closest unbelieving friend. The spirit of the living God dwells in both of you. You're a new creation in Christ Jesus.

You're both a part of the body of Christ. You've been awakened to new life. The kingdom of heaven is in them and is also in you. And you both are now a part of an everlasting eternal kingdom that will not be shaken.

So I'm just saying, you got a little more in common with that than your hobby. What if every time you came to this place, you had one meaningful conversation before you left? And you say, what, you mean I got to -- I got to get all the way down to ask somebody how's their heart? No, I'm just saying, if you normally just say to people, hey, how you doing? And they say, good, just move -- just the next time, hey, how you doing? Good. Hey, tell me a little bit more about yourself. Just tell me about your family. That would count. The next week, you might go a little bit further and say, hey, tell me about what the season has been like for you? One meaningful conversation every time you're here. We are as strong as our relationships, and that we will go as far as our relationships can carry us.

And if that's true, then in order to arrive at our prophetic destiny, not just as a church, but for you to arrive at your prophetic destiny, for you to see heaven come to earth, and his kingdom come and the good works he's prepared in advance for you to do, for us to see the peace and the prosperity of the city to really be a movement of hope, then we need to start rolling up our sleeves, getting our hands dirty and building relationships with one another.

Come on, do you remember some of those words spoken over you, some of the things that He declared into the atmosphere when we learned that we are the temple the living God? We like living stones are being built up to become a dwelling place for His Spirit to be His presence to reside. You see, in the Old Testament, they had to go to a place to receive time with the Spirit of the living God. In the new covenant, the New Testament, in the new reality after Jesus, we are that temple.

We like living stones are built up until the whole thing rises to become a dwelling place for God. And we are living stones, not bricks. That is we're unique, we have unique skills, and gifts, and passions, and talents that God wants to bring to the table here inside of our church family. Not uniform bricks where everybody looks the same and acts the same, and does exactly everything the same way. Those stones that are made by God's hands, not human hands, being built together to become this, what's called the church, the body of God, the body of Christ, and that's us. And so I want to encourage you, you are the temple that is you when you receive the Spirit, but we are the temple. And every time we come and we make a place for the Spirit of God to reside among us, then we are experiencing literally heaven on earth. Every time we come onto campus and we do things like something as simple as having one meaningful conversation, we are building and we're being built up. So here's a question, who are you building into and who is building you?

Have you had a chance to embrace that idea of saying, okay, when I come on the weekend experience, when I gather maybe online with the online community, I'm actually going to engage people in a way that's more than just how's it going. How's it going? Good. Okay, well, tell me a little bit more. What's going good? And then continue, continue. What's Jesus been speaking to you? What's he doing? What's happening in life? How's your -- all the way down to how's your heart? Like a deep waters question that can actually create transformation and life change and connection with the person you're speaking to. Don't miss a chance to truly not just come to church, to be the church. To not just attend church, to actually be part of the people of God. We are being built up into this holy temple, this dwelling place for God. That's an amazing series. I'm really glad that God reminded us of what He spoke during the Build series. And then we go one step backwards into the summertime, we had a series called 60 Days of Rest, Joy and Relationships.

Simply put, everybody was real tired. So they needed some rest, some joy and some relationships. And so here we go, quick recap of what God spoke to us this summer over those 60 days.

Sixty days of rest, joy and relationships. It's an invitation to experience summer in a different kind of way. Do you feel at rest? Because the world wants to try to answer the question for you on how you find rest. There's actually only one place that your soul can find rest. "Truly my soul finds rest in God." Many of us are waiting for the circumstances outside of us to change before we'll experience rest, but in reality it's the Jesus inside of us that brings us to His rest. So when you focus on kingdom movement, you'll experience kingdom joy.

There is a motion to it, there's movement, there's mission in mind. Because it really works like this, you focus on kingdom movement, you'll be filled with kingdom joy and that joy will become your strength. Kingdom movement leads to kingdom joy, leads to kingdom strength.

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Jesus said that the most important commandment is this: to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, your soul, your mind and your strength. And the second is equally important, to love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these. I wish you catch that. Out of all the commandments, hundreds, in the Bible, of everything that God has ever said about following Him and what that looks like, the two most important ones are all about relationship, to love God, love others, and they're equally important.

We need something deep. We need a deep clean. And so as the leadership of this church, we all got together and we began to pray and we think that this is a time for what we're going to call a soul detox.

A soul detox. It's a deep, deep clean. Now, transforming your mind, it is not an attitude adjustment, it is not the power of positive thinking, it is not self-help. It is letting the Holy Spirit, the Almighty God of the universe take our minds, completely change them and transform them, get the toxins out and give us His true perspective. That's what transformation looks like.

So 60 days, rest, joy and relationship, it was a declaration from our church for our church. It was a declaration from our word spoken to us into every single one of our lives. So can I just tell you, that wasn't just for this summer, that's for now too.

So like there is a rest in God that doesn't come from circumstances, it only comes directly from Him that's available for you in Jesus' name. You don't have to wait until only that vacation or till things calm down or till, you know, you reach a certain pinnacle in life. There's rest for you all the time. Why? Because when God started resting, He never stopped. And so now He does everything that He does from a place of rest. He invites us to experience the very same thing. When you learn to rest in God, you'll discover the rest of God, everything He wants to reveal and do and speak to you so there is a rest for you. There's a joy for you, there's a joy that's way beyond happiness or than everything just working itself out. There's a joy that comes from the deep well of the Spirit. And there's a joy that can only be experienced when you move forward by faith and then you gain kingdom joy, this kind of internal fruit of the Spirit that wells up in you and then it strengthens you.

It strengthens you on your inside. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." So any place that you may feel weak right now is probably a place where God is inviting you to experience His joy. And the way you experience His joy is by moving forward in faith. And then there's relationships for you. I just want to declare over somebody who's listening to this right now, you're still wondering if this church family is going to work out because quite frankly you haven't gathered or you haven't gained those close relationships that you thought you would, they're for you. And they're here and they're available. And so in Jesus' name, I declare the very closest friends, the very best godly relationships you're ever going to have can be found with inside this church family. Your heart, your hope, your dreams, your desires, you're doing life with, those people are available to you. And I really want to encourage you, that's why

we've been banging the gong of circles all year long, getting in a circle, getting in a place where you can engage the Scripture, talk about the weekend message, pray together, letting circles really be that carrier that carries you into godly relationships and into other deep relationships here at Valley Creek Church.

And then we finished off with all that inviting you to Soul Detox. Maybe some of you had a chance to do that. We had about 3,000 people that experienced the Soul Detox and that was a really, really special kind of time in this year. However, it's still available to you right now. So Soul Detox is actually available to you on valleycreek.org. I really want to encourage you to check that out. Here's why. From time to time, we get some toxins in our soul and so there's some gunk on the inside that needs to be cleared out in Jesus' name. That's the whole point of what soul detox does. It allows you to just rest your mind and to just truly spend time with Jesus and to hear from him and to let him start to clean out those places that have gotten gunked up by the world. So if that sounds like anything you're experiencing right now, come on, check out Soul Detox at valleycreek.org. Rest, joy and relationships, not a one-time event, not just for the summer, all the time, all the time for our church family. And so I'm so glad that we get a chance to remember what God spoke there.

And then we go back one series into the springtime called Becoming. And this was really a pinnacle series for our church because it was teaching us how to learn and live as a disciple, not just to identify with Jesus but to actually follow him. Come on, check out this short recap of the Becoming series in the spring.

We're going to start a new series today called Becoming: Life as a Disciple. And over the next few weeks, we're going to ask ourselves this really simple question, who am I becoming? Like are you growing? Are you maturing? Are you getting healthy and free? Is faith, hope and love showing up in your life? Are you becoming quicker to repent and apologize and forgive? Are the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control showing up in your life? Are you starting to do the things that Jesus did like be a servant and live on mission and make disciples and give to the poor?

Like who are you becoming? Being a disciple is the delta or the difference between who you now are in Jesus and how you actually think, believe, act, talk, move and it's bringing those things into alignment. It's not changing your behavior, so you can become holy, it's I already am holy, now I want to learn to live in alignment with who God says I already am in Jesus. See, I think we're in a season where God is inviting us back to discipleship, to being a disciple, a learner, a follower, a becoming, one who longs to be like the one that they're following. And I think God is inviting us as a church to move into this new dimension of creating a discipleship culture a discipleship culture that values the word of God, that honors the Spirit of God, that is devoted to the people of God and that leans in to the circumstances of life.

There are three questions that I think are incredibly important for all of us to ask along the way and if Jesus is really Lord and I'm living as a disciple, then at any point in time you should be

able to answer these three questions. What has Jesus been saying to me in this season? Where is Jesus inviting me to submit to his lordship, o come under who he is and what he has done? And what is my next step?

So the series started off with just a simple question, are you happy? Are you healthy? Are you maturing? Are you growing in the fruit of the Spirit? Because if not, it's an invitation to become who Jesus says that you already are in him. You see, becoming living life as a disciple is just simply becoming like the one you follow, following Jesus.

Part of what happened over the last two years across the United States and what you call Christianity, is that those that simply identified as Christians have really just kind of shown or really quite frankly fallen off the map while those that actually followed Jesus have gone further and farther into the heart of the father. They've actually like journeyed into following, journeyed into taking next steps and so for you do you identify with Jesus, are you actually following him? Are you moving forward in Jesus' name? Are you taking just like one next step at a time, aligning your life for what he already says because it's not about doing, it's about believing. And as you believe then you'll start to do it. As you start to become it and you take those steps forward you learn more and more on who God says that you actually and already are.

So that learning to live life as a disciple, simply moving from identifying to following is a critical step. It was a critical juncture for our church. Part of what's happened even since then is we've taken massive steps in a discipleship culture as Valley Creek. Here's a question for you. Have you taken steps? Have you taken steps in truly following Jesus, not just calling yourself a Christian, but taking steps and following each and every single day? Those questions are really critical. I invite you to write those down, if you didn't have the chance to take note of those before. It's really three questions that anybody who's following Jesus should be able to answer at any given time. What is Jesus saying to me? Where is he inviting me to submit to his lordship? And what is my next step? Those are great questions, man. They go they go inside the heart and they search the deep places and they start to pull out clarity for us and if we've aligned our life with Jesus -- and hear me if you're thinking, no, I don't know if that's me. I don't know if I've aligned my life very much with Jesus. That's okay, that's why we're doing the recap.

That's why we're moving forward today in Jesus' name, remembering what he said to us, keeping it in our sight and in our heart so we can learn to follow him to live life as a disciple. Valley Creek Church will continue to have a discipleship culture that is follow me as I follow Christ, one next step, walking into who he says that I already am, one next step learning to become who he says that I already am on earth as it is in heaven. Did you know that? You're always, when you're following Jesus, taking steps, you're always discovering more on earth who he says that you already are in heaven, forgiven, free, loved, worthy, valued, life for purpose, a hope carrier, all the things we declare over you. That's who we're becoming. That's what God

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is aligning us to in this season. So I'm so thankful for the Becoming series, for what God spoke over us and then it takes us all the way back to the beginning of the year. At the beginning of the year, we started the year with a series just called Again.

And we realized that it had been a really rough go in 2020 for a lot of us. There was a lot of transition, there was a lot of pulling back, there was a lot of stepping out. And so it was time to Again. Breathe again, believe again, begin again. So man, may your heart go all the way back to the beginning this year and remember what the Lord spoke to us as we check out this recap of again.

JOHN STICKL: We're starting a new series today called Again. It's time to breathe again, to believe again and to begin again in Jesus' name. And I want to start this series by saying something really significant. And I'm acknowledging its significance right out of the gate. And it's simply this, I think this might be the most important year of your spiritual journey. I know some of you sit here, and you can go back to different points in your life and you're like, no, that year was the most significant or this year.

I get you on all that. This might be the most important year in your spiritual journey because what I want you to understand is we are six weeks away from one year. Six weeks away from one year ago, when COVID hit and we stopped gathering at our campuses and had to go through all that and we're back now, and all those different kinds of things. But what I want you to understand is that if you don't engage your spiritual journey again this year and you go another year the way we did last year, there are patterns, behaviors, habits, beliefs that will get so ingrained in your life that you may never get them out, and you might wake up 5 years, 10 years, 20 years down the road and say something like this, like what happened? What happened to my faith? What happened to my family? What happened to my life?

And so it's time to engage again. It's time to connect again. So it's time to forgive again. It's time to obey again. Today, you got to trust again. So my question for you is this, what was the last Next Step that you took? This is the most important spiritual year of your life. So in Jesus' name, let's not just go down the road the world is going, let's start doing some things again.

So in Jesus' name, let's not go down the road that the world is going, let's start doing some things again. Let's start moving forward in faith. 2021, here we are, the most important year of your spiritual journey. Here's what I want to ask you, how'd you do? How did it go? Sometimes when you get to look all the way through like that much timeframe and that much of a spoken in over your life, it causes you to take a second and reflect.

It causes you to do what Proverbs 4 said, to not let it out of your sight and out of your heart, but to reflect on what God had spoken and what actually came of it because unlike last year, we chose to move forward in faith. We chose to like take a breath and breathe in the goodness of God. We chose to believe, to align our hearts and our minds with what the kingdom says,

not what the world is speaking to us. We chose to begin to actually travel forward on our journey with Jesus, one small step at a time. How'd you do? And if you hear me saying that right now and you're thinking, not so good, I got great news for you. I have -- this is profound. Today as I'm speaking, there are 40 days left in the year.

Do you have any idea what that means biblically? Do you know what God can do in 40 days? After 40 days, the rain stopped flooding the earth. After 40 days Moses came down the mountain, had the very words of life written on tablets of stone to give to the people. After 40 days, Jesus came out of his wilderness journey, led by the power of the spirit and began to start his earthly ministry and the kingdom of God came to earth and advanced mightily within that time. Forty days, a lot can happen. Forty days, breakthrough you didn't see coming can occur. So you might be hearing this right now and thinking, well, that's a real call-up of my life. I wasn't actually -- I didn't actually approach this whole year like with those kind -- that kind of, you know, passion and like thoughtfulness over my spiritual journey. That's okay, you got 40 days. And so I'm declaring it over each one of us over our church family, over our lives that in this time, we can step into the words that were spoken over us.

We can receive them by faith. We can walk out that journey one next step at a time. All those words are not just for like somebody else in this room, they're for you. All those words are for me. Those are words that I can hold on to. Those are -- that's the voice of the Lord, the goodness of God speaking into my life, telling me which way to go, telling me how to take one next step at a time. And so you still got 40 days for the most important year of your spiritual journey. Let's walk it out in Jesus' name. Let's move forward by faith. In fact, go ahead and stand up with me right now, wherever you're watching this from, go and stand up with me. I just want to pray us out and declare the heartbeat, the spirit of what we spoke during the Again series and I would ask you by faith, would you even consider just opening your hands as a sign of faith? Just a sign of surrender, a sign of openness to what Jesus continues to do, a word once spoken continues to be spoken over you. So Jesus, I declare over our church family that we would everything again in Jesus' name.

We would step forward into relationships again. We would step forward into discipleship again. We would truly believe what you say about us again. We would be willing to take a breath and just say every time I breathe in I breathe in the very life of Jesus. I'm breathing in the spirit again. We would begin our journey of following you again. We would be the church you've called us to be again. We would be built and we would build up again. We would live in that rest, and the joy, and the relationship and everything else your kingdom offers again. We would become disciples that actually imitate the life of Christ again, not just saying that we follow him, actually following. Not just calling ourselves Christians, but actually following Jesus as Lord, stepping forward into the life that he's called me to. I believe that we'll do that again. And then as we do, we will truly become the church you've called us to be. We will become everything you've called us to be.

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By faith, for any of us that have had a journey where you're like, man, I stumbled, I struggled, it was just really hard, that's okay. In Jesus' name, you're moving forward as of today. As of right now, as of me praying for you, you have the Spirit of God, and the people of God, and the word of God and the presence of God leading you in your life. You have nothing to fear. You have everything to step into. You have all the kingdom going in front of you and behind you and beside you and surrounding you and leading you forward again in Jesus' name. Thank you God for what you spoke to us. We do not take it lightly. We honor your word. We experience your presence and we love your voice in our life. We love you Jesus, in your name, amen. Alright.