

Well, hey, everyone. Welcome. Welcome to Valley Creek. Welcome to the first Young Adult Gathering of the fall. Hey, my name is Caleb, and I get to serve on staff here. Man, I'm so excited to be here tonight because God is doing a deep work. Guys, God is doing a deep work in our church. He's doing a deep work in our region. And really, He's doing a deep work in the lives of young adults, and He's doing a deep work in my life. God's doing a deep work. And He's shaken up some of the things that we used to call "normal Christianity". He's really taken us back to the core of what it means to follow Him, to live a different way. He's really shown us what it means to live life with Jesus at the center, to be Jesus-focused, to be aware of Him. And really, all that to say, like God's calling His people back to Himself. And really, Young Adult Gatherings have been one of the greatest ways that we have to encounter the presence of God together. And like Dawson said earlier, man, Young Adult Gatherings are where we get to connect with God and connect with each other. Connect with God and connect with each other. And so, our hope is that it's a transformative experience where you get to leave changed because you got to encounter God. Like the author, the creator, the maker, and the sustainer of the entire universe, He changes us. And man, you get to leave changed because you get to connect with others – other people going through a similar season of life as you are, like following Jesus in a similar season of life. And so, man, I am so excited. It's so like, man, filled with joy for what God is doing at our Young Adult Gatherings. And so, my encouragement to you is, be present. Be present at these things. If we're like the core, what if we were here and we were present, we were aware of God from the moment we walked into the doors? No matter what's going on, what chaos, what craziness in the world, as soon as we walked in, we were aware of God. What would it look like for you to be aware of God? And then, what would it look like for you to be present with other people? Be present in conversations to have intentional, meaningful conversations. What if we use the Young Adult Gatherings to talk with other people about what we're learning at Young Adult Gatherings? I think we're great at connecting with each other. We can talk with each other all day long, but what if we took it a step deeper and we had deep, meaningful conversations at our Young Adult Gatherings? And man, really our hope is that these gatherings really lift our eyes to Jesus. They give us a vision for what a life in the kingdom is like, for what it looks like to become more like Jesus.

And so, that's why if you've been with us this entire year, we've been in a series called "Learn From Me: Life in the Kingdom." Learn from me –not from me, but from Jesus. Learn From Me: Life in the Kingdom. And man, each month, we've been taking a look at the life of Jesus. See, we've been looking at the things that Jesus has done, and we're learning from Him. So, the whole year, we've been talking about if we want to do what Jesus did on the spot, we have to do what Jesus did behind the scenes. If we want His life, we have to take on His lifestyle, right? To do the things that Jesus did, we have to do the things that Jesus did. But man, sometimes it's fun and it's great to talk about what Jesus actually did do on the spot – to talk about His life, the amazing things that He did – because it gives us a vision for who we can become. It gives us a vision for life in the kingdom. It really lifts our eyes. It gives us a vision for who we can become. See, and the thing about having a compelling and a great vision is that's how we do the behind-the-scenes things. It's super easy to do the behind-the-scenes things when we

have a great compelling vision. Think about any time you've done some hard work, behind-the-scenes stuff – it's because you had a compelling vision of what it was going to do. And so, man, that's what we've been doing through these gatherings is we're building a vision for life in the kingdom. And we've been coming back to Matthew 11 where Jesus tells us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls."

He says, "Come to me and learn from me and you will find rest for your souls." Come to me – seek me, search me, spend time being with me, and learn from me. Like, "Follow my ways, do the things that I do, take up my lifestyle, and you'll find rest for your souls. You'll find the very life, the very thing that you are searching for. You'll find it only in me." Do you ever just feel like your life's incomplete sometimes? Like there's just something more missing? It's because life in the kingdom is the only way we can find fullness of life. See, life in the kingdom is how we experience the fullness of life. So, in a sense, Jesus is saying, "Learn from me and become like me, and then you'll be satisfied." Like, "Come and learn from me, and you'll live life that's fully alive." Because, man, Jesus lived an incredible life. Like, He showed us what it was like to live life fully alive. He was alive in every circumstance. He knew who God was. He lived in perfect relationship with Him. And believe it or not, Jesus was fully human. He's the son of God – we talk about that a lot, but He's also fully human. He was made in human likeness. He didn't just snap His fingers and one day have the perfect life. No, He was fully human – just like me and just like you. And He came to show us what it was like to be fully human. He showed us what it was like to learn from Him – to look to Him, to live life in the kingdom. He came to show us what it was like to be fully human and in perfect relationship with God. Knowing exactly who He was, knowing exactly who God was, a great and loving Father, and living life in the fullness of God's kingdom. And because He was fully human, the things that Jesus did are accessible and available to each and every one of us. So, the Bible says, "In this world, we are like Jesus." See, and that we can even do greater things than He did. And Jesus did some pretty incredible things. Like, this is what we've been talking about. Check this out.

He lived life in the kingdom. He did things like have peace and chaos, have purpose in the mundane, have wisdom in life, forgive no matter what. So, what Jesus is saying is, "Come and learn from me and become like me. Come to me, and I'll show you what it looks like to live life to the full." And come on, isn't this the life you want? Isn't this the life we're all chasing? This is what we're searching for, regardless of where it is, in work, in school, in relationships. This is the life we're searching for. And so, Jesus is saying, "Come follow me. Come learn from me. Become like me and live life to the full." And see, each month we've been talking about one of these areas, just talking about one of the things that Jesus did so we can build a vision for life in the kingdom. We've talked about things like self-control in the face of temptation, joy in every circumstance, purpose in the mundane, freedom from the world, connection with God – Man, we've talked about all those this year. What we've been doing essentially is we're building a vision for life in the kingdom. That's what we've been doing at these Young Adult Gatherings

is we are building a vision for what life in the kingdom could truly look like. And so, if you want to go back, pro tip, I just found this out last week, actually. You can go to ValleyCreek+ and they're all available to listen to. You search "Learn From Me." You can listen to any one of those. And so, I confess, I didn't know that until last week. But man, because we've learned some pretty incredible things, we're building a vision for life in the kingdom. And so, tonight, I'm super excited because we get to continue on with the series. And man, I love tonight's topic because tonight we get to talk about hope in the midst of despair.

Hope in the midst of despair. Everyone say hope. (Hope.) There you go. Jesus had hope in the midst of despair. And man, I don't know about you, but sometimes I could use that in my life. Hope in the midst of despair. Anyone else? Yeah. Yeah, see hope in the midst of despair. And before we look at the life of Jesus and how He had hope, what if we just started by defining what hope is? Because I think it's pretty easy to define despair. You could probably define it right now, but what is hope? See, hope's a little harder to define than despair is. Hope's a little harder to define, but you know when you have it and you know when you don't. It's easy to identify. You know when someone else has hope, and you know when they don't. It's easy to say, "Man, I hope, I hope, I hope." We know when we have hope, but how would you define hope? Well, I'm going to tell you, hope is not just wishful thinking. It's not like, "Man, I wish I could have a great job, great house. I wish I could have a great car, like a 401(k) and all that." And it's not like, "Man, I hope my manager's in a good mood today because when they're not, ooh. I got hope I passed that test that I didn't actually study for." I don't know. "I hope, I hope, I hope, I hope she says 'yes.'" That one's real. And man, I can tell you, hope is not just wishful thinking. Hope is the confident expectation of the goodness of God.

See, simply put, hope is the confident expectation of the goodness of God. Hope is the joyful anticipation of the goodness of God. It's the belief that God's kingdom has come and more of it is coming. It's the belief that God is good and God is good to me. Hope is the confident expectation of the goodness of God. It's confidently expecting the goodness of God in my life. Think about it. Maybe think about it like a little kid who knows their birthday's coming up. So, hang with me. Think about it like a five-year-old who knows their birthday's next week. They are confidently expecting to get some presents. It's their birthday. There's no doubt about it in their mind – they are going to get presents. Like, "It's my birthday. I'm going to get it." They are confidently expecting it. Why? They know that their parents are good. They're good to them. They asked for a present. They've asked for it. They know that in the past, they get a birthday present on their birthday. So, they have no other reason than to believe that they're going to get a birthday present. They are confidently expecting it. Now, imagine if we had hope. If we confidently expected God's goodness in our life, the way that five-year-old is confidently expecting to get a birthday present. Man, that would change the way we live, right? If we confidently expected God's goodness wherever we went, it would change the way we live. We would pray some bold prayers because we knew that God is good. If God's good, He gives good gifts. And man, if He doesn't give something, then there's something good in store. We would have joy. We would have peace. Because we know that no matter what

happens – no matter how stressed out I am, no matter what's going on – God is good. So, there's no need to worry. Man, if we had hope, it would radically change the way we live – if we would confidently expect God's goodness in our life – because hope transforms us. Hope changes us. And so, can I ask you, is that true of you? Would people say you're a person of hope? Do you confidently expect the goodness of God in your life?

Are you a person of hope? Would other people even say that you are a person of hope? Do you go through life believing the best or just anticipating the worst? And if your answer is somewhere on the spectrum of, "not at all it's a, 'man, I really wish I had hope,'" you're in the right place. Because in Jesus' name, we can become people of hope. See, the things that Jesus did are available to us in the here and the now. In this world, we are like Jesus. And man, one of the things we see all throughout the life of Jesus is that He was a person of hope. He was confidently expecting the goodness of God no matter what He did or no matter where He went. Every miracle He performed, He knew that He would see God's goodness. Could you imagine if He was just going around having some wishful thinking? It would be pretty lousy miracles. Like, "You know there's some dirt, you're blind, what if I just spit in this and rubbed it on your eyes? Not sure what's going to happen." Or like, "Hey, Peter, I've never fished a day in my life, but what if you threw your net to the other side of the boat? Just throwing out ideas because you look a little stumped." Or like, feeding the 5,000 when they brought Him the two fish and the five loaves. And He was like, "That's it?" That's got to be pretty devastating. Like, "Peter, do you have DoorDash or something like that on your phone?" Man, no – that was not how Jesus lived His life. And it's funny to joke about because what Jesus had hope, He confidently expected God's goodness wherever He was at. And I know it's easy to say when He's going around performing miracles and feeding 5,000 people on a normal day, but He also had hope in every circumstance, even in the midst of despair, even in the difficult things. See, even when He faced the cross, He had hope. He was confident of the goodness of God. Look at this. The Bible says, "For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God for the joy set before Him, even when facing the cross," which by the way, is like the most painful death someone can endure. It is so painful we had to invent a new word, excruciating, which means "as painful as the cross." And – see, you didn't know that. There you go. But even when faced with that, man, Jesus had hope. He was confidently expecting the joy set before Him. He was confidently expecting the goodness of God. Man, all throughout the life of Jesus, He was confidently expecting the goodness of God in every circumstance. He was filled with hope. And so, why is that? Like, why is it that Jesus had hope in every circumstance? And yet to us, it's like so unattainable sometimes. So out of reach. We're like, "Man, it's so hard. How did Jesus have hope in every circumstance?" Let's see if you can catch this. This comes out of the book of Luke. This is Jesus saying, He says that everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. Hope right there. There you go.

See if you can catch this. Jesus could confidently expect the goodness of God in His life because He knew what God had already spoken about Him. He could confidently expect the

goodness of God because He knew what God had promised Him, that "everything must be fulfilled that's written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms." And so, in other words, "No matter how crazy things are, no matter how I feel, no matter what's going on around me, no matter what I can see right in front of me – I know that God is good and He has promised this to me." He could be confident in the goodness of God because He knew that God had promised it to Him. And so, even when He faced the cross – could you imagine going to the cross but knowing that God had promised it to you? Knowing the Psalms where it says, "I will remain confident of this. I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. I will not abandon you to the realm of decay." He knew the book of Genesis where it says, "He will strike your heel, but you will crush his head." He knew Isaiah that said, "After all he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied." He knew Ezekiel who prophesied and dry bones came to life. He knew Jonah who was a prophetic picture of Jesus who was buried in the belly of the whale but on the third day rose again. He knew Hosea where it said, "After two days, He will revive us. On the third day, He will restore us." He was confident in the goodness of God, even when He faced the cross, because He knew what God had promised Him. See, He confidently expected the goodness of God because He knew what was promised to Him. And you might be thinking, "That's awesome, but that's Jesus." Like, "That's great, good for Him, but that's an unrealistic expectation, unrealistic standard. You know, He's the son of God. That's what He's supposed to do. He's the son of God, but I'm just a teacher. I'm just a student. I just work at a coffee shop, fill in the blank. He'll never face the disappointment, the despair, the loneliness, the temptation, the whatever, 'dot, dot, dots' that I'm facing." But see, that's what we've been talking about this entire series is that that's available to us. That the goodness of God – that everything that Jesus experienced – was available, is available, the here and then now to us. You see, Jesus faced discouragement and loneliness and despair and temptation. Jesus faced sadness. Do you know that the Son of God, like the savior of the world, faced sadness, just like me and just like you? There's this really deep, profound theological verse in the Bible. It's probably one of the most profound ones. Do you know what it says? Check this out. "Jesus wept." That's your memory Scripture for this month. "Jesus wept." The savior of the world wept just like you and me. Jesus faced loneliness. Like, could you imagine knowing the destiny, the glory of God available to you in heaven but being here on this earth waiting for that day? Or the Bible says that Jesus faced every temptation that we face, but He did not... He was not overcome by it. And Jesus faced disappointment. After all the time of teaching on servanthood and humility, His two closest disciples asked for the two best seats in heaven. "Did you catch anything I just said to you?" Talk about disappointment. Or how about when Jesus went to pray in the garden on the night He was arrested? He said, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." I don't know about you, but that sounds pretty intense to me. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow." See, all that to say Jesus faced despair just like you and just like me. It was fully human. And part of being fully human means facing despair in life. But even in the midst of despair, He confidently expected the goodness of God. See, even when His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, Jesus confidently expected the goodness of God in His life.

And so, can I ask you, where in your life do you need to expect the goodness of God? Where in your life do you just simply need to be reminded that God is good and He's good to you? Another way to say it, where in your life do you just need some hope? Where do you need to be reminded of God's goodness in your life? Because no matter who we are, where you are on your journey with Jesus, we all have areas that we need to be reminded of the goodness of God. And maybe it's like a circumstance, a relationship, a disappointment, like grief, like actual despair. Maybe it's just a place where you've lost sight of the goodness of God in your life. And so, I'd love to invite you literally just as a step of faith. Could you just write that area on a card? There should be a card in the seatback in front of you or on the first row if it's on the ground. But man, sometimes it's just a step of faith to write things down. It helps us literally see things from a different perspective, literally just taking a step of faith. See, man, I'd love for you to go ahead and write that down. Write on the card, where do you need to be reminded of the goodness of God? Because sometimes literally just writing it down helps us see things from a different perspective. And regardless of what's going on in your life – no matter what you're writing on the card, what's coming to mind – there's hope because we have Jesus. In fact, the Bible calls Jesus our living hope. He's our living hope. He's the reason that we have to confidently expect the goodness of God. Because of the finished work of Jesus, we can confidently expect God's goodness. No matter what you're writing down on the card, no matter what's happening in your life, you can confidently expect God's goodness because of Jesus. And so, just like Jesus had the law of Moses, the prophets, the Psalms, we have the life of Jesus. We have the gospel. We have the finished work of the cross where we can confidently expect God's goodness in our life. Look at this, this is out of Romans. It says, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide, we might have hope." So, the truth is, regardless of what's going on in your life – where you're at, what your circumstances look like – you can experience hope. You can confidently expect the goodness of God despite your circumstance. See, Jesus had hope because He knew what was written about Him. But did you know that all the Scriptures were written so that you could experience hope as well? So that you could experience hope? So whatever you wrote down on your card, He wants you to have hope in that area. And He wants you to learn from Him, to look to Him, to live life in the kingdom, to let His Word really encourage you so you can have hope. The Scriptures, the Word of God, literally Jesus, our living hope, were given to us so that we could experience hope.

And so, tonight, what do you think God wants to say to you? Holy Spirit, what do you want to say to us right now? Where do you need to look to Jesus to learn from Him? To look to Him – to live life in the kingdom and be reminded of His goodness in your life? And maybe He's just reminding you He loves you, He sees you, He's good, He's good to you. And you know that thing that's going on, "Hey, even in the midst of that, I'm good. I'm good to you." And so, here's what I'd actually love to do. I'd love to invite the band to actually come back out. And would you just stand up with me? Would you stand up with me, and as a sign of faith, would you just hold out your card? And can I just declare God's truth over you? So, regardless of

what's going on, where can you grab onto God's goodness, God's truth, His promises in your life? And so, as I declare these out, where can you grab onto the goodness of God for your life? What's the one promise that you need to be reminded of? Jesus had hope because He knew what was written about Him. He knew what the Father had spoken, but do you know what God says about you?

He says that He'll never leave you. He'll never forsake you. He says you can't flee from His Spirit. You can't leave His presence. He says that He will be with you wherever you go. That neither height nor depth, neither angels nor demons nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate you from the love of God. That He has forgiven your wickedness and remembers your sins no more. That as far as the east is from the west, so far as He removed your transgressions from you. That if the Son has set you free, you are free indeed. That you are a new creation. The old has gone; the new has come. That by His stripes, you are healed. That in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him. That He is close to those who mourn. He is near to the brokenhearted. That He will wipe every tear away from your eyes. That He knows the plans He has for you. That He will be found by you. That He will show you great and unsearchable things you do not know. That if God is for you, who can be against you? That God is good. He's good to you even when the world is not. That Jesus has forgiven you, regardless of what you've done. That you are loved for who you are and not for what you do. And that everything is possible. There is always hope. See, all these are written so that you may have hope – so that you can have a confident expectation of the goodness of God. Jesus had hope, and He's our living hope. So, we can confidently expect the goodness of God.