

Alright. Hey, everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. Come on, wherever you are today, Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville, The Venue or online somewhere in the world, let's just welcome each other together. Come on, I am so glad that you are here with us. And we are just about done with our series called The Ancient Future: Practicing the Way of Jesus.

This is the longest series that we've ever done. This is the longest weeks in a row I've ever preached. And what we've been doing for basically the entire fall is talking about what does it look like to be a disciple, to follow Jesus, to be a learner, a student, one who becomes like the one that they're following. And we've been looking at the lives of the people who have gone before us, who followed Jesus. And we said there's this ancient wisdom, this ancient word, this ancient way that is the path through this modern world that as we look back on those who have gone before us in the midst of every circumstance, every situation, every generation, they took the ancient path. And we're called to do the same. And so this has been a big series. It's been a weighty series. It's been a challenging series.

It's been a convicting series. I hope it's been an inspiring series. And what we've done is we've really just kind of gone at it. There's been passion I think that you've seen. There's a directness that you've seen. There's an urgency, a gravity, a weightiness to this. And some of you are like, yeah, look, I can tell something's different in this series. But what is it and why and why we've been so long in this series? And why is there so much like passion and burden coming out of you as we talk about it? Well, if you go all the way back to the beginning of this year, I had the sense from the Lord that I shared with you right at the beginning of the year. And it was simply this, that this might be the most important year in your spiritual journey. Remember that? We said that 2020 took so many of us and spun things so around and I had the sense from the Lord and I shared with you at every series we've had this year that if -- that if you don't deal with the things that got set in motion in 2020, then there are behaviors and patterns and beliefs and perspectives that will get so ingrained in your life that you may never get them out.

That you might wake up 5, 10, 20 years down the road and ask yourself the question how did I get here? And so all year we've been talking about what does it really mean to be a disciple, to turn our hearts back to the Lord, to build a discipleship culture? And so there's a weightiness and a gravity and an urgency because I'm tired of watching people get off the ancient path and run down the road of this world. And so if you're like what is with the intensity in your voice? It's that. It's I want to see you experience life. And what I've been trying to tell you in this whole series is there is no third road. There is a road of this world, a wide road that leads to destruction, a way of comfort and convenience and personal happiness that says, come one, come all, let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

Come do what you want, when you want, how you want. But in the end it leads to destruction and death. And then there's an ancient path, a narrow road, a good way with a small gate. And this road simply whispers, come die that you might live. Come be a servant that you

might become great. Come lose your life that you may find it. And this is the way of Jesus. There's no middle road. And too often we convince ourselves, deceive ourselves, trick ourselves into thinking we're walking down this third road. And that's what I see so many of us have gotten lost from all the chaos of the last two years. And that's why we keep saying this year is so important to get your feet and your heart and your hands and your life and your mind and your eyes back on Jesus because otherwise the third road that doesn't exist becomes the world of the -- the road of the world and we become comfortable in it and it starts to become too normal to us.

And so I want to use a lot of verses today and really just kind of let Scripture speak for itself as we pull this whole thing together. And I know I've been telling you that there's only two roads this whole series and some of you you're like, yeah, yeah, that's just this verse or that verse. Let me just show you this real quick, that this is from Genesis to Revelation. Like this is important to God and He wants us to get it. If you go all the way back to Genesis chapter 2, in the middle of the garden where the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Two paths. If you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will die. If you eat of the tree of life, you will live. Then we get to Deuteronomy as the Israelites are going into the Promised Land and God says, "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God. Listen to his voice and hold fast to him for the Lord is your life."

Two roads, life and death. Blessings and curses. Now choose life, he says. Make a choice. Then you get to Jeremiah, the verse that we've used this whole series, "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls." He says there is a crossroads and over here is the modern road of the world and over here is the ancient path of Jesus. Ask for it. Look for it. Walk in it. Choose it. It goes on we get to Jesus, enter through the narrow gate for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it but small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.

There is a wide road that leads to destruction and there is a narrow road with a small gate that leads to life. Only two options. Many walk down this, only a few choose this. Are you catching the pattern here? Well, it goes on. There's more pattern for you. "For sin shall not be your master because you are not under law but under grace." You're either under grace or under law. You're either under the undeserved favor and forgiveness and freedom of God or you are under the weight, demands, expectations and consequences of the law. There is no third road. He goes on, "So I will say walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." There is the flesh and there is the spirit and you are either walking in the freedom of the spirit or the bondage of the flesh. Are you with me on all this? One more all the way to Revelation.

So it started in Genesis, goes all the way to Revelation. Here's Jesus, I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you are one or the other. But since you are

like lukewarm water neither hot nor cold I will spit you out of my mouth." There is hot and there is cold. There is the way of life and there is the way of death. From Genesis to Revelation, God is trying to get our attention to say you stand at a crossroads, now choose life. Choose me. Choose the ancient wisdom, the ancient word and the ancient way and his name is Jesus. You see, this entire series could be summarized in this, this is a series of lordship. It's a series of obedience. It's a series of whom and what are you going to trust and whom or what are you going to choose.

Because literally, every one of these two paths, it's a choice and you make a decision of your life and only you get to choose for you which way you want to go and what becomes normal and acceptable, what becomes the way that you live your life. In fact, Jesus tells us -- he says a student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. In other words, we're all in training. And as we're getting trained, we're becoming like the one who's training us. We're becoming like our teacher. And so if you want to know who your teacher is, all you have to do is look at your life and say who are you becoming like. So the question for you in 2021 is simply this, are you becoming more like the world or more like Jesus? Because that's who you're being trained by, which ultimately means that's who's your master and your lord.

Like if you're practicing more and more of the ways of the world, the way the world thinks and talks and acts and lives and believes, then the world is your master. But if you're practicing the way of Jesus and you start to think like, talk like, act like, live like, believe like more like Jesus, then Jesus is your master. He's your teacher, you're his student. And you're in the process of being shaped and molded and conformed more into his image and his likeness. And so much of what the series has been about is trying to bring you to an honest assessment of where you are. Because it's so easy to say, oh yeah, I'm a student of Jesus. Jesus is my master. He's my teacher. But if I'm becoming more and more like the world, Jesus tells me that no, no, no, the world is then actually my master and my teacher and I'm learning to practice its ways instead of his ways, which is why the Bible tells us, "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourself, do what it says."

I think we so deceive ourselves. I think we deceive ourselves thinking that we come to the gathering of the church or we watch online and take the message in and we have this knowledge and this information and we're a good person. And we hear all these things that Jesus invites us and asks us to do, but we don't actually do them. So we deceive ourselves because we're convinced we're living in this third road reality that doesn't actually exist. And if this is the most important year in your spiritual life, then you got to kind of like wake up to the reality of where you are so you can make a decision about where you want to go. Does that make sense to you? I mean there's a great story in John chapter 6. Jesus has just fed the crowd, the 5,000, with the bread and the fish. It's this great miracle moment and everyone's all excited about it.

And they want more. And they're hanging out with Jesus. And then he starts teaching them some things that they didn't like. He says, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no part with me." Eat your flesh? Drink your blood? Who is this guy? And they start grumbling and murmuring among themselves and they say, this is a hard teaching. Who can accept it? And maybe one of the saddest verses in the Bible say, "From this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him." They didn't like what he said. It was uncomfortable. It was inconvenient. It was mysterious. It didn't make sense. They didn't know how to put it all together. It didn't make sense in their logical minds because it was supernatural wisdom. And they just decided like, this guy, he's gone too far. I can't do this. It was a crossroads moment. And they decided because it's uncomfortable and inconvenient and mysterious and I don't understand it, I'm out.

And while all kinds of disciples are literally turning and walking away from Jesus, he looks at the 12. This is -- read it. He looks at the 12 and says, "Do you want to go too?" While he's watching his entire group of disciples leave, he looks at the 12 and he's like, hey, you can go too if you want. That's not what I would do. I would be like, okay, you guys. Will you stay here with me? I promise I'll make it easier. We'll make it a little less intense. I'll make it a little more fluffy for you so you feel good. You want to go too? In other words, I can't change the kingdom. And I can't make the ancient path look like the modern world. And I can't bring down my standards and my life and my grace and my goodness. So do you want to go too? And Peter looks right back at him and says, "Lord, to whom else should we go? You alone have the words of life."

In other words, Peter says, we've been there, done that, tried it and in the end it leads to death and destruction. So Jesus, we don't have a clue what you're saying either and it kind of creeps us out a little bit too to be honest and it is uncomfortable and inconvenient and it's mysterious, but in this crossroads moment, we choose you. And so I show you this verse because there's a soberness to this verse, but I think there's a propheticness to this verse for our church. Are you ready for this? From this time, I think many Valley Creekers are going to turn toward Him and start following Him.

From this time, from this crossroads moment, I don't think you're turning back and no longer following him. I think this crossroads moment, many Valley Creekers are going to turn towards Him with their heart, and their mind, and their emotions, and their feelings, and their trust, and lordship, and feet and directions and start following Him into the fullness of the life that He offers. I don't believe this is a crossroads moment where you're going back and you're retreating and you're saying, too much, mysterious, don't like it, don't get it, uncomfortable, inconvenient. I think this is a crossroads moment of your life where you're like, I'm not there, I'm not where I want to be, but you know what, today, I choose Jesus and I'm going to start moving in that direction. And the reason I believe that's true is because I think there's more for you than against you. I think there's more drawing you down the ancient path than drawing you down this world. I mean just check this with me. Come on, you got the grace of God drawing you down the ancient path right now. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has

appeared to all men --" including you -- "and grace teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions --" the way of this world -- "and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives --" the ancient path in this present age, like right now -- "Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own --" ready? -- "eager to do what is good."

The grace of God not only forgives you, it empowers you. It is the undeserved favor of God but it's also the supernatural empowerment of God that begins to change your mind, change your heart, change your perspective and empower you to say no to the things of this world and say yes to the things of God. Why? Because now within you is actually an eagerness to do what is good. The grace of God literally makes you a new creation, gives you a new identity, a new nature, which means you are now hardwired to follow God. You actually long to obey God more than you actually desire to live in this world.

Now, you may not feel like that every day and it may not look like that in your current life, but if you've been saved then guess what? Within you, the grace of God has transformed you to this place where you are more eager to do what is good than eager to do what is wrong. And it's the grace of God that's teaching you, and changing you, and molding you, and drawing you and empowering you to walk down this ancient path. So you've got the grace of God actually drawing you down the ancient path. And not only do you have the grace of God, you have the Spirit of God. Jesus says, "When he, the Holy Spirit, comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. In regard to sin because men do not believe in me, in regard to righteousness because I'm going to the father where you can see me no longer, and in regard to judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned." You're like, that's a big verse that's a little overwhelming. Let's simplify it. Jesus says the Holy Spirit will come to convict us. He says he's come to convict the world of sin.

In other words, he wants to convict the world that they are on a path that leads to death and destruction and they need a savior who has come and his name is Jesus. That sounds pretty good, don't you think? And not only that, the Holy Spirit has come to convict believers of righteousness. That we've already been made right with God. God made him, Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. We've been made right with God once and for all and now the Holy Spirit is in our lives as believers to remind us that we've been made right with God and we don't have to live down to the world anymore. So when we start dabbling in the things of the world, the Holy Spirit is convicting us not to shame us or make us feel bad, no, no. He's kind of saying like, hey, you know what, like you've already been set free from this. You don't have to live down to this. You're over here on the ancient path, the high road. You've been empowered to walk in victory and freedom. You don't have to go down, that's beneath you, that's below you. You've been set free.

You don't want to go back and be a slave anymore. No, no, no. You've been made right with God once and for all. Now let's keep moving down this road. And not only that, he wants to

convict us that Satan has already been judged, that Satan has already been defeated once and for all, all authority belongs to Jesus. We have the victory so nothing Satan can do can keep you from walking the ancient path if you so choose Jesus. So we've got the grace of God, we've got the Spirit of God and we've also got the people of God drawing us down this path. You remember the story of the paralytic? Jesus comes to town and there's this paralyzed man and he can't get to Jesus, so his friends pick him up and carry him to Jesus. Some men came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four of them, here's what I want to say to you, you have the people of God literally carrying you to and down the ancient path. You might be sitting there and you might be like, I don't have a single friend in this church. That's okay.

The family of God that's on mission that's moving down this path is creating momentum, and draft, and energy and life. And because they're giving, and serving, and walking, and believing, and praying, and interceding, and leading, and blessing and prophesying, it's literally creating a wake, a draft, a draw that's literally pulling you down this path so that you might find freedom. We pick each other up and carry each other to say, come on, this is the way of life, let's keep going. So we've got the people of God carrying us, drawing us down the path. And then we've got the word of God. "Every Scripture, for it is God breathed --" ready? "will empower you by its instruction and correction, giving you the strength to take the right direction and lead you to lead you deeper into the path of godliness. The word of God is literally empowering you, strengthening you and leading you down the ancient path.

It's supernatural. It's living and active. The words Jesus speaks to you are spirit and they are life. So you've got the grace of God, the Spirit of God, the people of God and the word of God all leading you down the ancient path. I'm just telling you, ain't no temptation, ain't no media, ain't no news outlet, ain't no social media platform or program, ain't no addiction, ain't no brokenness have a stronger pull to be able to pull you down the way of the world.

We just have to learn to believe in the power of these things. I mean do you remember the story in 2 Kings chapter 6, it's Elijah and his servant and they're in this city and the enemy comes against them and as far as they can see the enemy surrounds the city. And the servant begins to panic, he's like, we're going to die, this is terrible. Elijah, what are we going to do?

And Elijah just looks at the servant. He goes, hey, there's more for us than are against us. And the servant looks back out over the horizon and the city walls, he's like, Elijah, you crazy because I don't see nothing but the enemy. And Elijah prays, Lord, open his eyes that he might see. And as he looks again as far as he can see, he sees horses and chariots of fire, the supernatural power of God for them, more than what's against them. Can I just tell you? Open your eyes because the grace, the Spirit, the people and the word of God are more for you. They are the supernatural power of God for you and that's greater than anything in this world that can be against you. And it's designed to empower you, to inspire you, to challenge you, but to strengthen you to walk down this ancient path.

I mean this is why Jesus's main message was repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. You realize every time he says that, it was his main message, it was a crossroads moment. It's like repent. Don't feel bad. Don't feel shame. Don't feel get -- no, no. Repent. Change your mind about what is life and then change your direction to align with your new way of thinking. And so my hope and my prayer for you in this series is that there's a deep sense of conviction and a deep sense of repentance over what is life and what is following Jesus looks like and which direction am I going, in which direction do I want to be going? Come on, Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I'll 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 for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Do you realize Matthew 11 is literally like a -- like the same thing Jeremiah 6:16 has been saying? Come to me you who are at a crossroads, you who are weary and burdened, you who are discouraged and defeated, who are tired, who are broken, who feel in bondage, who feel like it's hard to wake up and live and find any level of life. Come to me and I will give you rest. And it's only in me where you will find rest for your souls. Why? Because Jesus is the ancient path. He's the ancient wisdom, he's the ancient word, he's the ancient way. And if we will just come to him, learn from him, practice the ways of Jesus, we will find the rest that we are so desperately looking for.

Come on, maybe you used to be walking down the ancient path, a year ago, two years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago, a week ago and you feel like you've drifted. You feel like you've fallen off. You feel like you've gotten tangled up and lost and you find yourself now in this ways of this world thinking, and talking, and acting, and living and believing like the world. Come on, this is Jesus calling out to you saying, come on, right now come to me. Right now, come to me. Come on. Right now, I have opened a door for you. I am the narrow gate. I am the small road, but I have opened it for you. Come to me and I will give you the rest you so desperately long for. But you have to make the choice. And I know as we've gone through the series, we've talked a lot about the ancient path and the narrow road and kind of probably painted this picture that it's this hard to take journey and path.

Even the logo, it makes it look like, oh, that's a hard to do thing. But if you can catch this flip, Jesus says his way is easy and light, which means you are actually created and empowered to take the ancient path which means you have everything you need for life and godliness in him. And as a believer, it's not the hardest path to take, it's actually the easiest path to take when the grace and the Spirit and the people and the word of God are active in my life. In fact, look what Jeremiah says later on in the book of Jeremiah. He says -- talking about his people, he says, "He says, they have lost their way stumbling from the ancient path of blessing. Now, they walk in the ruts of rebellion instead of taking the high road of obedience."

So if you can catch it, what he's actually saying is the ancient path is the high road of blessing. It's the road that's built up. It's the road that's paved. It's the road that doesn't wander and

wind and go up and down and zig and zag. No, no, no, it's the easiest most simple best road to take he says the way of the world is ruts, it's muddy, it's full of thorns and thistles. And it's difficult and it winds and it causes you to get lost. He's reminding us that this is actually the easier path to take. Or how about in Isaiah when Isaiah says, "And a highway will be there and it will be called the way of holiness a." A highway of holiness. And the unclean will not journey on it. It will be for those who walk in that way, the way of Jesus. Wicked fools will not go about on it. And no lion will be there nor will any ferocious beast get up on it they will not be found there but only the redeemed will walk there and the ransom of the Lord will return and they will enter Zion with singing everlasting joy will crown their heads, gladness and joy will overtake them and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Anybody else want that in there? Some everlasting joy, some gladness and joy to overtake you, some sorrow and some sign to flee away. What is he saying? It's a highway of holiness. Think of a highway -- a highway, it's been paved, it's been created, it's been laid out all the hard work has been done and you're like, but I'm not holy. In Jesus you already are. If you ever spend any time in our church with our church that's all we try to teach you is who you are in Jesus because it changes how you read the rest of the Bible. A highway of holiness. Oh my goodness, Jesus has made the way for me.

And I'm already Holy and I'm already righteous and I've already been set apart. Now he's empowered me to live a life that's holy, and live a life that's righteous and live like I'm set apart. And there's no beasts, no lions and no things to get me up here. Why? Because it's the road built up. And the redeemed will walk there and the ransom will return. Have you been redeemed by Jesus? Have you been ransomed by him? Then he says, this is the path that I have made for you. You are created and empowered to take the ancient path which is a highway of holiness that accelerates and moves you towards the life that God created for you. Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the lord.

In some ways this is the summary of this series. Let us examine our ways. Let us take an honest evaluation of our own life and not just like what we say we believe, and not just the knowledge that we have, and not just the information, and not just that little verse that's on our social media handle, let us examine our ways and test them. Am I thinking, acting, talking, living and believing like the world or am I thinking, talking, acting, living and believing like Jesus?

Sometimes we have to be honest about where we are so we can then get where we want to go. This is why this series, we have to look back so we can move forward, so we can return to the lord anywhere where we've left, anywhere where we've drifted, anywhere where we've allowed the world to tell us what's normal. I mean I've tried to be so direct with you in this series about just saying things like that this is what the world says is normal and we're starting to get deceived as believers and believe that this is okay and normative and fine and it's no big deal. But you've got to examine your way and test it and say, what does Jesus actually say



about that? And that's my invitation to return to the Lord through a heart posture of repentance.

And I love it says return to the Lord. Like you should need no other reason than because he is Lord. He's worthy. He's the creator, the sustainer and the redeemer of all things. He is the ancient of days, the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, the great I am, the rock of the ages, the good shepherd, the way, the truth and the life. And in some ways that just needs to be enough, not what am I going to get out of it and how blessed will my life be and what will -- what will I get out of the deal. No, no, just because he is and he says, I will. Because he is and he says, I will.

From this time many Valley Creekers are going to turn towards him and follow him because if not now, when? Hey, let me just look some of you right in the eye right now. If not now, when? What are you waiting for? What are you waiting to change? When you get married? When your kids grow up? When you finally retire? When that circumstance change? When the situation's over? When the hardship is -- you'd just come up with the next reason why not. If not now, when?

The great burden that so many of you can pick up from me in this series from here and so many of you that I've talked to throughout the week, that you can just see on my face, and in my persona, is because I know if you hear all of this series and you still choose to go this way, your heart just became that much harder. And so there's a gravity and an urgency and a weightiness to say, today is the day of salvation. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Look for the ancient path, choose it, take it. From this time, decide that this is me and my house and we will serve and follow the Lord.

Come on, let's be an old school church. Old school church. No, I'm not talking about bringing back, you know, hymns and organs. Let's be an old-school church that takes the ancient path, that are people with character, and integrity, and passion, and lordship, and trust, and submission, and honor, and mission and purpose and life. Like let's be old school to believe that Jesus is real, that his word is truth and that his ways are life. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." If we walk in his ways we will discover his truth and we will experience his life. So let us return to the lord by just being honest with ourselves of where we are. Last verse, stand -- come on, stand at the crossroads, look -- look at you, your life, where you want to go and then ask for the ancient path.

Excuse me, I'm looking for the ancient path. Ask where the good way is. I'm also looking for the good way. And then walk in it. Walk in it and you'll find rest for your soul. See, it doesn't go reversed. It doesn't say, find rest for your soul and then start walking in it and then you can look and ask for what you want. No, no, no, no. It says stand at the crossroads and look, make an honest assessment of your life and which way you want to go. Then ask where it is, look for

it, seek it, walk it and then you will find rest for your soul. This is the way of Jesus. This is the ancient future.

Let's be people who believe that the grace of God, the Spirit of God, the people of God and the word of God are strong enough to pull me out of the world and lead me into his kingdom. I declare over you that this crossroads moment from this time, you will follow him and no longer turn back. So close your eyes with me. Come on. Jesus, we need you. We look to you we ask for your grace and your Spirit and your people and your word to help us get from where we are to where you want us to go.

Lord, would you break off the things of this world that have deceived us, and confused us, and trapped us, and tricked us and entangled us? Would you break them off that we might be free to walk down this path of life that you have created and empowered us to take. Holy Spirit, I ask that you would stir up a deep sense of conviction and repentance in our hearts. Holy Spirit, would you come and do that which we can't. Break through the hard parts of our hearts, break through the wounds and the pain and the brokenness. Open our eyes that we might see where we've been deceived and what is truth and then empower us and strengthen us to choose Jesus.

When you realize this whole series that's literally -- it's not even like what -- it's just choosing Jesus. So maybe even in your own way right now at this crossroads moment, can I just invite you to make a choice to choose Jesus? Maybe just in your own heart, in your own mind, in your own way, can you just even visualize yourself turning your feet, and your heart, and your mind and your gaze towards Jesus, the way of life?

Choose life that you and your children may live. For the lord is your life. Jesus, may we be an old school kind to church that chooses to take the ancient path in a modern world. May we be the few that find it, and live it, and believe it, and walk it and help others discover it.

You can sense I don't want to land the plane because some of you are still on that tension point. And maybe it takes you all week to wrestle through it. That's okay, wrestle through it. Wrestle through it. Lord, I want it to be true but I don't feel it. Lord, I want it to be real but I -- but I'm just not there. Lord, I want to go in that direction but I can't logically understand how it will work out practically in my life. Ask him, wrestle with it. He is not afraid of your questions, your doubts, your concerns, your worries, but bring them to him, not to the people of this world because he wants you to walk on this path even more than you.

So thank you, Lord, that he who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it. So I declare that you're at work, you're going to bring things to completion and from this time, many Valley Creekers are turning their feet, their hearts, their minds, their lives towards you and will follow you with their heart, mind, soul and strength. We love you Jesus. Thank you for your way, in your name we pray, amen.