

Valley Creek is a movement of hope for the city and beyond. It is good to be together today. It's good to be the church gathered at church. And I just want to start by saying, I'm loving it. I'm like McDonald's, I'm loving it. I'm loving what God is doing. I'm loving how He's moving. I'm loving the faith that I see released. I'm loving what He's doing among us as we've lifted up the name of Jesus. All December long, we've been in a series called The Name Behind Christmas. And we've been taking time to just lift up the name of Jesus in preparation for all of the Christmas season. And it's been good. And I'm enjoying all of what I'm seeing. And I'm loving lifting up the name of Jesus because it's lifting our heads, it's renewing our minds, it's settling our hearts, and God is moving. You see, Christmas is when God finally put a face to His name. After thousands of years of waiting and wondering what God looked like that first Christmas, He put a face to His name in the form of a baby in a manger.

That's when hope came down so that we could rise up. That's when Jesus came down and showed us what God looks like and what He's actually like. And so, I feel like it's a little bit like when parents go to their littles and they just are like, "Hey, just gently touch their chin. Hey, just look at me for a second. Up, up here, look up here. Look, look, look, look." That's what Jesus is doing with us right now. He's lifting our heads. He's lifting our heads to see Him. High and lifted up, exalted where He deserves to be. And I think it's moving all through our church right now. In fact, I even got to see something kind of cool in a conference room here, in a staff conference room. Somebody had written this onto the whiteboard. And it was the name's from Isaiah Chapter 9, that Jesus will be called Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God and Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. But then, they wrote around it some of the anecdotal kind of ideas and thoughts that they had with it.

I first want to say, whatever staff member that was, you have excellent handwriting. Well done, well done. But what I really want to do is I want to just declare some of this over us. Jesus is Wonderful Counselor. So, for you, may your entire season with Jesus be full of wonder. May you see amazing things, that hope really moves into every area of your life. May you have this counselor, this next level discernment in decision making and in relationships and in life. May you know that God is mighty. He has all the authority, and Satan has none. And so, may you have a confidence that God is mightier than whatever you're facing right now. And that God is Yahweh, He is the great I Am. Side note, if you have never listened to the Yahweh series from 2023, you need to go on to Valkyrie Plus. It's incredible. It's about the goodness of God. It will lift your head this Christmas season.

God is everlasting. Seasons may change, God doesn't. Things may be different, God's not. He's the same yesterday, today and forever. God's a good father. So, may He be a father to those fatherless places, those orphan places inside of our hearts this Christmas, bringing His comfort, His love, His protection. And God is a Prince of Peace. And it's not just peace for like a little while, it's like all the time. Comprehensive, flourishing, shalom, wholeness in every part of life. Included with the Jesus, and when we lift up His name, included in His name is all of the realities and the emotions and the attributes of what He's like. So, when we speak out those

names and we write them on a whiteboard, when we look at them and let them just take place in our minds, it changes us. Jesus changes us. So, all semester, all December long, we've been lifting up the name of Jesus in this series, and we've been just speaking out His name into the atmosphere.

And we try to just call upon the name of the Lord. One of His names in the Old Testament, one of the names of Jesus is just The Lord. Capital The, capital Lord. So, I don't want to call this into the atmosphere right now. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face to you and give you peace. See, the next verse after that says, "They will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them. Put my name on." Can I ask you this? Have you put on the name of Jesus? Or more specifically, has Jesus ever gotten to put His name on you? Like a banner over your life, like written on the walls of your heart, do you wear His name?

Because God gives us His name so we can put on His name. He tells us who He is so we can show the world who He is. He wants to invite us to put on His name. And we've been working through the different names of Jesus that are kind of connected to Christmas, like Prince of Peace and Emmanuel, and it's time for just one more today that's simply this. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. They will have the light of life." Jesus is the light of the world. But not just the light of the world, the light of your world, my world. So, can I ask you, have you felt like things are a little dark recently? Has it felt like you maybe are just stumbling around day to day, moment to moment, thing to thing? I'm talking like stumbling. I'm talking like middle of the night trying to go to the bathroom, but instead of running into the door this way, you're running the long way, which is the worst.

I'm talking about like going through your living room, like stepping on the Legos. It's dark. Like, I can't see the light. Because Jesus wants to be that light in your life, because He's the light of the world. He's the light of your world. There's a caveat to the verse that says, "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness." I think what that means is, if we don't follow, we're going to stumble, we're going to fall, we're going to trip, we're going to bounce into things, and we're going to just kind of stumble through life. But when we follow, Jesus is with us. He's our light. He guides our path. In fact, He calls himself the light of life. In Him is life, and that life is the light of us. Another way to think of that is when you understand that the sun has risen, your life is going to have a lot of sunrise. You're going to be able to see in the darkness. It's going to be this illumination. When you live in the presence of the sun, there's a whole bunch of sunlight all over your life.

But I think what happens to us sometimes, the reason it's difficult to see Jesus as the light of the world is because Jesus says that your eyes are a lamp to your body. And so, whatever you look at starts to come into you. If your eyes are full of light, your whole body will be full of light. If your eyes are full of darkness, it's going to feel pretty dark within. Another way to say that is whatever you stare at, you stare towards. Whatever you behold, you become. So, if you look at

Jesus, the resurrection and the life, the light of the world, your whole life will be filled with light. When we look at everything else, man is going to be dark. How dark will that darkness be in our life? This Christmas, has your Christmas been Jesus-focused, looking to the light of the world? As we lift our heads, are you looking up at Him? Are you seeing Him for what He truly is? One of my encouragements to you is don't spend so much time just only trying to push out the darkness. Just let so much light in, you don't have to.

Like next week, when you think about Christmas, and when you light a candle next week, I want you to think, that candle's about like, it's about that big, in about this big a space. But that light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can't overcome it. So, the goal is not, "Oh, I can get the darkness out. I'm so filled with light, there's no room for it." And that is one of the pictures of Christmas. Jesus is the light of the world. He declares himself that over our life and over our church, but then He also says something kind of interesting. He goes on to say in Matthew 5, "You are the light of the world." A city on a hill can't be hidden, nor does a person light a lamp and put it under a basket. They put it on a lamp stand, it gives light to everybody who's in the house. So, therefore, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works, and glorify God on the day He returns, your Father in heaven.

So, Jesus says, "I'm the light of the world," and then He switches it, "You're the light of the world." He's the light of the world, you're the light of the world. He's the light of the world, you're the – which one is it? It's both, because His light is shining so brightly inside of us, the people take notice. He actually puts His name upon us. We carry the name, the light of the world. Here's a question for you. Do you know what the word Christian actually means? Christian means little Christ. A lot of scholars think it was like a derogatory term to try to make fun of early believers, but that's the moniker. We're a little Christ. There's a little light inside of us that shines brightly for all the world to see. So, listen, when you call me Christian, you're not making fun of me. You're telling me, man, I look like Jesus. I follow Jesus. I listen to Jesus. And if His light is inside of me, then my life can be a light to others. I think one of the invitations for us at this Christmas is that a lot of us live our life like a half lit up Christmas tree.

You know when you go to get your Christmas tree and you pull it out of the attic and it's been like 105-degree heat all August long and you're like, "I'm hoping for the best." And then, you plug that thing in, it's got like half the lights. I think a lot of us live our life that way. Not actually plugged into the source. Not realizing Jesus is the light of the world. He calls me to be the light of the world. Why is that? I think it's because we look at everything else except for Jesus, and so we don't actually take in the light, lift our heads, light comes inside of us, shines out of us, and we have an amazing opportunity. Why? Because next week is Christmas. And at this time of year, so many people's hearts are open to saying, "I just need some light in my darkness. I just need somebody to like show me where to go. I'm stumbling all over the place. Bathroom doors and Legos, that's what my life looks like."

"And I need somebody to show me what light actually looks like in their life." I want to first tell you that one week from now during our Christmas services, they're going to be incredible. Incredible. And people's hearts are going to be open and we're going to have an experience and we're going to meet with Jesus. We're going to have like first Christmas kind of Christmas, where Mary was full of faith in the Holy Spirit, where the shepherds were full of awe and wonder, where the wise men are like full of reverence and worship. That's what it's going to be like. You do not want to miss any of it. And we have an opportunity. Matthew 28 says it like this, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations. Be a movement of hope, actually move." Can I just say, the mission is urgent? The vision is clear. We're a movement, which means we actually have to go and we have to engage, and we have to have the conversations, and we have to let our light shine brightly in the darkness.

We can't lose sight of it all week long. Look at what it says here in Jeremiah 29. "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city," a movement of hope for the city and beyond, "to which I've carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for if it prospers, you too will prosper." Where we live and the people we engage with and the conversations we have, when those things start to prosper in Jesus' name, everything prospers. But there's a command. We're supposed to pray to the Lord for it. We are supposed to pray to the Lord for it. So, here's what we're going to do. Today, we're going to pray to the Lord for it, for the peace and the prosperity of our city, for an amazing Christmas, for God to move among us this next week. You see, contrary to popular opinion, we, the organization of Valley Creek, we're not having Christmas next week.

We, the people of God, are having Christmas next week. Like, the leaders of our church, we're not just hosting Christmas, we, the body of Christ, is hosting Christmas. And we've been learning to be people of prayer and to pray boldly and to believe that God answers. And that if we ask and we seek and we knock, He goes on our behalf, He moves forward into all of life and He changes things when we pray. So, in just a moment, I'm going to invite you to pray for Christmas. You see, we did this right before Easter. We saw a profound move of God. The future is going to be defined by prayer, not just by like going through the motions because when we pray, things change. So, we're going to lead you through five different prayer prompts and verses. You're going to pray, we're going to have Christmas. And if you're thinking, "Well, what do I do? How do I do that?" Listen, it's going to be on the screen. You can just do as a simple, it's just like praying what's on the screen and just believing that the Lord is going to answer that.

We're going to lift our voices. We're going to lift the faith in the room. We're going to use our energy now for the people who don't have energy then. We're going to raise our faith now for the people that don't have enough faith for it then. We're going to pray for Christmas. So, let me invite you, go ahead and stand up, stand up at all the campuses. I'm going to give you a chance, if you want to take a step to just move a little bit down the aisles, whatever you feel comfortable with, man, we are praying people. My encouragement to you is as we pray, think of that person. Think of the person you want to pray for, that grandma, that mom, that student

that's far from God. That person who's somebody, somebody, they want more than anything to experience the light of the world, the name behind Christmas. Here's the first thing we're going to pray, that I would be a hope carrier. Jesus said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, the workers are few. We got to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out hope carriers." So, during Christmas time, are people going to experience hope?

Man, I sure hope so, because we are going to be hope carriers. They're going to experience us and the light and the life inside of us. So, come on, at all your campuses, wherever you're at, begin to raise your voice and pray that I would be a hope carrier.

The light inside of us shine brightly. The hope inside of us will shine. And we call out the hope of Jesus for the broken people, lost. We need you, Jesus. We need you, oh, Lord. Shine on us, Christ Jesus. We can't live without you. We can't live without you. You are our hope, you are our light, you are our salvation. You our light and salvation.

So, Jesus, we just prayed that we would be hope carriers. That there'd be so much light inside of us that people would take notice, they would want that. And we carry that hope into every conversation, every interaction, everywhere we go across our campuses, and everywhere we go in the city. We know that when we seek that peace in the city and when we carry that hope, hope carriers, that the city will prosper.

Jesus, will you go before us, will you give us this confidence, this boldness? I'm not just showing up, I'm not just coming to a Christmas service to experience it, I'm carrying the hope of Jesus with us. So, Jesus, show us who we are. Remind us of who we are as a church. We want to carry your hope this Christmas.

All right, come on, we're going to keep praying. Is that okay? Let's raise our faith level. Let's raise our faith in the room. God is here with us, He wants us to pray. This is what I want to pray for Christmas, is that I would be anointed to serve this Christmas. So, you would be anointed to serve this Christmas. So, as we pray this, pray this for yourself first. This is what the Scripture says, it says each person is given something to do that shows who God is. Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. This is talking about the body of Christ. This is the body of Christ being the body of Christ. So, if you have a part of your body that's not working, that's not great, we want all of the body of Christ to serve and to be a part this Christmas.

That means the greatest form of love that you can show this Christmas is going to be serving. That's what the body does. So, whether it's you're leading a team or whether you are opening doors or you're helping people get to their seats or you're out in the parking lot or you see a piece of trash that needs to be picked up in the parking lot or you go and pick up a friend that you're saying, "Hey, I'm going to serve them by getting them here to a Christmas service." Can we just pray that God would anoint you to serve? Come on, can you just lift your voice right now and just say, "God, help me." All the opportunities that you want to show, God, would

you show it to us right now in the name of Jesus? You've created us to serve. You've created us to be a servant to the body of Christ and to those around us. So, God, would you anoint us to serve? Come on, pray that out right now.

Father, you've placed every single person and you've given every single person the right place to where they can serve. And so, this Christmas, God, would you just open up opportunities that no man can shut, no door can be shut because you're opening the way to serve and to love the body of Christ, our city around us, the people in our lives. Thank you, God, that you are with us. Thank you, Jesus, that you came and served us first so that we can go and serve others. So, we love you, Lord. We're grateful that we get to serve in the name of Jesus.

So, come on, keep thinking about that person, that family member, that co-worker, and let's pray that we would all leave differently, that we would all leave changed. See, the first Christmas, God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod, not to go back to the world, so they return to their own country by a different way. You see, every year, we prepare an excellent Christmas experience, but it's not about the service. It's about encountering Jesus.

It's about having an encounter with God because His presence changes everything. It's His presence that cuts us to the heart. So, begin to pray that we would all leave differently, that we would leave changed because we met with Jesus.

So, Jesus, I pray that we would all meet with you. Would your presence fill this place? Would it fill each of our campuses as we get to gather for Christmas because your presence changes everything? Will we come to meet with you?

Will we have an encounter with you in a new and a fresh way? Would you cut us to the heart, Holy Spirit? Would your words cut us to the heart and we would be open to living a different way? Would we all live differently? Would we all live changed because we met with you? Would people take note that we had been with Jesus in Jesus' name?

Can I just encourage you, church, right now, your prayers are making a difference. Your prayers are making a difference. You may not be able to see it, you may not be able to sense it, but in the supernatural, there are people that are going to say yes to the invitation because of your prayer. So, let's not be weary in it. Let's continue to pray because you see, Christmas is supposed to be a time of joy. It's supposed to be a time of peace. But oh, how often the hustle and bustle of the world wants to distract us from our peace. It wants to rob us from our joy. But can we just make a decision that we are not going to allow that to happen?

That the attention and the affection of our heart is not going to be stolen. May we learn from Mary, this young girl whose life was interrupted. Don't you know she had some questions? Don't you know there was a little chaos and stress? And yet look what the Scripture says. It

says, "But Mary was treasuring up all of these things in her heart," to catch that last line, "meditating on them." So, can we just make a decision right now? I am not going to let the world distract me from treasuring up Jesus this Christmas season. I am going to keep my eyes focused on Him. I am going to meditate on Him. I am going to meditate on the gift of love and joy and peace that came that first Christmas. Begin to pray that now, church, for you and for those that are coming. We will not be distracted, but we will treasure up Jesus in our hearts.

So, right now, I just want to invite you. I sense that there are some people in this room. Maybe there's some people at other campuses that something is wanting to distract you from Jesus this Christmas. I just sense that. So, Lord, I just speak in Jesus' name that will fall to the ground. There is nothing that will replace the name of Jesus. There is nothing that will have a greater affection in our heart than Jesus. There is nothing that will keep us from lifting up and meditating on and celebrating the King of kings, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of lords, Jesus. We say that you are our one thing, and you are the only thing, not just Christmas, but every day that follows it. We make a decision today, Jesus, to put you in your rightful place on top of the throne, and we will carry you there all year long.

All right. All right, one more. One more. Fighting for those that can't fight for themselves, declaring the things that are not as though they are, calling out spiritual realities all across the Christmas services. Here's the last one, that we would just meet with God, because if He's not here, it's like not worth it. Like, it doesn't matter, that we would meet with God. Surely the Lord is in this place, and we would be aware of it, because He's going to be in this place. So, come on, raise your voice, raise your faith. Let's meet with God this Christmas. Let's call it out. We want to meet you, God. You are the main thing. If your spirit's not here, if you don't build this house for me. We hope we want to meet with you. We want to live like the spirit is actually real, like you're real. We want to meet with you.

You're the everything, you're the reason for Christmas. You are our hope, you are our salvation, the reason we came. You are the reason we came. We want to meet with you, and when we meet with you everything changes. When we meet with you, our life changes. We want to meet with you across this place.

So, God, we just declare, we want to meet with you. You're the main thing, you're the only thing, you're the one thing. You are the reason, not just for this season, for every season. You're the reason that we gather as a church, and we are a people. And you're the reason that we have Christmas services in the first place. And so, would you be here? Would you move among us? Would your spirit be so tangible that people can't help but take notice? And they would say, "Surely God was in this place. And we experienced it, we felt it, and we're aware of it. And we just go back to our life the way that we do life, we're going Jesus's way. Not the way that we do our family, we give it to Jesus. Not the way we go to work every single day, we give it. We give our lives, our work, all of it to Jesus because we met with you. And because we met with you, everything changed." So, thank you, Jesus, for your people, the people that pray,

and we just give all of these prayers to you. We know that you're moving. We know you're working. We know that you are transforming, even now, ahead of time, you're going on behalf of all of those that are lost, hurting, and broken, and your name will be lifted up. And you will put your name upon your people, and we will wear it as a banner.

We will hide it in our hearts. We will live and be the light of Christmas. Thank you for what you're going to do, Jesus, in your name. Okay. One more. It's this. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God boldly. That's what we believe is going to happen one week from now. The spaces, the places, the Christmas services, they're going to be shaken. And some things are going to be shaken off of people, and some history's going to be rewritten in people, and some hearts that are broken are going to be mended in people, and the Lord's going to move because people prayed and because we did it full of faith. And so, even if you're like, "Wow, that service, I'm not used to that."

You know what? This is a great church. This is a great church, where the people of God pray, and where we believe He's going to move. And so, this is the reason to gather, and this is how the Lord's been leading us to do it all year long, and He's only going to continue to do it. So, thank you, Jesus, for what you're going to do at Christmas. Thank you that you are just so good, and that when we lift up your name, it lifts our face. We have created a space and an atmosphere where we just believe you're going to move this Christmas. You're going to do something amazing, and we're going to get to see it, and we're going to get to experience it. So, thank you, Lord, for an encounter, a fresh encounter with you. Thank you, Jesus, that you're what we gather around this Christmas. You're the name we lift up. You're the one that we love. You're the one that we worship. You're the name that we raise on high. You're worthy of it all. In Jesus' name, amen.