

All right. Hey, everybody. Once again, welcome to Valley Creek. Happy Mother's Day. So much great stuff to celebrate. It's been a great week celebrating Kids Leadership, Student Leadership, VCLA graduations, and I love what God is doing in our next generation. I love being a church for the generations. I love that we want our ceiling to become their floor. We want our summit to become their base camp. We're all about raising up generations of Hope Carriers, and I don't know if you realize it or not, but on any given weekend, more than one in three people sitting in our rooms are a part of the next generation. More than one in three people sitting here today are going to be a kid, a student, or a young adult. And so, I just want to draw your attention to what a privilege and what a responsibility to raise up this generation. And we don't want to just rush on from this, and I get it. And sometimes you probably think, especially if you're an adult or a super adult, you might be like, "Why is it always about the next generation?" Because Jesus says that unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. When we give up our rights and our pride and our preferences and our opinions and our methods and what we think the songs and the vibe and the culture and all the things should be, we become a people that reproduces the life of God by being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth. This is why Scripture says, "I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth." Every parent in the world will tell you there's nothing better than watching their kid live in the truth and live free. And if we're a family on mission, then there's no greater joy this church will ever have than to watch the next generation walk in the truth and live free. And so, I would be remiss if I missed the opportunity to just say to students and young adults that are sitting here that aren't a part of what God is doing in the next generation here, I get it. There's a thousand reasons. You've got a thousand things going on, but before you say, "It's not for me," "I've tried it," or "I've been there," or "I've done this," or "I got this," just stop. And would you just ask God? Don't worry about the worst, "Hey God, do you want me to be a part of that? Do you want me to be a part of Valley Creek Students and Circles, and Student Leadership Experience? Do you want me, God, to be a part of a Young Adult Gathering, a Circle, or Valley Creek College?" Before you just say no, just ask God. That's the heartbeat of our church. Just ask God, and whatever He genuinely tells you to do, we stand behind that and support you in that. And if you're sitting here and you're inspired about what God's doing in our church, and you're thinking of those next steps you're going to be taking over the five years as we go on this journey together, maybe God's stirring in your heart and it's time to get involved in the kid's ministry and raise up that generation. Maybe it's time to become a leader or a coach for our students and help them become who God's called them to be. Maybe it's time to get involved in Young Adults and be a mentor, a disciple maker, a coach in their life to help them become who God has called them to be. And the last thing that I just want to say on this is: parents, parents, remember Jesus has given you your child, and you are responsible to train them in the way they should go. You've been equipped by God with everything you need for life and godliness, and He has entrusted with you that child, that kid, that student, that young adult to impress upon them the commands of God and train them in the way they should go. So, my question for you is, do you have a plan to train them in the way they should go? Part of the plan in my life to train my children in the way they should go is Valley Creek Kids, Valley Creek Students, and Valley Creek Young Adults,

because I know I can't do it on my own. So, even when they don't want to go and they say they're too busy and there's 400 other things going on, I care more about their soul than their social calendar. I care more about their heart than their academics. I care more about their mind than their athletics. And so, it's become an important part of Colleen and I's entire existence to say, "I want to be able to stand before the Lord and say, 'I've done everything I can to train this child in the ways of your kingdom.'" Do you have a plan? It doesn't have to be this, but do you have a plan? Because what a gift those formidable seasons are of the heart, mind, soul, and spirit of a child, a student, and a young adult. So, Jesus, we thank You for this next generation, and we say – May we as a church continue to raise them up, and may they go further and farther than we ever dreamed was possible. In Your name we pray.

All right. We are in a series called Living Loved. And we're taking just a couple of simple weeks to just talk about: what does it look like to live loved? We all know, in a sense, in church that we are loved, but there is a big difference between knowing you're loved and living like you're loved. And so, we're asking, the question is, what does it look like to actually live in the love of God? Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hear God's voice and make God's message their way of life." The blessing isn't in hearing God's voice; the blessing is in making what you hear God say your way of life. The blessing isn't in hearing that you're loved; the blessing is taking that message and making that your way of life and living like He actually loves you. This is why Paul says, "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love." He says, "I have to pray for you because this is a supernatural encounter. This is a supernatural experience to become the kind of person that doesn't just know they're loved, but lives as if they're loved would be rooted and established in love, that you would know and experience that your roots would go down deep into the love of God, and you would draw everything you need, everything that you need to sustain you from the very love of God, and that you would have the power, the capability together with all the saints to grasp, to literally take a hold of how wide and long and high and how deep is the love of Christ." You see, the need of the human soul is so great that it can only be filled by the limitless love of God. The desire of the human soul is so great that it can only be satisfied by the limitless love of God. You were created for the glory of God, and nothing else will ever fill you nor satisfy you. That's why no matter how much you pursue and how much you chase and how much you acquire of the world, it never fully satisfies in here because only the limitless love of God can. And the more I grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of God is, the bigger my life becomes. You want a big life? You want to have a life that expands? A big life is not how much money you have, is not how much you travel, is not how much influence you have, is not how many social media followers you have. No, a big life is how much love you live in; and the more you grasp the width, the length, the height, the depth of the love of God, the bigger your life becomes. But the more I resist the love of God, the smaller, the shorter, the shallower, and the narrower my life becomes. A big life comes when I live loved. And to know this love that surpasses knowledge, we're supposed to know beyond knowledge, which means we're supposed to experience that which cannot be understood through comprehension, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

I am supposed to be so full of the love of God that I am overflowing in a sense that when I bump into somebody, I spill out the love of God. If you want to know whether or not you're actually living in love, here's the last line. And some of you that have checked out of me are like, "You've taught this verse two weeks in a row." Yeah, I know. Don't worry. I always know that we've already done this. Like, if you're ever like, does He know? He knows. I'm making sure you know that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. You know you're living in love when someone bumps into you and the love of God spills out over you into their life. When someone bumps into you at work, at school, on the road, at home, in the grocery store, here's the question: what spills out of you? Something's spilling out of you, and that's what you're full of. And you know you've moved from knowing you're loved to living loved when people bump into you and love spills out of you and splashes onto their life. And so, I've told you in this series, I'm not trying to teach you anything new. I'm praying for a revelation and an encounter with the love of God, and all we've been doing is just saying, "Father, I open myself to Your love." And God's love has been moving, and people are experiencing and encountering it and getting a revelation of it beyond knowledge in here.

You see, one day Jesus was on the side of a mountain, and a bunch of people came around Him as He began to teach, and He taught the greatest sermon that has ever been preached, the Sermon on the Mount. It was a message about life in God's kingdom, life from above. It was a message on what it looks like to live loved. And I want to read a simple portion of it to you. "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

I want to read that to you a second time, but this time I want you to listen not with your mind, but with your heart, because this is God's heart for you. "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to His life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of

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You see, the human body, the human mind, the human soul, and the human heart was never created to worry, and that's why worry destroys us like a cancer from the inside out. You are loved, and love frees you from worry. And yet, if we're honest, we're really good at worrying. Oh, we worry. We know how to worry. We're gifted at worrying. We would have won an award today for worrying. We worry about our bodies, we worry about our health, we worry about our children, we worry about our parents, we worry about our spouse, we worry about not having a spouse, we worry about our finances, we worry about our possessions, we worry about our situations, we worry about our circumstances, we worry about the details, we worry about the vision, we worry about the small, we worry about the big, we worry about worrying. And if we're honest, it's almost like we're more comfortable living in worry than we are living in love. I think we're more comfortable worrying about the future than we are living in the present. We're more worried, we're more comfortable living in worry than we are living in love. But you're loved, and love frees you from worry. And the problem is just telling you that you're loved and you don't have to worry is knowledge; and it doesn't work, does it? That's why I can stand up here and try to teach you a message about not worrying, and you'll leave and you'll still be worried because it's knowledge, it's information, it's got to move to revelation and experience and encounter before it actually changes me.

You see, when I say that you are loved and we say that God is love and we declare that God loves me, what does love actually mean? What does the word love mean? We throw it around; we use it all the time. God loves me, I am loved, I want to live loved. What does love actually mean? Well, love is not emotions or feelings. Contrary to popular belief, we think love is emotion and it's feeling. The definition of love is charity, which means goodwill. Love is good will. To be loved means that God's will for you is good, that His will, His desire, His choices, His wants, His heart is for your good, that every word that He speaks, that every action that He takes is for your good, that His rule and His reign over your life is always for your good. To be loved is to have goodwill from someone else towards you, and so to live loved is to live as if God's will is forever and always permanently fixed for your good. You see, if it was just emotion and feeling, it would leave you very insecure because you would wake up every day and go into every situation and circumstance and wonder; Does God have good feeling and emotion

for me today? Does God have more feeling and emotion for me than He does for this person? Or does He have more feeling for them than He does for me today? And if He has more feeling for them, then what's going to happen to me? And did I do enough stuff to maintain God's feeling and His emotion towards me? And the reason we think that is because that's what human love looks like. Human love is all about emotion and feeling, and it comes and it goes. God's love is His good will towards you, that is fixed and permanent and can never change.

This is why 1 Corinthians 13 that defines love; it really defines God's heart for you. God is patient, and God is kind. God does not envy, and He does not boast. God is not proud, and He is not rude. God is not self-seeking. God is not easily angered, and God keeps no record of wrongs. God does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. God always protects. God always trusts. God always hopes. God always perseveres. God never fails because His will for you is good. I mean, just think about Jesus for a second. Jesus was never worried. You can't find one passage in Scripture where Jesus is worried. Why? Because He lived, loved, and love drove out the worry of His life. He knew the Father loved Him, so He walked around free from worry. Jesus wasn't worried about His body. Jesus wasn't worried about His disciples, though He probably should have been. Jesus wasn't worried about the crowd. He wasn't worried about the cross. He wasn't worried about His reputation. He wasn't worried about the circumstance. He wasn't worried about the storm. He wasn't worried about what was going to happen to Him. Jesus wasn't worried because He lived loved. He knew the Father's will was for His good. So, no matter what happened, He was good, because if the Father's will is for my good, then I don't have to worry about what's going to happen tomorrow.

You see, do you know what the word worry actually means? The word worry means to torment oneself with disturbing thoughts. That's what it means – to torment oneself with disturbing thoughts. It means to strangle, to seize, and to harass. Isn't that what worry does? It literally torments us with disturbing thoughts, and it strangles us, and it seizes us, and it harasses us. This is why if you live with someone who is a constant worrier, it's like you can see it. You can see it on them; their life. They're always bound up in this sense of being strangled and being seized and being harassed by these tormenting thoughts. And it's almost like we've become more comfortable living in worry than living in love. You see, worry is to be consumed about what might happen to me, love is to be confident in Who is for me. That's a big difference. To worry is to be consumed about what might happen to me, but love is to be confident in Who is for me. And if His will for me is good, then I can be confident even though this may be hard. In fact, look at this verse – "God is love, so His will is for your good." This isn't emotion, this isn't feeling. This is His will, His choice, His desire, His thoughts, His words, His actions, His rule, and His reign is forever and always for your good. I pray that when you see that God is love or that God loves you for the rest of your life, you will remember that that is not a human emotion or a feeling, but that is a will that is fixated on your good. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God, and God lives in us. When we know this love that surpasses knowledge, then we are filled to the fullness of the measure of God. When we live in God, we live in love. When we live in love, we live in God. Get ready. This way, love has the run of the

house, becomes at home and mature in us so that we are free of worry. When love moves in, worry moves out. When love moves in, worry moves out. Love and worry cannot coexist. So, when I open my heart to the love of the Father, worry must leave. Why? Because when I open myself to the love of the Father, there's no more room for the worry of life. But when I close myself to the love of the Father, something needs to fill that space, something needs to fill that void, and worry is all too quick to move in and squat in your life. When I open myself to the love of the Father, worry has to leave. And I love it, says love has the run of the house. See, when I open myself up to the love of God, love comes in, worry has to leave. And when love moves in, love doesn't just kind of like sweep the floor and mop things and rearrange your knick-knacks. No, love goes in and has a fire sale and sends it all out on the curb and says, "Yep, doesn't belong here anymore. This is no longer a part of us. This should have never been here in the first place. This – we're going to fix this. This – this is broken, we can restore this. This – all of this has got to go: the emotions, the feelings, the thoughts, the attitudes, the opinions, the perspectives. If you struggle with worry, it's because you're not living in love. This is why you can't just tell someone "stop worrying." If it was that easy, we'd all do it. That's why Jesus says, right? "Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to their life?" Like, has worry ever helped you? But you can't just stop doing it because that's all knowledge-based. But when love moves in, worry moves out. So, if I find myself with a lot of worry in my life, it's probably because I've closed myself off to the love of God. But if I will open myself to the love of God, worry will go. This is why it says, "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." See, love is the deepest root, and if there's no faith and there's no hope in my life, if I'm full of stress and anxiety and depression and fear and worry, it's because I've closed myself off to the love of God.

And you say, "So what do I have to do?" Just open yourself up. You don't have to do anything. You don't have to stop worrying. You can just receive the love of God. This is why all those verses in the Bible that we love, verses like "What you intended for harm, God intended for good", "God works together for the good, all things, for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purposes", "Cast your cares on Him for He cares for you", "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything through prayer and petition, present your request to God and the peace that surpasses understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus", "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and all your ways acknowledge Him. Lean not on your own understanding, and He will make your path straight", "In this world you will have trouble, but take heart for I have overcome the world", "Trust in God; trust also in Me." This is what Jesus says. And those verses take on a totally different meaning when love is not an emotion or a feeling, but it's actually His will for my good. It's different, isn't it? It's different. When love moves in, worry has to move out. And I think there's an invitation for the people of God to open themselves up to the love of God in a way that maybe we never have in the past.

See, God knows how much we need this. You go all the way back to the Old Testament when they were going in on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, God knew they were going to face giants and fortified cities and rivers and trials and storms. He knew there was

going to be so much opportunity for worry to overtake their heart. So, He gave them this really simple thing, it was called the priestly blessing, where the priest would literally pray the love of God into the people's lives so that worry would have no place to hide out and hang out. The priest would simply pray this, "The Lord bless you and keep you, protect you, sustain you, guard you; the Lord make His face shine upon you with favor and be gracious to you, surrounding you with loving kindness; the Lord lift up His countenance, His face upon you with divine approval and give you peace, a tranquil heart and life." So, Aaron, the high priest, and his sons shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them. He says, "I want you to pray this into my people because if they're full of the love of God, they will be free from the worry of life." And He says, "Put my name upon them. When the name of God comes upon your life, all the realities of God come upon your life as well." God's name brings with it His reality. So, when God's name is on my life, then His love, so His goodness and His kindness and His patience and His provision, and His protection also come. And there was nothing that the people had to do because it was the Lord who blessed them. All they had to do was be open to it. And what I love about this is this is an Old Testament prophetic picture of Jesus. See, this was like basically praying Jesus into their life, Jesus, the One who is love. And this in Jesus, if His name is upon your life, if you're included in Christ, we don't have to pray for this to be a reality. We now pray that we would have a revelation and an encounter with that which is already true. See, this is Jesus, and He's already done it. Jesus has already blessed you. He's already blessed you in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing there is in Christ, and He keeps you. Jesus was forsaken on the cross, so you'll never have to be. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Make His face shine upon you – The Father turned His face away from Jesus on the cross so He could forever turn it towards you. Be gracious to you – He has moved into your neighborhood with grace and truth. You have received the abundant provision of His grace. You have been saved by grace through faith. Grace teaches you to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and live a godly life in this age. Lift up His countenance upon you – In other words, divine approval, be pleased with you. In Jesus, you are His beloved son or daughter in whom He is well pleased, and give you peace. Shalom, the comprehensive flourishing of life. His name is upon you, which brings the realities of His life upon you. He blesses you. You don't have to do anything but receive it. And when love moves in, worry moves out. When love moves in, worry moves out. And I can face those giants, and I can face those obstacles, and I can climb that mountain, and I can cross that river, and I can deal with that marriage crisis, and that health crisis, and that child crisis, and that lunch crisis, and that friendship crisis, and all the things that are in my head that just rattle around like this rattle all the time. I can be free because I am loved.

So, here's what we're going to do today. We're going to take a moment, and we're going to pray this over each other because this is not a series that is about teaching and information. We're praying for revelation and encounter. And I can't think of anything better to do on Mother's Day than to pray the love of God into the hearts of one another. And so, in a minute at all of our campuses, our worship teams are going to start coming out. They're going to start coming out now. And what we're going to do in a second is I'm going to invite you to just

stand up. I'm going to invite you to find some people around you, maybe the people you came with, maybe somebody, so you can move around the room if you want to find somebody. And I want to invite you to just pray the love of God into their life. And maybe you don't know what to pray. And in a second, we're going to put this up on the screen for you, and you could just literally pray this over their life. Pray that they would receive an experience and have an encounter with Jesus in that reality. And maybe you have something else that you want to pray. That's fine. And maybe you literally start by just introducing yourself and saying, "Hey, can I just ask you, are you worried? And if you are, what are you worried about? I want to pray the love of God into that area of your life. I want to pray that the love of God will fill your life and drive out that worry." And if you're here and you don't feel comfortable doing that, and you're like, "That's just a lot," we're going to have some great leaders that are going to come down right now at all of our campuses. If you're like, "Hey, I just want someone else to pray for me and my family," great, come and let these people pray for you. If you're a single mom, if you're a widow, if you're by yourself, don't just sit here and just miss the moment. God's love wants to fill your life. And sometimes all it takes is a little step of faith to just move out and let God do what only He can do. And there's nothing magical about this. It's just simply praying the love of God to displace worry. And the reason we pray over each other is because one of the primary ways we encounter the tangible love of God is through one another.

Do you remember the story of Martha and Mary? Jesus goes to this woman's house, and while Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet, taking in all of His love, Martha is scurrying around the house, doing all of these things. And all the while, she's getting more and more worried and more and more upset until Jesus finally says to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, but only one thing is needed." You see, when you sit at the feet of Jesus, the one thing is needed; that love leaves no room for worry. But when I refuse to sit at the feet of Jesus and open myself up to His love, the only thing I have left to do is to be worried and troubled, to torment myself with disturbing thoughts, to be seized, harassed, and strangled. And if I think of the typical mother's heart, a typical mother's heart has so much worry and trouble inside of it, worry and trouble for her children, for her husband, for her family, for her grandchildren. But I think today, mothers, Jesus wants to say to you, "Mother, mother, you're worried and troubled about many things, but only one thing is needed. Come and receive my love." I think Jesus wants to also say, "Woman, woman, you are worried and troubled about many things. Man, man, you are worried and troubled about many things. Student, student, young adult, young adult, super adult, super adult, you are worried and troubled about many things, but only one thing is needed, the love of God." And so, by faith, we're going to take the next five minutes or so. So, maybe stand up where you are with me, whatever campus you are. If you don't feel comfortable, come down and let these people do it. We're going to put the verse up here for you. You can use that. Let's pray the love of God into each other's lives. Holy Spirit, pour out Your love into our hearts. In Your name we pray.