

Alright. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad that you're here with us. Whatever campus you're at, whatever's going on in your life, we are so glad you are here. We welcome you. And today, as a church, we finish up and break our week of fasting and prayer. For the last week, as a church, we have been abstaining from food in order to feast on God, denying the flesh to walk in the spirit, turning away from the things we want to turn towards who we need. And I just want to tell you how proud I am of you, how grateful I am for you. I've heard so many great stories this week of people fasting, of people trying it maybe for the first time. And if you did anything in any way of just saying, "I don't want the things of this world, but I want more of Jesus," sometimes you just are turning your feet in the direction you want your heart to go. And so I'm believing we prepared the soil, that we are moving with God and that which He wants us to do. I think God is tenderizing our hearts. And so, whether you had the fasting experience you wanted, or maybe it didn't go like you wanted, literally, if you even just in any way just turned towards the Lord, remember, God gives grace to the humble. And He promises to reward you. That which you do in secret, fasting, He promises to reward you in the open. So, Jesus, we just say You are the living water, the bread of life, and the desire of all nations. God, this week we tried to prepare our hearts and our church for that which You want to do this fall. We tried to prepare for revival. So, we say, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come." We are hungry and thirsty for You. Stir it up, God, and may the wild things grow in Jesus' name.

You see, we're in a collection of talks on movement, mission, and maturity. And we're just taking some time this fall to talk about what I believe is on God's heart for our church. We're just talking about movement, mission, and maturity. We want to move with Jesus. We want to be on mission with Jesus. We want to mature in Jesus. And we keep saying that we can't make God move. But we can prepare for when He does. And we can't make God move, but boy, we can respond when He does. And so, in a sense, what we're doing as a church is we're preparing for revival, crying out, calling out, saying, "God, we want more, and we want more of You." And really, the undergirding of this collection of talks is Philippians chapter 3. It's Paul at the end of his life. This is a lot, so let me just declare it over your life. Here's what he says. He says, "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him. Not that I have already obtained all of this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take a hold of that which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Man, that fires me up. It's like Paul at the end of his life, and he's looking at all these things, and he's like, "I realize now that Jesus is the only thing that matters. I consider everything else in this world rubbish. It's a loss. I want to become like Him. I want to know Him. I want to move forward with Him. So, this thing I do, I forget what is behind and I press on towards what is ahead. I'm moving with Jesus. I'm on mission with Jesus. I'm maturing in Jesus." And there's this one little line that I want you to see today. When he says, "I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." What took hold of Paul? He says, "I press on to take a hold of that which took hold of me." What took a hold of Paul? The gospel. The gospel of Jesus and the gospel of the kingdom took a hold of Paul in such a way that it completely transformed every aspect of his life. The gospel captured his heart and captivated his mind. From the moment Paul had an encounter with the resurrected Jesus and the kingdom of God, his heart was captivated. Set on

things above. His mind was captured. Set on things above. And everything in Paul's life completely changed because the gospel took hold of him and then he took a hold of it. See, we have to remember that the Apostle Paul was formerly known as this guy named Saul. He was a Pharisee, a religious guy, a zealot, a persecutor. And he thought Jesus was a heretic and a lunatic. He thought the Followers of the Way were a cancer on this earth that needed to be removed. So, he spent his life going around murdering and destroying and persecuting the church until one day on the road to Damascus he had an encounter with the resurrected Jesus that knocked him to the ground, and the light shone – and all of a sudden for the first time in his life, Paul could see. And he goes from being the murdering Saul to the Apostle Paul, one of the greatest apostles who have ever lived on the face of the earth. And his entire life completely changed. The gospel took hold of him. This is why he says, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it's the power of God." Here's what Paul says. He says, "I get it. The cross, the gospel, Jesus, all of it, to those who are on the outside, it's foolishness." He goes, "I get it because it used to be foolishness to me. It made no sense until I had an encounter with Jesus and His kingdom, and now I know it is not foolishness. It is literally the power of God to save, set free, heal, make whole, and deliver. In Jesus' name." It's why he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." He says, "I'm not embarrassed to say, 'I need Jesus.' I'm not embarrassed to admit that when I am weak, then He is strong. I'm not embarrassed to say, 'I need the grace of God,' not just then but now and in the future forever more, because that is where the power of God comes to save anyone and everyone who is interested." The gospel took a hold of Paul and changed his life. And so, the question we have to ask is has it taken a hold of us? Has it taken a hold of us? And have we taken a hold of it?

And before we can answer that question, we actually have to first define what is the gospel. Because we have lots of different ideas because we live in a Christian nation with an evangelical movement in the world around us. So, there's all this different noise and fodder and definitions and vocabulary. But what actually is the gospel? It's probably pretty important if you call yourself a Christian or a follower of Jesus to actually know what it is. Well, the word "gospel" means "good news." Not good idea, not good advice, not good suggestion, not good religion – good news, something that has actually happened and is fact and is worth proclaiming to the world around us. And I would submit to you that the gospel is the availability of the kingdom of God through the person and the work of Jesus. That's the good news. This actually happened. The availability of the kingdom of God through the person and the work of Jesus. The gospel is that Jesus, God's only Son, poured himself out, stepped out of heaven, came to this earth, took on humanity, moved into our neighborhood with grace and truth, and He walked among us. And every place where you and I fail and fall short and get it wrong, He got it right. And He showed us who God was. He showed us what it was like to be human and to be fully alive, and then He went to the cross. And He was beaten and mocked and persecuted and whipped. And they hung Him on the cross, and all the sin and the shame and the brokenness and the rebellion of this world was placed upon Him. He died. He was buried in the grave. Three days later, He rose again from the grave, poured out His spirit to anyone and everyone who wants it, that they may now have the eternal, abundant life, living in the kingdom of God through the person and the work of Jesus. That is the good news. It's not a good idea. It's not a good suggestion. It's not good advice. It's a reality that has already taken place. In fact, this is what Jesus' entire ministry was. It says, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news, the gospel of the kingdom, the availability of God's kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness." I love

this. Jesus went to people. He doesn't make people come to him, He goes to them. And He did three things. He taught, He preached, and He healed. He taught them. He taught them how to live a good life, what was good and what was true and what was right. He taught them how to walk on the narrow road that leads to an ever widening life. He taught them who God was and who they were and what they were created for. He taught them how to live a life that was truly life, and invited people to be His disciples and come and follow Him. And He preached the good news of the kingdom. In other words, He went around declaring the availability of God's kingdom. He preached the with God kind of life was available, that another kind of life was available, that the rule and reign of God was available, that life from above was available, that being born again in eternal, abundant kind of life was available to anyone and everyone who wanted it. And then, He healed people, showing the power and the authority of the kingdom of God, of what the rule and reign of God actually looked like. This is what Jesus did. He went around showing and demonstrating the good news of the kingdom of God that is available. And when it takes hold of you, you will take hold of it. And years ago, God gave us this little illustration as a church, this little image that if you've ever been around here, if you've ever seen it, we just call it the three circles. And the three circles is literally just a demonstration of the availability of the kingdom of God and what it looks like through the person and the work of Jesus. And it's taking a hold of us and we've taken a hold of it, because it is not foolishness to us, and I am not ashamed or embarrassed of it. And we will preach it endlessly until Jesus comes back, because it is the power of salvation for all who believe. You see, this is the gospel. The gospel starts with receiving His grace. Grace. Grace. You have been saved by grace through faith. This is not of yourself. It is the gift of God, not by work, so that no man can boast. Grace, undeserved favor, supernatural empowerment. God acting in your life to do that which you could not do on your own. And it saves us. What does it mean to be saved? To be saved, to be healed, to be set free, to be delivered, to be made whole? And we need to be saved because we're lost. And we use the term "lost." And when we use the term "lost," we often, in church, mean it's some horrible person who is on their way to hell. But that's not what lost means. What lost means is lost. I'm lost. I don't know where I am. I don't know where I'm going. I don't know how I got here. I don't know what to do. I don't know which way is good. I don't know which way is right. I don't know who to ask for help. I'm confused. I'm disoriented. Everything is dark. I'm literally lost. I have no bearing of where I came from. I have no bearing of where I am. And I have no idea where I'm going. And even if I did, I don't know how to get there. And so, when Jesus came, in Him was life and that life was the light of man. When Jesus showed up, His life turned on the light, so people who are lost could actually see where they were, where they came from, and where they actually wanted to go. And then, they would know how to get there.

See, there's three words you have to understand: judgment, mercy, and grace. Judgment means you get what you deserve. Mercy means you don't get what you do deserve. And grace means you get what you didn't deserve. On the cross, Jesus was judged so that you could receive mercy and grace. He got what you deserved, so you could get what He deserved. He cancelled your debt and He credited your account. He forgave your sins, but He restored your identity in Jesus' name. See, yes, He's forgiven you and fully set you free. As far as the east is from the west, so far as He removed our transgressions from us. He forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases. "I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more." The sins you can't seem to forget are the ones He can't seem to remember. Oh, yeah, that one. The one that you can't forgive yourself for? Yeah, that's the one in Jesus. He says He can't seem to remember. But not only does He forgive your sins, He restores your identity. If anyone is in

Christ, He has a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come. He's canceled my debt, but He's credited my account. He hasn't just brought me back to zero. No, He's blessed me in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. In fact, this is why Scripture says, "As He is, so we are in this world," which means that everything that's true of Jesus is now true of me because I've been included in Him. So, because He is righteous, so am I. Because He is holy, so am I. Because He is loved, so am I. Because He is free, so am I. You see, when Jesus was baptized, the Father spoke from heaven. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." When you're included in Christ, you become the Father's beloved son or daughter in whom He is well pleased before you do anything right and even after you do everything wrong. You don't have to spend your life trying to get the world to say what the Father already has, that you are loved and He is well pleased with you. You see, Romans 5:19, I think, is one of the most important verses in the Bible to understand the gospel, the availability of the kingdom and what it all means. And it simply says this, "Through the disobedience of the one man, Adam, the many were made sinners." Identity statement. "But through the obedience of the one man, Jesus, the many will be made righteous." Identity statement. Through the disobedience of the one man, Adam, in the Garden, the many were made sinners, but through the obedience of the one man, Jesus on the cross, the many will be made righteous. So, see if you can catch this with me. When you were born, you were born trapped in a prison of sin. You were born a sinner. You were born a sinner trapped in this prison of sin. And there was nothing you could do to get out of it because it was the identity of which you were born into. You're not a sinner because you sin. You sin because you're a sinner. This is really important. Identity determines behavior. Who you are determines what you do. You're not a sinner because you sin. You sin because you're a sinner. And if I'm born as a sinner in a prison of sin, if this is my identity statement, then the only lifestyle I can live is that of sin. So, when we look at the world and we look at these people and we look at the choices that they're making, and we get so shocked and horrified and disappointed, it's all they can do. They're trapped in the prison of sin, and there's nothing they can do to free themselves from it. It's the identity of which they were born into. But then, Jesus came and Jesus came to rescue us from the prison of sin and put us into this position of righteousness. Through the one man, the many will be made righteous. So, we are now the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. We're righteous not because we live righteously. We live righteously because we are now righteous. Identity determines behavior. Who you are determines what you do. And just like there was no good thing you could do to get out of the prison of sin into the position of righteousness, there is no bad thing you can do to lose your position of righteousness to go back to the position or the prison of sin. Why? Because sin is no longer my master. I am dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, for God became sin so that I might become His righteousness. You are more than sinners saved by grace. You are beloved sons and daughters in Jesus' name. So, we got to shake off this Eeyore spirit. "Oh, well, I guess I'll always be a sinner." No. No, rebuke that in Jesus' name. Yes, you were a sinner, but you're now the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. And just like your good works couldn't move you from there to here, your mistakes can't move you from here to there. And the reality is, is there's no such thing as a righteous sinner because no one can have two identities. You're either under the curse of Adam or the victory of Jesus. You're either a new creation or you're not. You're either defined by what you do or what Jesus has done. Can't have two identities. It's not about what you do, it's about what He has done. I mean, don't you think it honors God when we call ourselves beloved sons and daughters instead of worthless sinners? I don't know where this whole thing in the Christian movement is, is like this put ourselves down as if that's the most mature thing. Maturity is acknowledging that I am who Jesus says I am, regardless of what I do. Don't you think God is more pleased when I call

myself the righteousness of God in Christ, even when I'm actually failing and falling short? Don't you think it takes more faith to believe that I'm defined by what Jesus has done than by what I have done? See, if we spend more time talking about what we have to do than what Jesus has done, something is wrong because He said, "It is finished," not "I'm working on it." Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, whatever you're hearing about your faith and that thing is growing.

So, if I stand up here every week and preach about "stop sinning so much," your faith is going to grow in the strength of sin. But if we stand up here and preach about the victory of Jesus, then my faith begins to grow in the victory of Jesus and I become what I behold. So, the more I look to Him, the more I actually start to live according to who I am. This is why Jesus says to the woman caught in adultery, "Neither do I condemn you. Go sin no more." When you understand you're forgiven, freed, that you're the beloved son or daughter and whom God is well pleased, you don't want to sin anymore. And you start to find victory and freedom as you move forward. So, can I ask you a question? Do you know who you are? I mean, do you really know who you are? Because that's the beginning of the gospel. And as I receive His grace and He restores my identity, I can't help but now experience His presence and move into relationship with Him. Because He's given me this grace and changed me from the inside out, all of a sudden I'm not afraid of God. And I start moving towards this reconciled relationship, experiencing His presence, because Jesus has removed every barrier, every obstacle, all the distance that exists between you and God. See, when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, God put a skin clothing of animals upon, and He'd killed an animal to cover their nakedness and their shame. And then, He had to send them out of the Garden of Eden. And we see all through the Old Testament, this distance now exists between God and man. You see it in the tabernacle and the temple that there is this veil separating the holy place from the people of God. But when Jesus hung on the cross and said, "It is finished," the veil in the temple tore from top to bottom, representing that God could come out and man could come in and they could be reconciled together once and for all. We can now approach God with freedom and confidence. We can boldly approach the throne of grace in our time of need that we may find mercy. He says, "I will be a Father to you and you will be my sons and daughters." The Holy Spirit now resides within us. We now are literally the dwelling place of God. Jesus says, "You can abide in me and I will abide in you." He offers us this deep union with Him. In Jesus, you are fully known, fully forgiven with no fear of rejection. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Jesus. Peace with God. This is why Jesus says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" In that moment, the Father forsook Jesus so He can never forsake you, because He can't punish the same things twice. The sin of your life was placed upon Jesus that the righteousness of God may be placed upon you. That's why He says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." You know what that means? That means that you can be as close to God as anyone who ever lived. Any person in the Bible, any hero in your life that you think and knows, you can be as close to God as anyone who has ever lived. You can be as close to God as you want. The only distance that exists between you and God is that what you allow in here and in here. In fact, in the only place that the Bible defines eternal life, Jesus says, "This is eternal life that they may know you, Father, that they may know, have relationship, experience." So, can I ask you a question? Do you know who God is? I mean, not knowledge and facts. Do you know Him experientially and personally? And then, as we experience His presence, we can't help but start releasing His kingdom, living this life of purpose. The first thing God says to humanity, Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it," using all its vast resources in the service of God and man. It's the great commandment, why we existed. It was the

commission of our life. Be fruitful, live a life of productive beauty, and multiply. Reproduce the life of God in you into the world around you and fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory, of the goodness of God, and subdue things. "Bring order to chaos and light to dark and hope to despair, and then use all the resources that I've given you to accomplish my purposes in the lives of men." We were created to rule and reign with God. But when Adam and Eve sinned, that whole commission was broken. Instead of being fruitful, we became barren. And instead of multiplying, we started to divide everyone and everything. Instead of filling the earth with the glory of God, we started to fill our lives with the things of this world. Instead of subduing things, we became agents of chaos, bringing chaos to things. And then, we started using God and man to get a bunch of resources for ourselves. But then, Jesus came. And when the resurrected Jesus breathes on His disciples the Holy Spirit, He says, "As the Father has sent me, I send you. In other words, I have recommissioned you to live the life that you were created to live. Go make disciples of all nations. Be my witnesses." He's given us His name. He's given us His nature. He's given us His keys. He's given us His kingdom. He's given us His power. He's given us His authority. And He says, "Rule and reign once again with me. Go and destroy the works of darkness." We are servant leaders sent by God to release His kingdom in the world around us. And so, if sin management is the goal of your life, you are in danger of living a dramatically and drastically inferior life than the one that God created you for. Sin has already been dealt with. We're now here to walk on water, move mountains, and defeat giants in Jesus' name. I don't have to live this life of purposeless futility thinking, "It doesn't matter what I do." I am tending a garden with God that will bear fruit and that fruit will last. So, do you know what you were created for? I mean, do you really know? Because you see where these three cross, this is the gospel – the availability of the kingdom of God through the person in the work of Jesus Christ. The availability of the with God life, another kind of life, a life from above, the rule and reign of God. This is not about forgiveness of sins. Go back to your life and you'll get to heaven when you die. This is like the kingdom is here and now.

And I want you to understand how this works together. When I receive His grace, I'll experience His presence and I'll release His kingdom. When I know who I am, I'll know who He is and I'll know what I'm created to do. And I believe I'm a beloved son or daughter. I'll run to the Father, and I'll spend my life releasing His kingdom. When I know I'm forgiven and restored, I will never be afraid of God. And therefore, I have nothing to prove. But the opposite is true. If I resist His grace, I'll avoid His presence, and I'll spend my life building my own kingdom. If I don't know who I am, I have no idea who He is. And I have no idea what I was created for. If I live like a spiritual orphan, I'll be terrified of God, and I'll spend my life trying to take care of myself. But the problem for a lot of us is not that. It's this. We start here, and we try to do a bunch of things, behave better, do more, try harder in order to earn our way into God's good graces so that one day we can be forgiven and be free. We try harder, behave more. We try to achieve. We try to accomplish. We try to prove our sense of value and worth so that God might accept us so that one day we might actually be significant. This is religion. You are drawn by grace, not driven by expectations. This is an exhausting way to live. Try harder, do better, behave more? That's not how it works. In Jesus, I live from acceptance, not for it. I live from significance, not for it. I live from love, not for it. I don't have to do to become I am, and so now I'm free to do. We don't do to become, we do because we are. This is why identity determines behavior. Who you are determines what you do. Our legacy people, help me out. Fish? (Swim) Birds? (Fly) Cows? (Moo) Dogs? (Bark) Cats? (Meow/annoy) Low-hanging fruit. Sinners? (Sin) Righteous people? (Live righteously). Beloved sons and daughters live free in their Father's kingdom. Hope carriers change the world. Identity determines behavior. Who you

are determines what you do. I don't do to become. I am, and so, now, I'm free to do. This is the power of the gospel. Everything that ever has been or ever will be required from me has been paid in full. I am now free. I am now free to live the life that God has created me to live. I get to live this with God, this another kind of life, this life from above, and everything changes. And this is what you see all throughout Scriptures. This is the gospel. This is the fullness of the gospel. You see this all throughout Scripture in this order. The prodigal son comes home. My son has returned. The father gives him a hug and gives him a robe, a ring, a sandals. Identity, relationship, purpose. This is 2 Corinthians 5. If you're in Christ, you're a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come. God has reconciled us to himself. And He has given us the ministry of reconciliation, making us His ambassadors. This is Ezekiel 36. "I've removed your heart of stone, giving you a heart of flesh. I've put my spirit within you and I have moved you to obey my commands, my decrees, and my laws." This is Jesus calling His disciples. He designated them apostles, identity, that they might be with Him, relationships. And then, and only then did He send them out to heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons. This is Genesis Chapter 1. God says, "Let us make man in our image," identity, "and in our likeness," relationship, "and let them rule over the earth," purpose. I could go on and on and on. This is the fullness of the gospel. This is not about the forgiveness of your sins. Go back to your life so you can go to heaven when you die. This is about living in the glory of God and experiencing the kingdom of heaven, both here and now and forevermore in Jesus' name. I'm a beloved son. I am the very dwelling place of God on this earth. And I'm tending a garden that will bear fruit and fruit that will last. So, ready? Here's the question. Are you acting as if this were so? Not that you know this, not do you understand this, not can you teach this. Are you acting as if this were so? In your life, in your marriage, at school, at work, in your struggles, with your friends, in your finances, in the circumstances, in the storms, are you acting as if this were so? As if you're a beloved son or daughter, the very dwelling place of God, and that you are on mission with Him to see His kingdom come and His will be done? Are you acting as if this were so? See, the word believe literally just means to act as if it were so. In fact, faith, all faith means is to act as if something were so even when I can't see it. That's how faith is. I'm acting as if something were so even when I can't see it because I believe it. It's taken a hold of me, so I've taken a hold of it and I now act as if it were so. Maybe let me show it to you like this. Are you becoming like Jesus, enjoying Jesus and doing what Jesus did? It's different language to help you ask yourself the question, am I actually acting as if that were so in my daily life? Because Jesus is still doing the same thing He did all those years ago. He's going to you in your life, trying to teach you that which is good, true, and right Inviting you to follow Him. He's preaching, declaring the availability of the kingdom of God, the with God, another kind of life. Life from above is available here and now in this moment, this situation, this circumstance. And He's still healing, restoring, setting free, bringing His power and His authority into any and every situation of your life. So, are you acting as if it were so?

Okay. Let me push a little further. Ready? Maybe let me ask it to you like this. Have you experienced the gospel like the way Paul did? Have you experienced the gospel? And let me maybe say it to you in Americanized words that we would like to use. Are you saved? Just straight up today, are you saved? Are you saved? And do you know that you're saved? And how do you know that? Are you a Christian, a genuine Christian? Are you a disciple of Jesus, a Follower of the Way? Here's what I'm not asking you. I'm not asking you if you go to church. I'm not asking you if you grew up in a Christian home. I'm not asking you if you're a citizen of a Christian nation. I'm not asking you if you're a Texas conservative Republican. I'm not asking you if you're passionate about social justice. I'm not asking you if there's a cross on the wall in

your house or a Bible verse on your Instagram handle. I'm asking you, have you experienced the gospel? Because the gospel is a movement of hope for all creation. And movements are disruptive. Movements disrupt. They disrupt rhythm and routine. They disrupt that which is normal. They disrupt comfort and convenience. Movements disrupt how I think and how I act and how I live. So, if the gospel is a movement of hope for all creation, then if I've experienced the gospel, it's disrupted my life. It's convicted me and challenged me and changed me. See, the gospel is not something that happened to you 20 years ago. The gospel is something that's happening to you right now. A lot of us, if we've been in church or you've been an American citizen or a Texas conservative Republican or you grew up in a Christian home, we have this thought that I pray the prayer in a moment, had a service, and then I went back to my life. But the gospel happened to me 20 years ago. And we treat it the same way that we're like, "Oh, I graduated from college 20 years ago." "Yeah, I got my ring. I graduated. I got the degree and I got a few friends from that era, but it has no real relevance to my life today." That's not the gospel. See, you have been saved. You are being saved and you will be saved. What does that mean? That means the moment I trust in Jesus, you have been saved by grace through faith. In that moment, I am saved. But I'm also in this moment being saved. For the message of the cross is foolishness, but to those of us who are being saved. Right now, I'm being shaped and molded and formed more into the image and likeness of Jesus. He's getting rid of my ungodly beliefs and my flesh and the things of this world that have just stuck upon me all these years. But then, I will also be saved because when Jesus returns one day, He will make all things new and I will be saved from anything and everything that is not of Him. That means I've entered the kingdom. I'm living in the kingdom. And one day, I'll experience the fullness of the kingdom. That means I was changed, I'm being changed. And one day, I will be completely changed when Jesus returns in the twinkling of an eye. Have you experienced the gospel? Because it's not something that happened to you 20 years ago or two years ago or two months. It's something that's happening to you right now. Like, right now. If you're experiencing the gospel, what is the gospel? Because why? Define the gospel. Oh, go back to your notes. The availability of the kingdom of God through the person and work of Jesus. "Oh, I thought He said you were forgiven. You could go live your life and go to heaven when you die." Yeah. No. No. No. See, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, when He talks about the kingdom, here's what He says. "By their fruit, you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit, you will recognize them." He says, "We know who lives in the kingdom of God by the fruit of their life." Your fruit reveals your root. Whatever you're rooted in, that thing manifests in your life. And a good tree can't bear bad fruit, and a bad tree can't bear good fruit. So, here's the question. If you're rooted in Jesus, then do you see the fruit of Jesus in your life? Is there the fruit of obedience, the fruit of holiness, the fruit of the fear of the Lord, the fruit of generosity and mercy and compassion, the fruit of forgiveness and repentance, and the fruit of the desire and hunger and thirst for more of God, the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, is that fruit in your life or is the fruit of the world in your life? The lust of the flesh, the cravings of the eyes and the pride of life. Is the fruit of greed and hoarding and division and chaos and cursing and anger and bitterness and revenge and vitriol and lust and pornography and addiction and worldliness, is that in your life? How do you know that you've experienced the gospel? Jesus just tells us we look at our own fruit. I'm not judging you. He's asking you to just look at your own fruit. And I'm not saying perfect. I'm saying which is growing more? That's how you can look at it. Which fruit is growing



more? Is more worldliness growing in my life or more of Jesus growing in my life? That shows me what I'm actually rooted in. And this is why He goes on to say, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." It's the will of the Father to believe in Jesus and enter the kingdom. "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.'" Jesus says, not everyone who comes to church, votes evangelical, grew up in a Christian home, or puts a Bible verse on their Instagram is living in the kingdom of God. Regardless of what they say or what they do, and I want you to catch this, He says, "Away from me, for I never knew you." He doesn't say, "You didn't know me." He doesn't say, "You didn't know all about me, and you didn't know all kinds of facts and quote all kinds of Bible verses and could tell all kinds of people about me. I didn't know you. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens the door and hears my voice, I will come in and eat with him and he with me." He wants to come in. Have you let Him? You may be here today and you know Him, but does He know you? Does He know you because you've submitted and surrendered? You've taken your kingdom and laid it at His feet, and say, "Jesus, come be my King."

See, when the Holy Spirit moves into your life through the gospel of Jesus, just so we're all clear, He remodels everything. He's got a big budget and He remodels everything. Remodels, restores, renovates. The Holy Spirit doesn't move into your life and then live in the linen closet or on the pull-out futon. No, He takes over and He starts getting rid of all the worldliness and He starts making it godliness. When a young man and a young woman fall in love and decide to get married, when they get married, when that woman, the young woman moves into that young man's bachelor pad, oh, she's going to do some remodeling. "We're getting rid of the mold in the shower. We're getting rid of all those nasty dishes that haven't been cleaned in weeks. We're getting a carpet cleaner to get that dog pee off the ground. That couch, that couch has got to go. And I don't even know what this is, but it's going." And she makes a bachelor pad a home. When the Holy Spirit moves into your life, He turns your life from a frat house to the dwelling place of God. So, if there's no evidence of that, then I have to ask myself, "Has He moved in?" If there's no evidence of that, I have to ask myself, not anyone else, just myself, "Why am I still partying," stay with the analogy, "when I can literally be the dwelling place of God?" Because maybe I haven't experienced it yet. This is why it says, "The grace of God, Jesus himself that brings salvation has appeared to all men." He's appeared to you. And He, the grace of God, which is a person teaches us, starts to change us, to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives in this present age, not when I die, now, while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and savior, Jesus, who's coming back to get us again, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness, to remove from you the desire to have a bad will towards the world around you, and to purify for himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good. You want to know how you know if you've had an encounter with the grace of God, your desires change. Your desires change. I no longer want to do wicked things. I'm now eager to do what is good and true and is right. And as I walk with Jesus over time, the things I struggle with, I start finding freedom and breakthrough from. Because I've lived in this world so long, I've been an orphan so long, I've been religious so long, I've been worldly so long that I don't totally know how to live this life. But He says, "I'll do the work and I'll teach you. And if you'll just keep walking and surrendering to me, watch what will happen." So, have you experienced this? And are you acting as if it were so? If you come in here on a Sunday and you have no

desire to worship because you have no worship to offer, could it just be that you haven't experienced the gospel yet? Because the first thing the leper does when he's healed by Jesus is hits his knees and worships Jesus. And the gospel cures us from leprosy of the soul. If I come in here and I have no interest in giving my money to God, could it just be that I haven't experienced the gospel yet? Because Zacchaeus, the rich, wealthy, greedy man, the moment salvation came to his house, the first thing he does is say, "Lord, here and now I give half of what I have to you." If you have no interest to be on mission and invite other people to experience what God's doing, could it be that you haven't experienced the gospel yet? Because the woman at the well, the moment she received springs of living water, runs back to her town and says, "Come meet Jesus." If I have no interest to serve and use my life to build and strengthen the body of Christ, could it be, not that you're busy and it's inconvenient and you're not interested, could it just be you haven't experienced the gospel? Because the disciples, as soon as they meet Jesus, start passing out bread and fish as a normal part of their life. If I have no interest in obedience, just obedience, I probably should question whether or not I've experienced the gospel. Because all through Scripture, we discover that people who live in the kingdom obey God because He's the King and they are no longer. Is there any sense of repentance and hunger and conviction and obedience and desire and thirst for Jesus? If not, it's okay. It's Him trying to draw attention to your life to show you your fruit so you can understand what you're actually rooted in. See, no one would ever read the Scriptures and come to the conclusion that the gospel is Jesus proclaiming, "I will forgive you of your sins. Go back to your life, live however you want. And when you die, you'll be in heaven." No one would ever read the Scriptures and come to the conclusion that God is just a vending machine or a genie in the bottle. And we can just come to Him to get what we want, when we want, how we want. No one would just read the Scriptures without any preconceived formation and come to the conclusion that God is religious and harsh and obstinate. No, if you read the Scriptures without knowing anything, you would come to the conclusion that there is a loving Father who is drawing His children home. That Jesus is the great shepherd and a really good teacher. And He wants to teach you that which is good and true and right, and give you grace for the empowerment to live it out. And you would come to the conclusion that you were created for so much more than you're currently living in. And that God wants to lift you up out of the ashes and give you life that is truly life. See, when we use the word saved, I think we just misunderstand it. Because if you actually save something, do you know what it means? If I save something, it means I save it from destruction to restore it back to its original purpose. So, when we say, we're in our car and we're driving and we almost get in an accident, we go, "Oh, I saved it." What does that mean? That means you saved your car from destruction and restored it back to its original purpose, which is effective transportation to get you where you're going. When we knock something over in the kitchen and somebody catches the glass as it's falling to the ground, you say, "Oh, I saved it." It means I saved it from destruction and restored it to its original purpose so that people can drink out of it again. When I'm in a busy city and walking and not paying attention, and my friend grabs me as I'm about to walk into an intersection, "Oh, you saved me." That means they saved me from the destruction of getting hit by a car to restore me to my intended purpose, to live the life that I was created to live. So, when we say we're saved by God, it means He restored us from that which wanted to steal, kill, and destroy, to restore us back to our original purpose, which is living as beloved sons and daughters dwelling with God, ruling and reigning with Him both now and forever more. That is the availability of the kingdom of God through the person and the work of Jesus. You were created for so much more. Are you acting as if it were so? In your anxiety, in your depression, in your marriage, in your work, in your purposelessness, in your struggles, has this taken a hold of

you? And have you taken a hold of it? Because this isn't just for when you have an awakening. This is for all my life. Because when my marriage stinks, I need some grace right now. I need His presence right now. And I need His kingdom to flow through me right now. Because when my anxiety flares up, God, I need your grace and I need your presence and I need your kingdom. When there's storm and I can't get my bearings, God, I need your grace and I trust in you. I know that you're with me in this valley and I'm believing that your will is coming, and your kingdom is the center of my life. Has it taken a hold of you? And have you taken a hold of it?

And so, here's what we're going to do together at all our campuses. We're going to take communion. We're going to take communion as a way of breaking our fast, but also as a way of taking a hold of that, which has taken hold of us. And as our teams begin to pass it out, when it gets to you, it's just simply a cracker and a grape juice, but it represents the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus. When you take it, what you're saying is, "I take a hold of that, which took hold of me." What you're saying is, "I enter into His kingdom through the person and the work of Jesus." And if you're here and you're like, "Yes, I'm a disciple of Jesus, I live in His kingdom." My hope for you would be in this moment, this message, this communion would create tremendous gratitude and extravagant worship for who God is and what He has done. And lift up your head a little bit as we go into this fall of this life that you're actually invited to live. And if you're here and I've kind of stressed you out a little bit, and maybe you're a struggling student or a precious grandma, and all of a sudden your head's spinning, like, "Am I okay?" Listen, if your heart is in any way pointed towards Jesus, don't let the great accuser come in and steal your peace. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. How about that's darkness trying to steal the peace? Jesus was forsaken, so you'll never be. So, may this communion remind you of your security that you have in Him. But then, I think there's some of us, some of us here, and we don't know, or we never have, or we point back to this moment all the time saying, "That's when I got saved, but there's no fruit or evidence in my life." Listen, I grew up in a great home. My parents loved Jesus. We went to church every Sunday. I was talking to my son about this the other day. But I didn't get saved until I was 23. I was in church every Sunday. I had a great parents who loved God, but it wasn't mine. It was theirs. There was no fruit that was evidenced that my life had been surrendered to Jesus. Oh, I could tell you the things. And I was a good kid and I had good morals, had a good exterior polish, but I didn't know Jesus. But more importantly, He didn't know me. Because I heard Him knock, I just didn't let Him in. And if you're sitting here when the first gospel was preached, after the spirit was poured out, it says, "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart." I've just been praying for you this week that you'd be cut to the heart. Cut to the heart not with guilt and shame and condemnation. Cut to the heart with grace and mercy and love, that you are created for so much more. And I'm believing that there's a stirring in your soul. And as that gospel was preached, they were cut to the heart and they cried out, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And maybe that's your goal, "What do I do?" Oh, Peter simply said, "Repent." Just change your mind. Change your mind about who you are and who God is and what you were created for. Change your mind of what is good and true and right. And then, change your direction. Stop going your way. Start going His way. Be baptized. Be baptized, representing that you are now a part of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, that you are a new creation because the old is gone. The new has come in the name of Jesus, based on the person and the work of Jesus, not my work, not what I have done, but who He is and what He has done. And I will receive the forgiveness of my sins, and I'll be forgiven and set free. And I will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. God will move into my life. I will become the dwelling

place of God. He will start turning my frat house into the very dwelling place, a holy place because the Holy Spirit lives there. And because it's the Holy Spirit, I start to become holy and godly over time. And it's for you and for all who are far off in Jesus' name. What's God saying to you? What's the Holy Spirit whispering in your heart? Today is a day of salvation. Today is the day of the Lord's favor. Today is the day where you've received revelation. May it become repentance and resurrection in Jesus' name. You see, on the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread. And after He had broke it, He gave thanks. And He said, "This is my body, which is broken for you." He said, "My body is broken so that you can enter in. My body is broken so that you could be made whole. My body has been torn apart so that all of you can be put back together." For anyone and everyone who wants to receive the availability of the kingdom of God through the person and the work of Jesus, thus by faith act as if it were so and take. And in the same way, after the supper, Jesus took the cup. He said, "This is my blood poured out for you. My blood is going to wash you clean. And it sounds paradoxical and it sounds like a mystery, and it is. But if you will, by faith, receive that I became sin so that you could become righteousness, everything will begin to change." In Jesus is life, and that life is your light. And so, as we have lifted up the name of Jesus today, may the light start shining in your world so that you don't have to be lost, lost of where you've been, where you are and where you're going. Lost, not sure how to move forward, or what is good or what is true or what is right, but found because you have a good shepherd who will show you the way. For all who want to live in the availability of the kingdom of God through the person and the work of Jesus, may you, by faith, receive what Jesus has done for you.

So, Jesus, we just declare You are the living water, the bread of life, the desire of all nations. We are not ashamed of the gospel. And even though it's foolishness to the world around us, I declare in this moment over our lives, it is the power of God. And it is saving us and setting us free that we may live in its fullness, not it's diminished Americanized reality, in its fullness of the glory of God. Your kingdom has come. May Your will be done. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.