

All right. Everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. We're so glad you're here with us today, and I love what is happening at VC College. Valley Creek College exists to raise up a generation of leaders who know who they are, who God is, what they were created to do, and act as if it were so. And there are five unique distinctives, academic excellence, spiritual formation, relational skills, leadership development, and missional living in a world that is focused on knowledge, and information, and experience. We are focused on the development of the whole person. And we are so excited because this first year, we have 41 amazing students who are earning their fully accredited two or four-year degrees in everything, from communication to psychology, leadership, business, education, raising up a generation of leaders who can create the future. And we wanted to make sure that you are aware of a few things that are happening. One is we've got a pop-up shop that just opened. If you want to get any Valley Creek College merch, there's some great stuff. If you want to represent, if you want to share -- that is a killer sweatshirt that I would preach in if I wouldn't die from heat up here. All proceeds go to VC College. We have our first-ever 5k coming up in October. This is a great opportunity for you to come with your circle, or a serve team, or your family. You'll get to see our current building that we're going to start renovating soon. You want to see the before, so you can be super inspired by the after. Again, all proceeds go to VC College. Come do the 5k, do a one-mile walk. Come just hang out with us. It's going to be great. And then we have preview day coming up. If you're a student or a young adult, let me encourage you. Even if you're not thinking about VC College, come to the preview day. Because the point isn't to get you to come to VC College. The point is to do everything else like the way we do it is to help you figure out how are you supposed to figure out what God has next for you. And we'll help you figure that out and navigate your way forward. And I get it, for some of you, you're like, man, we talk about the next generation a lot around here. And we do. And the reason we do is because it takes generations, plural, to raise up a generation. It takes generations, plural, to raise up a generation. If you're going to raise up a generation, they need people who are going to come after them, who have gone before them, and who are walking with them. If you're going to raise up a young adult, they need kids and students and brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers and grandmas and grandpas in their life, if they're ever going to become fully who God created and called them to be. So there is a responsibility on our church, on your generation, whatever generation it is, to contribute to the raising up of generations, plural, whatever they may be. So if you're like, I'm an empty nester, that stuff's irrelevant for me. Or I just got young kids, like, I'm not even there yet. Oh no. It's a part of all of us because we're all creating culture and praying and believing and encouraging and mentoring and inspiring and giving and creating atmospheres and environments. It takes generations to raise up a generation. And that's one of the things I'm the most grateful for as a dad, being a part of this church, is all the other amazing generations that are shaping and forming my children into who God created and called them to be in a way that I can't do on my own. This is what it looks like to be a movement of hope for the city and beyond.

All right. We are in a collection of talks on movement, mission, and maturity. And we're taking most of this fall to talk about moving with Jesus, being on mission with Jesus, maturing in

Jesus. And it's not really a series as much as it is as a collection of talks, taking some time to just talk about things that I believe are really important to God's heart for our church in this time, in this place. And so, this whole experience that we're walking through is meant to be an interruption, a disruption to the status quo, the normal rhythm and routine, if you will. So we can grab a hold of that, which God wants to say to us. You see, one day, Jesus came to town. And when Jesus came to town, word began to spread. And as word began to spread, a large crowd began to develop. And so Jesus went inside this home, and he sat down and he began to teach. And as word spread, the crowd grew larger and larger until there was no room left, standing room only in the house. And then a large crowd began to develop around the house because everybody just wanted to see this Jesus. Everybody just wanted to hear from this Jesus. And it says, "The power of the Lord was present for him to heal." And as word began to spread, more and more people kept coming. Why? Because this was the Jesus that they had heard about. This was the guy who was doing things nobody had ever seen before, saying things nobody had ever heard before. He was healing the sick and raising the dead and casting out demons and answering the deep questions of their soul. And in my mind, somewhere on the other side of town, there's a man, and he's hard at work like he is every other day. And someone comes running by and just says, "Jesus is in town." And as he sits there, he thinks about it for a second. Jesus is in town. Wait a second. Jesus is in town. Like, he's here today. And he drops his work, and he runs, and he goes, and he finds his friend. And he says, "Hey, Jesus is in town." Like right now today, you know what that means? You got to leave everything you got going on. Come on. We got to go. We got to go now. And the two of them run, and they find their third friend. They said, "Jesus is in town. Like, he's here, man. Come on. We got to get on with it." And the three of them go, and they find the fourth friend. "Jesus is here. It's going to happen. Today's the day." And the four of them go, and they run, and they find their other friend, a man who has probably spent his entire life on a three-foot by six-foot mat. He's a paralytic. He's a paralyzed man. And he spent his life at the mercy of everyone else. Other people have to take care of him. Other people have to provide for him. Other people have to meet his needs, move them out of the sun when it's hot, bring them out of the rain when it's raining. And they come and they say, "Jesus is in town and we're picking you up, and we're taking you to him today." And in my mind, I picture that man be like, "No, no, I don't want to go. I've tried everything else, and nothing else has worked. And this isn't going to work either. And in fact, I'm busy. I've got other things to do." But those four friends look at him and say, "We don't care what you have to do today. We're taking you to Jesus." And they each pick up a corner of his mat, and they start running through town, asking people, "Have you seen Jesus? Where's Jesus? Which way did Jesus go?" And people keep pointing directions, and they go and they run up and down and through the city and around the hills and valleys and all this stuff until they come around the corner only to be completely defeated. Because by now, the crowd has grown so large that they can't even see the house. But passion refuses to be defeated, and desperation leads to innovation. So they walk around the house a couple of times and realize, "We got to go on the roof." They climb up on the roof and they start digging a hole through the roof because they're getting their friend to Jesus. And when the noise begins to happen on the roof, everybody inside the house goes quiet. A little smile comes on

across Jesus's face because he knows exactly what's about to happen. Some dust starts to fall from the ceiling. A little beam of light shines through hands, start reaching in, ripping back the roof. Then four sweaty, dirty, desperate faces peer over into the entire group. And they lower their friend down in front of Jesus. Hush falls over the crowd. And Jesus looks at the man, and he looks at the friends. And it says when he saw their faith, not the man's faith, because the man had no faith. He had no belief. He had no faith. He didn't act as if it were so. He wasn't confident of what he hoped for certain of what he did not see. No, he had no faith, but these four men did. And it says when Jesus saw their faith, because they believed, they acted as if it were so, these four men knew that God was good. Jesus had forgiven them. They were loved, and everything is possible. And they wanted that for their friend more than anything else. When he saw their faith, he looked at the paralyzed man and said, "Son, take heart. Your sins are forgiven." Now, with that, everybody would have been confused because you don't bring a paralyzed man to Jesus to have him say your sins are forgiven. You bring a paralyzed man so that he can walk again. But in that moment, Jesus gave the man what he needed. A restored soul. What he needed was a restored soul. What he wanted was to walk, but what he needed was a restored soul. And Jesus will always give us what we need, even if we don't realize. That's what we truly want. And when he says your sins are forgiven and restores his soul, the Pharisees in the crowd -- they're offended. "Oh", they grumble. They complain. They criticize. "How dare this man? Who does he think he is? No one can talk like that. And what's going on with these guys, and why are they interrupting the event? And couldn't they have waited till everything was over, and they ripped a hole in the roof. Who's going to pay for this? I mean, like, who do these guys think they are? Who does he think he is?" They're so offended. And Jesus knows what they're thinking. And he says, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is it easier to say? Your sins are forgiven, or pick up your mat and walk. But so that you might know that the Son of man has authority to forgive sins. Young man, I say to you, Pick up your mat and walk." And for the first time in his life, he stretches his legs, takes his mat, runs out of the house. Everyone is amazed at what just happened. And it scans back to the four men on the top of the roof with tears streaming down their face, realizing that God just used them to help their friend find hope. And I tell you that story because that is a great picture of the mission of God, that God chooses to use us to bring the people in our lives to him, that they might experience the hope of Jesus. And there are four people in this story that I want you to see. There's the broken man. There's the four friends on mission. There's the crowd. And there are the Pharisees.

There's the broken man. He's lost. He's lonely. He's broken. He's desperate. He's by himself. And there is no way he can get himself to Jesus. Then there's four friends who are living on mission. They have compassion and empathy in this missional fire. They're willing to be inconvenienced. They're willing to die to themselves. They're willing to go out of their way. They're willing to use their entire life to help their friend find Jesus. Because as they rip the hole in the roof, they probably realize we're going to have to be the ones to pay for this. And they're okay with that because they're that locked in to the Mission of God through the faith that they have in their life. Because at some point in time, they must have met Jesus on their

own journey. That's why they have faith. Then there's the crowd. The crowd is there because they want to be, but the crowd is not there to contribute. The crowd is there to consume, but not contribute. The crowd is entertained, but they're not engaged. The crowd is amazed at the miracle, but they are not in all of Jesus. And no matter how much they listen, they're not convicted or cut to the heart. In fact, if anything, they're kind of in the way. Like if they weren't there, they wouldn't have to rip a hole in the thing. They could have just come right in the door, right to Jesus. But the crowd came early and got the preferred seats, the seats of honor, and kind of got in the way of what the work of God was wanting to do. And then there's the Pharisees, those that complained and criticized and had moral outrage and gossiped and slander, and had an issue with everyone and everything, and how Jesus was doing it, and what happened. And so here's my question for you. Which of those four people are you today? Who are you in this story? Like today, are you the broken man, lost, lonely, and broken, like, your life has fallen apart? Like, it took everything you had to just get here today? And you're not even sure if Jesus is good, real, or true. You're just desperate and looking for some hope. Are you the four friends on mission where your whole life is sacrificial servanthood? You're willing to invite and to bring and to use your time and your energy and your resources. You're willing to be inconvenienced. You don't care what other people think about you. You have a great faith because of what God has done for you. And that faith helps other people find and experience God. Or are you the crowd? And you're here because you want to be, and you consume, but you don't contribute. And this is all entertaining, but you're not really that engaged. And you're amazed at some of the things that happen and some of the things that Jesus does, but you're not really in awe of him. And no matter how much happens and how much is said, there's no cut to the heart or conviction that leads to any transformation. Or are you the Pharisee? Do you criticize, and gossip, and complain, and slander? Like, you got something to say about everything that happens. Why are we doing this? Why don't we do that? Why don't we talk about this? Why do we talk about that? Why are we doing that VC college stuff again? I'm tired of hearing it. Like, what's going on and who's going to pay for that? And why... do you have this sense of moral outrage, the sense of moral outrage that leads to emotional rhetoric? This moral outrage about what's happening in our country and in the world and in the city and in the churches and in school, and that what you see in here on social media? Do you have this moral outrage that leads you to emotional rhetoric where you have a lot to say about everything, but you don't do much about anything? Or does your moral outrage lead you to missional living, where you don't have much to say about anything, but you have a lot to do about everything? Who are you in this story? And who do you want to be? Like, do you remember what your life was like before you met Jesus? Do you remember what it was like before you got saved, before you experienced the gospel and entered the kingdom of heaven?

A few weeks ago, I asked you, like, are you saved? Have you received the gospel? Are you in the kingdom? And how do you know? And if your answer was yes, then my question for you is, do you remember what it was like before Jesus? Do you remember what your life was like when you were lost, lonely, and broken? Like, when you were lost in darkness, confused, not sure why

you're here, where you're going, what the right path is, what your life is all about? Do you remember what it was like when you were lonely, when you were separate from God and from everyone else, when you were forgotten and forsaken and had no one or nothing? Do you remember what it was like to be broken when your life just didn't work? And no matter how hard you tried, you couldn't align things and have any grace or grease to make things happen. There was no peace. There was no satisfaction. There was no healthy soul. Like, do you remember what it was like when sin was your master and ruled over you? Do you remember when sin stole, kill, and destroyed everything in your life? Do you remember what it was like when you were led by the lust of the eyes, the cravings of the flesh, and the pride of life? Do you remember what it was like to live in condemnation and shame and fear and anxiety and depression as the ruling emotions and realities over your life? Do you remember what it was like to be in that horrible marriage, and have that addiction that was so powerful, and have no hope for your future, and not sure how to raise your kids, and not sure where to go or what to do? Do you remember when you didn't know who you were, who God was, and what you were created to do? Do you remember when you were the paralyzed man? Do you remember? Do you remember what it was like before you were planted in a life-giving church that you could raise your family and that would lift your head, help you experience the presence of God, and help speak over your life that which is good and true and right? Do you remember what it was like before you had godly relationships, people you could walk with, who you could confess and repent to, who would rub the rough spots off of your life, and help you become who God has made you to be? Do you remember what it was like the first time you walked in here and you were terrified, terrified? Is God mad at me? Is he going to get me? Is he going to zap me? Are they going to embarrass me? Am I going to be ashamed? What am I going to have to do? Do you remember what it was like? Maybe I could say to you like this, What would your life be like today if you didn't have Jesus? And do you remember how you got to Jesus? Because I would bet 99% of us sitting in this room would say that someone brought us to Jesus. Someone invited us, someone brought us, someone encouraged us, someone lived a life that was so inspiring that in our brokenness, we saw light that lit up our darkness and drew us in. They blessed us, they served us, whatever it might be, because we couldn't get ourselves to Jesus. We didn't have faith, but someone else's faith was at work and picked us up and brought us to Jesus. And even if you're the 1% that say, No, I just walked in here on my own. Well, guess what? You walked into a room where other people's faith was preaching and, leading and serving, and giving. No one comes to Jesus by themselves. Do you remember what it was like? Do you remember? Because I'm convinced that the greatest barrier between us and a missional life is we forget what our life was like before Jesus. We forget what it was like when we were the man on the mat. And when we forget, we become narcissistic and judgmental. It becomes about us. We're the center. And we think I've got my salvation worked out. Yeah, you should get your salvation worked out, too. In fact, we're here every week. You can come on if you want. But that's the whole point. They can't come. They need someone to go and get them, or we become judgmental, and we judge people for why they are and where they are and how they are. And we blame them for what's going on in their life and come against them. And it would just be so easy. If you would just stop doing this, your entire life

could be different. But do you remember, you couldn't stop doing whatever that thing was. And you needed someone else to pick you up and carry you to Jesus. And when we do remember what our life was like, it fills us with compassion and empathy and missional fire. This is why the Apostle Paul is the greatest missionary that ever lived. He says, "How thankful I am to Christ Jesus, our Lord, for choosing me as one of his messengers and giving me the strength to be faithful to him. Even though I used to scoff at the name of Christ and hunted down his people and harmed them in every way I could, God had mercy on me because I didn't know what I was doing, because I didn't know Jesus." Oh, how kind our Lord was, for he showed me how to trust him and become full of the love of Christ. Paul's the greatest missionary that ever lived because he never forgot where he came from. He never forgot what his life was like before Jesus. So it didn't matter what obstacles or challenges or oppression or rejection came against him. He's like, "Oh, I remember what it was like when I didn't know what I was doing because I didn't know Jesus. I remember what it was like stumbling around in the dark. I remember what it was like to have sin be my master and rule over me. So you know what? I'm all in on this game because Jesus was merciful and has filled me with his love, and I will not forget that. That's why I'm so missionally passionate. And missionally passionate doesn't mean I moved to Africa as a missionary. It means I live on mission in my daily life with God. In fact, this is why it says that the disciples for week. They say we cannot help, but speaking about what we've seen and heard, like, we can't help it. We know who we were. We know who we now are. We know live without Jesus. We know live with Jesus. So I don't know, beat us, stone us, arrest us, reject us. Don't give us that promotion. Don't let us sit at your table at lunch. Don't invite us to the party. That's okay. We can't help speak about what we've seen and heard because we know what it was like before. We know what it's like now. And we can't help, but tell. The question is, is, are you speaking about what you've seen and heard? Because if you're not speaking about what you've seen and heard, you're going to forget about what you've seen and heard. When the broken man doesn't start telling people what Jesus did in his life, he very quickly becomes the crowd. And then over time, you will become the Pharisee. The only way to not have moral outrage with emotional rhetoric is to be a person who lives on mission, telling people what Jesus has done. And when you're speaking about what you've seen and heard, you have so much compassion on people. We get so confused. We're -- listen, people who are in the darkness, do dark things. The people who are scared, do scary things. People who are hurt, do hurtful things. People who are in the world, do worldly things. People who are enslaved in sin, do sinful things. And when you realize that you have compassion and mercy because you realize that's who I was too. And I am so grateful that someone else had a faith to pick me up and bring me to Jesus. And as that man ran out of that house with that mat in his arms, do you understand he has something to share about now what he has seen and heard. His brokenness becomes his greatest message. His pain becomes a weapon of warfare. God takes what sin had stolen, killed, and destroyed, and turns it into a weapon of warfare that sets other people free. Because he runs around for the rest of his life, not forgetting. Oh, I cannot, I couldn't walk. And now I'm alive with a restored soul, and we have this life and this vibrancy within us. But if you don't speak about what you've seen and heard, you'll forget about what you've seen and heard. Do you remember?

Do you remember? See, you were created to live on mission. This is why Jesus says the first thing to the disciples, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." We follow, he makes. His ability to make is greater than our willingness to follow. And what I want you to see right from the beginning, when he invites them to follow him, he invites them to a life of mission. Come follow me, and you'll fish for men. You'll go on mission. Why? Because that's what I'm doing, Jesus says. So if you're actually going to follow me, you can't help, but live on mission because I'm going into the lives of lost, lonely, and broken people. So if you're going to be my disciple, learn from follow, become like, be with me, where you're going to find yourself all the time is in the lives of lost, lonely, and broken people. Because that's what I'm doing. I'm fishing for men. And so I'm going to teach you how to do it. And if you're following me, that same reality will happen in your life as well. You see, if you remember a few weeks ago, I told you that movement is the evidence of life. Well, mission is the evidence of movement.

Movement is the evidence of life. If something is alive, it moves. Well, mission is the evidence of movement because if I'm actually moving with Jesus, I will be on mission with him because that's what he is doing. And mission is the only pathway to maturity. So you remember, God only makes things in motion. We have to follow so he can make. We have to move. So he makes things in motion, but he also only makes things that are missional. He makes things in motion, and he only makes things that are missional. In other words, God doesn't make any useless, arbitrary, pointless, trivial things. No, he makes things that are beautiful and glorious and purposeful. Everything he makes has a missional edge to it, including creation. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the works of his hands. What does that Psalm mean? That means that when God made the heavens and the earth and the sky, he made them with such beauty, glory, and purpose that they would declare a missional message to all of creation for all time, to say, there is a great God who is good and is worth following. And I am evidence of his goodness. So when he makes you, he makes you beautiful and glorious and missional. He forges mission into your very life because that's what he has created you for. And it's on this journey of mission that we actually get shaped and molded. How else are you going to learn to pick up your cross, deny yourself and die to yourself, by getting involved in messy, lost, lonely, and broken people's realities? And in that, Jesus says, "Yep, you just became a little more like me." This is why we tell people who join a serve team. We say, God wants to do something great in you as he does something great through you. We're so convinced that God wants to do great things through me. God wants to do something great in you. And if you don't go pick up that man and bring him to Jesus, he'll send someone else to go pick up that man and bring him to Jesus. You just won't have become who God has created and called you to be. He will still accomplish his purposes. We're just the ones that miss out. Mission is the evidence of movement. Is there evidence of that in your life? I mean, Jesus says, "For the son of man came to seek and say, which was lost." If he's seeking passionately pursuing saving, setting free, making whole delivering that which is lost, then if I'm following him, I will constantly find myself in missional situations and opportunities. Or how about this?

When John says, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God." Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love. In other words, it's impossible to say I follow Jesus, but I don't live on mission. Why? Because to know God is to know his love, and to know his love is to become a person of love. So to follow Him is to live on mission, and being a part of what he is doing, where he is going, what he values, what he says I was created for, which is a life of mission. From Genesis 1 to Revelation, from the first thing he says, "Come follow me. I'll make you fishers of men." The last thing he says to disciples, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations who are called to be missional." And this is why here we say all the time, we're a harbor of hope, a training center of life, and a family on mission. We're a harbor of hope. We're lost, lonely, and broken. People who have been battered by life storms can come into a harbor of refuge and find safety here. And over time, as they get healed and restored, they transition to this training center for life where we're training and shaping and molding them to live a godly life that which they were created for. And as that begins to arise in your soul, you wake up and realize this is a family on mission. I'm a beloved son or daughter. These are my beloved brothers and sisters. And we are now on our father's mission. This is why we say almost every single weekend, hope is here. Everyone is welcome. Jesus changes everything. Why? Because we believe hope is actually here. The goodness of God is available. Everyone is welcome, no matter where you've been, what you've done, what your life looks like, you are welcome and wanted here. We will rip the hole in the ceiling for you. There is a place for you. And Jesus changes everything. Because one word, one touch, one moment, one experience from Jesus literally changes everything. We live on mission because we are people who are moving, and we're moving because we're alive. So the day this church no longer is missional is the day we stopped moving. And the day we stopped moving is the day we're dead. Mission is the evidence of movement. Movement is the evidence of life, and mission is the only path to maturity. You really want to become who God has created and called you to be? You can't get there without a missional life. It's not possible. And we get so confused on mission, we literally hear that word. We think, go to Africa and a jungle. Maybe. And the less you want to do it, the more likely it's going to find you. But how about just this for a second? What if mission is just using all of my life to help people discover and experience the availability of the Kingdom of God through the person and work of Jesus? What if mission is just using all of my life, my time, my talent, my energy, my money, my social media, my influence, my power, my authority of my connections, my reputation, my possessions, my stuff. What if it's using all of my life to help people discover because they don't know they're trapped in darkness. Darkness doesn't mean bad. It just means lost. And you are now the light of the world because of what Jesus has done in you. And when you bring light into their life, it turns on the light so they can discover and see that Jesus is good and true and right. And experience because they need to taste and see that God is good in order to follow him, the availability of the Kingdom of God, the rule and reign of God, the With God Life, and another kind of life, a life from above, the life that you were created for through the person and the work of Jesus. This is mission. We can't save people. We can't transform people, but we can use all of our life, and everything that's been entrusted to us to help people discover and experience, demonstrate and declare, bless and

serve, and give and love, and encourage words and actions, all that we have to help people realize there is the Kingdom of God. It's available. It's right here. It's at hand through the person and the work of Jesus. And if you so want it, you can get up from that mat and walk. We can't make that guy get up and walk, but we can bring them to Jesus. This is why, if you remember when we started this Collection of Talks, I told you, we can't make God move, but we can prepare for when He does.

We can't make people move, but we can prepare for when they do. And we can't make people respond, but we can be ready when they do. And we can't make people come, but we can keep inviting them until they do. See, mission is embedded deep in the heart of God. And if it's deep in the heart of God, then it's deep in the heart of us because we're made in his image and his likeness. In fact, do you realize that God found you before he lost you? That'd be worth thinking about sometime this week in your life. He found you before he lost you. You say, What does that mean? It means this long ago, even before he made the world, God chose you to be his very own through what Christ would do. Hadn't happened yet, but through what Christ would do, that mission. He was coming. He decided then to make us holy in his eyes, without a single fault. We who stand before him, covered with his love, his unchanging plan has always been to adopt us, bring us into his own family by sending Jesus on mission to die for us. And he did this because he wanted to. Before he lost you, he found you, before you rebelled against him. He reconciled you. Before you wandered away, he picked you up and brought you home. Before he missed you, he was already on mission for you before he even created the world. He decided that no matter what was going to happen, he was coming on mission for you. All of God came for all of you. And this is why one day, when Jesus is hanging out with tax collectors and sinners, and the Pharisees have their moral outrage and their emotional rhetoric, and they have a lot to say about everything, but they don't do a darn thing. Jesus tells them three stories. He says, "There's a story of a shepherd who had a hundred sheep, and one of those sheep wandered away, and a good shepherd left the 99 to go find the one. And when he found it, he picked it up, put it on his shoulders, and carried it home rejoicing." He said, "Then there was a woman who had 10 coins. And when she lost one of those silver coins, she lit her lamp in her house and went everywhere in the darkness around her house until she found it. And when she found it, she called her friends and said, Come, rejoice with me. Then there was a father who had two sons. The younger son wished his father dead, and went off into the world and worldly living and hit rock bottom in a pig pen. And when he came back home, that father ran to his son, picked him up, hugged him, brought him back inside, and through a grand party. And while the older brother heard about it, he stayed outside in his pride and his narcissism and his outrage and refused to come in. The father went out to try to get that prideful religious brother and bring him back in." And Jesus tells those three stories to show us that all of God came for all of us. Why? Because the good shepherd is representative of God. The son, the flame, the lamp is representative of God, the spirit. The father is representative of God, the father. All of God came for all of you. He came to get you in your wandering. He came to get you in your darkness. He came to get you in your pig pen worldliness. And he came to get you in your religious narcissistic pride, to bring you back in. All of God came for all

of you. And now all of God wants to move through all of you to get all of them and bring them back home. This is mission. This is mission. But if you forget who you were. If you're like, my life is the same as it was, it's just, I'm a good person. And without Jesus, I'd still have been a good person. Then you need to go back to the earlier collection of talks and re-examine the gospel because there is no my life's the same. I was dead and now I'm alive. I was blind and I can see. I couldn't walk, but now -- I had a broken soul, but now it's been restored. Do you remember? You see, we learn how to go on mission for others by how Jesus went on mission for us. Mission is personal. It's face to face, life to life, breath to breath, soul to soul, friend to friend, family to family. For some reason, we just think mission is we have church buildings, church organizations, and church websites. If they want to come, they can. That's the whole point of the story. The guy couldn't come. He's paralyzed. If his friends didn't know him, see him, care about him, think about him. They could have just shown up to the event and been like, well, we hope Joe makes it here today. Joe can't make it here today is the point. I personally have to get him and bring him because not only can he not walk, he doesn't have the faith. So even if he could walk, he wouldn't walk here for the restoration of his soul. It's personal. It's personal. This is why it says of Jesus. He's a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Isn't it awesome that Jesus, like, literally personally was friends with these people that he was on mission with, that he didn't do this thing? Like, I have a building and a website. I've come to save the world. If you want me, you may come. That's what we think. That's what we do. No, Jesus was friend with the woman at the well, and the woman caught in adultery, and the man with leprosy, and Matthew at his tax collector's booth, and Peter at his depressed fishing business. And he's friends with you. Aren't you glad that he personally came and knocked on your door and called you by name? He didn't just say there's a building and a website. He's like, No, no. Like I want you. So the question is, is, are you personally aware of and engaged? Are you friends with sinners and tax collectors, not to party? It misses the whole point. Your life is the message. Remember? You're like, yeah, oh man. No, no. You know what that would be like in all seriousness? Because that would literally be like, if the four friends went and laid down on the ground with the paralytic. And said, "This is a great life." That's what it's like when people who profess to know God go out and live like the world with worldly people. You're literally getting down into the pig pen and saying, this is awesome. Your life is supposed to -- walking around a paralyzed man shows him what's possible, and gives him hope for a future that he doesn't yet have. So when I go and I say, Man, I'm just -- I'm not drinking. I'm not talking like that. I'm not looking at that. I'm not engaging with that. We're so worried about being rejected, which again, reminds us that we probably have forgotten who we were and what God did. Because I can't help, but speak about what I've seen and heard, but even more foolish than that is, we're coming down to the inferior life that Jesus rescued us out of. And then we're convinced that's what's going to win them over. Well, you know, you got to... not one time will you find Jesus doing what tax collectors and sinners did. And he was still the best friend they ever had. He didn't steal money from anybody, and he didn't do all the things that they were doing. And he was the best friend that they ever had. Why? Because he was a person of love. And he brought light to their darkness. And he showed them something that they didn't even know was possible and could exist, which is inconvenient. It's incredibly inconvenient. You talk about

inconvenient, those four guys, they have plans and jobs and hobbies and activities and homework and sports and great good things that God has put in their life. But this is the day.

So am I willing to be inconvenienced from my agenda and my thing to go and get my friend and bring... that's the real question. See, people are not an interruption from your work. They are your work. People are not an interruption to your mission. They are your mission. People are not an interruption to your life's purpose. They are your life's purpose. Jesus understood this. And aren't you glad he did? In fact, one day when he was hanging out at teaching. And says, suddenly while still in the meeting place, he was interrupted by a man who was deeply disturbed and yelling out. A demon-possessed man, in the middle of what Jesus was doing, interrupted, started yelling out. And Jesus didn't be like, "Hey, hey, no, I'm busy." He's like, "No, this is what I'm busy doing. This interruption is my work. This interruption is my purpose. This interruption is my heart." Aren't you glad that when you interrupted Jesus, he didn't tell you, "I'm busy?" When you reached out and grabbed the hem of his garment, when you cried out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. When you said, Jesus, come to my house because my little girl is dying. When you said, Jesus, I'm blind. And I want to see. When you're the leprous soul cried out, Jesus, please touch me and make me good. Aren't you glad he didn't see that as an interruption? He saw that as the point as his work. And you're like, Well, I'm not around any demon-possessed people. So I'll be like, are you serious? Anybody that's not in Jesus has the spirit of the world within them, which is the spirit of the anti-Christ, anti-against, all it means is against Christ. You're like, John just said, My neighbor is the one. No, he didn't. He said, Anyone that's not in Jesus has the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world is anti. It's against Christ. So their mind is demonically oppressed. Their soul is demonically oppressed. Their heart is demonically shaped and ensnared and enslaved. Like, we have to wake up to this reality. We don't panic. What we do is we say they can't get themselves to Jesus. So I'm showing up with the power and authority of what God has done in my life. And I'm going to be now, if you refuse to let me pick you up, I can't pick you up, but I pray for you, and I can bless you. And I refuse to allow my moral outrage to become emotional rhetoric where I say a lot, but do a little. I'm just going to go find someone else that does want to be picked up. And then it's messy. Mission is so messy. Oh, it's messy. But here's what I love about Jesus. Jesus doesn't see messy people. He sees people in a mess. Never one time do you watch Jesus to find somebody by their mess? It doesn't identify them by the brokenness, by the pain, by the sorrow, by the sin, by the darkness. No, he sees people made in his image and his likeness with a purpose and a destiny upon their life, trapped in a mess. And he has such compassion and empathy and missional fortitude that he wants to go into that mess to clean them, heal them, and set them free. Look what it says. A man with leprosy. It doesn't say a leper. It doesn't say a messy man. It says a man in a mess. You say that's semantics. No, it's not. That determines whether or not you'll live missionally or not. Because if you define everyone by their mess, I don't want to, that's a mess. I don't want to touch that. But if I see -- do you ever notice how parents, they never define their kids are like snot, gross crusts. I mean, it's like -- and they, oh. They don't see a messy kid. They see a kid who has a mess that needs to be cleaned up. I see that kid. I see a messy kid. Fair? Okay. Play that now into people's real lives. A man who's in a

mess came to him and begged, if you're willing, you can make me clean filled with compassion. Jesus touched. What does it say? It doesn't say the leper. It says the man. Because he saw a man, not a leper. He saw a man who was in a mess that needed the goodness and the grace of God to set him free. And he saw a willing and open heart. If you're willing, Jesus is always willing. That's the irony. We're the ones who aren't willing. If you're willing, I'm always willing. Are you? Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't see you in your mess, or didn't define you by your mess? He saw you in your mess, and he wanted to come and set you free. He never defined you by it, even when you had a leprous soul. And here's the problem. If you don't think you had a leprous soul, that is my point of this entire thing. You forgot who you were. You forgot who you actually were. Because a lot of us think like, well, I wasn't a paralyzed man. I did. I was pretty good. I walked in and said, Hey, Jesus. No, no. You couldn't have got to Jesus. If he didn't come to you ever, and he chose to come to you through us, which requires humility, and brokenness, and vulnerability. Come on. Who are you in the story? Are you the broken man today? And you're just hoping for Jesus. Man, may you take a hold of that which he offers. Are you the four friends on mission, inviting, bringing, engaging, like, feeling like, yes, this is what my life, like, yes, I'm moving, and I'm on mission with Jesus. And he's going to help me keep figuring it out. Are you the crowd? Are you consuming? Are you entertaining? Are you like... it's just... you just, like... it just take, but there's never any, any change. Are you the angry Pharisee with a lot of emotional rhetoric about a lot of things, but you don't really do all that much. And you're irritated at everyone and everything all the time. Do you understand that's its own version of being on a mat? And Jesus isn't even rebuking you in compassion. He's coming to you, saying, Hey -- we're like, yeah, the leprous soul, they need Jesus. So does the pharisaical soul. Paradoxically, it's easier to bring the paralytic man to Jesus than it is to inspire the crowd to follow Jesus or the Pharisee that they need Jesus. Can I tell you, after doing this for like 20 years, it's easier to preach to people on a mat than it is to people who are there to consume, or there with moral outrage, convinced that they're better than everyone else. These people don't change. This person does, if they'll let you pick them up. And when this person meets Jesus, if they don't go on mission, they will forget what they've seen and heard. And they will eventually become the crowd slowly. And then overtime, they'll wake up one day, and they are the Pharisee, and they don't even know how they got there. They're just convinced that their church is no longer good. My church no longer preaches on. My church no longer helps me meet with God. My country has done this. My school is that -- my husband -- my gosh, if you've seen that guy -- but you know, who never becomes like that people that are on mission. Because they remember who they were, and they know we're all on our journey, and we all need other people to keep bringing us back to Jesus. Even if you're on mission, you still need other people on mission to bring you back to Jesus when things drift, when you have ungodly beliefs, when you have active sin, when you've given into that temptation, when those things of the past come back up, we still need people in our lives. Listen to me. It says, Jesus showed up in that town, and the power of the Lord was there for him to heal. Can I tell you something? Jesus has come to this town, and he's come to this church, and the power of the Lord is here for him to heal. The only question is where we go get them and bring them in so they can meet and experience Jesus himself. So you close your eyes with me. I know that's a

lot. And I tried to just stir it up a little bit today for you, not for the sake of stirring it up, but for the sake of just being reminded. Do you remember what it was like without Jesus? Because that's what it's like for them. Every day, that's all they have.

And so, Holy Spirit, I just pray that You would just remind us of what our life is like without You, that it would re-infuse gratitude and missional fire within us. Thank You, Jesus, for how You treated us, and our brokenness may missional fire burn in our church, that that's how we'll treat other people. I pray for every person today who is lost, lonely, and broken today. We've just lowered you before Jesus. And even though you didn't have faith, we have the faith for you. So may you hear whatever he wants to speak in your life, which is probably "son, daughter, take heart, for your sins are forgiven. Now pick up your mat and walk with me through this life." In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.