

Alright. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek, whatever campus you're at today, whether you're in Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville, or online somewhere in the world. We are so glad you are here with us today. We are one church that meets at multiple campuses, that carries the hope of Jesus to thousands of locations. And the reason we're in thousands of locations is because wherever you are, that's where we are. Because church is not a place you go, it is the people you belong to. It is not an event you attend, it is a mission that you are on. Church isn't something that you do, it is something that you are. And so, we, we are a movement of hope for the city and beyond. Jesus has touched our life. We're alive. We're now moving forward, and we're on mission to bring hope to the world around us. Mission is the evidence of movement. Movement is the evidence of life. So, we are a movement of hope for the city and beyond. And we're a Jesus-focused, spirit-filled, life-giving church. We're Jesus-focused. We want to focus on Jesus. What He has done for us, not what we have to do for Him. So, we lift up the name of Jesus and only the name of Jesus. Jesus is the one thing, the main thing, the everything, the only thing. The more clearly you see Jesus, the more clearly you see everything else. In the face of Jesus is the knowledge of God. So, when we discover Jesus, we discover everything that is true about God. We're spirit-filled, which means we don't want to walk in the flesh or in the ways of this world, but we want to walk in the character and the power of Jesus. And we're life-giving. We're on mission to receive and release the life of God wherever we go, which means we don't want to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We don't want everything to be about good/bad, should/shouldn't, can/can't, do/don't, evil and good. No, no. We want to eat from the tree of life and then release that life into the world around us. And so, I'm so glad you're here with us today because this fall we've been in a collection of talks on movement, mission, and maturity. We've said that we want to move with Jesus. We want to be on mission with Jesus. We want to mature in Jesus. And this is really a collection of talks, much more so than a series. It's not a build week to week. It's a bunch of individual things that are all worth reflecting on, wrestling through and absorbing into our life because there are things that we believe are really important to the heart of God for our church in this season. And so, what I want to do today is I want to tell you a very familiar story and then I want to give you a chance to reflect on it. So, Holy Spirit, would you come and just give us eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to receive?

You see, one day, an expert in the law came to test Jesus and he says, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus took a breath, paused for a moment and look right back at the man, and said, "Well, what is written in the law and how do you read it?" The man looked back at Jesus and said, "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus says, "You have judged correctly. Do this and you will live." But the man wanted to justify himself, so he looked at Jesus and said, "Just who then, though, is my neighbor?" And Jesus didn't answer the question. He told the man a simple story. He said, "There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. And as he was on the road, a bunch of robbers came upon him. They beat him. They stoned him. They mocked him. They persecuted him. They robbed him. They stripped him naked and left him for dead right

there in the middle of the road. A little while later, a priest came walking along and when he saw the man, he went around him and quickly passed by. A while later, a Levite came along and when he saw the man in the middle of the road, he, too, quickly went around him and passed by. But a little while later, a Samaritan came along. And when he saw the man, he was filled with compassion, went over to him, got down, took oil and wine and poured it into his wounds, bandaged him up, picked him up, put him on his own donkey, took him into town, checked him in, paid two silver coins to pay for all the man's needs, and told the innkeeper, "When I come back, I will pay anything else that is due." And Jesus looks at the teacher of the law, the expert in the law, and says, "Which of these men was a neighbor to the man who was dying on the road?" He said, "The one who had mercy on him." And Jesus said, "Now go and do likewise." What a humbling, convicting, and challenging story. And I tell you that story because I think that story describes the heart of mission in a very beautiful way. And so, let's just walk through it together. One day, an expert in the law comes to Jesus. See, I think so often you and I come to Jesus as experts. We think we're experts. We think we've arrived. We think we've got it figured out. We think we're mature. We think more highly of ourselves than we probably ought. We think things like, "I've been in church for years. I know the stories. I have all of this information, and I'm above all of this stuff. All of this is for other people because I'm further down the road than them." And we often judge ourselves very generously and others very harshly. We think more highly of ourselves than we ought. And he says to Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" And here's his great problem. He wants to know what he has to do. And so often, you and I come to Jesus as an expert and we want to know, what do we have to do? What do we have to do to obtain or achieve eternal life? "How do I need to perform? What do I need to accomplish? What do I need to get right? What kind of success do I need to obtain? What do I need to do in order to get that which I long for?" The only problem is, is you were created to be drawn by grace, not driven by expectations. And when you want to know what you have to do, try harder, behave better, do more. It is an exhausting way to live. See, when he should have come to Jesus and said, "Jesus, what did you do that will allow me to obtain eternal life?" We should come to Jesus and say, "Jesus, what have you done that will allow me to inherit eternal life?" And if you say, "Jesus, what have you done?" He will look at you and He will say, "Everything that ever has been or ever will be required from you has been paid in full." He will tell you that you have been saved by grace through faith. That this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no man can boast. He will tell you that the grace of God has brought salvation, has appeared to all men. And He will show you the nail holes in His hands and in His feet. And He will show you the spear hole in His side. And He will show you the crown of thorns on His head. He will show you His beard that was ripped out. He will show you the stripes on His back. He will show you His body that is bloodied and bruised, and His face that is disfigured. And He will remind you that on the cross, He declared, "It is finished," not "Go work on it." Jesus will remind you that there is a righteousness by faith that is now available because God made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Jesus, what did you do that I might inherit eternal life? And that word "inherit" is very important, because to inherit something is by grace to receive it. You don't obtain it. You don't achieve it. You don't earn it.

You simply receive it. Inherit eternal life. Eternal life. See, we think eternal life starts when we die, but what we forget is that we are an unceasing spiritual being in God's great universe. That you are already living in eternity here and now. The only question is, is what kind of eternity will you live the remainder of it in? A with God or a without God eternity? In fact, the only place in the Bible where Jesus defines eternal life, He says, "This is eternal life that they might know you, the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." In other words, eternal life isn't going to heaven when you die. No, eternal life is the with God life, another kind of life, a life from above, the rule and reign of God in the here and now. And so, Jesus looks at the man and He says, "Well, what is in the law and how do you read it?" See, if you come to Jesus and ask Him what you have to do, He will always respond with the law. He will show you the law to show you that it is impossible for you to actually achieve it. And I love that He asked the man, "What is written in the law?" See, our great problem is, is we don't know what's in the law. We don't know what's in the Scriptures. We don't really know what's in the Bible. We haven't consumed them and meditated on them and memorized them and hidden them in our heart and searched after. And we haven't gone after the Scriptures with everything we've got to fill our heart and our mind with them. So, we actually don't really know what's in there. That's why Jesus says, "You are in error because you don't know the Scriptures or the power of God." We live a lot of our life missing the mark because we just don't know what God has already said to His people. I mean, a great question to ask yourself is over these last couple of weeks, with everything that's been going on in the world and in your life, my question for you is this. Have you spent more time on social media or in the Word of God? And I don't say this in any way to come at you. I just want you to just think about it. Did you spend more time on social media feeds or watching the media, the news cycles, or in the Word of God? And if I've spent a lot of time in social media, did you ever just stop to ask yourself this question, what thoughts do I think because I've consumed social media? What feelings do I feel because I've consumed social media? What attitudes that I didn't have that I now have because I've consumed social media? Did you ever stop and ask yourself this question? What would you think about if you didn't engage social media? "What would I think about? I'm honestly not sure." Now, here's a great question. What thoughts would you think if you engage the Word of God? What feelings would you feel if you engage the Word of God? What attitudes would you take on if you engaged the Word of God? See, I think we don't even realize how much the social media and the media rhetoric plants ideas and images into our head that then actually control our life. You're either led by social media or the Word of God, and those things lead your thoughts, and your thoughts lead your life. What would you think about if you didn't engage social media? Would you have anything to think about? I bet you, you'd be a lot more peaceful and joyful. And if you filled your mind with the Word of God, I bet you'd think a lot more about the kingdom of God, and impossibilities becoming possible and so on and so forth. So, what is in the law and how do you read it? It's not just enough to read it, we actually have to interpret it. And the problem is, is we often misinterpret the Scriptures because we interpret it through personal bias. We interpret it through our life experiences. We interpret it through our denominational upbringing or what grandma told me or what social media says that it's

supposed to mean and how we're supposed to live. Or we interpret it through our current situations or our circumstances and we completely miss the heart of God within it.

See, to interpret Scriptures correctly is to read it with the Jesus-focused lens. That's why when it says, "Jesus taught them the Scriptures concerning himself," it means the Scriptures are not about what you have to do. They're about who He is and what He has done. We interpret the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit, who Jesus says is the great guide, leading us to truth, pointing us to Jesus. And we interpret Scriptures in godly relationships, because through the counsel of many, we find victory, the accurate interpretation of what Scripture is actually trying to say to us. And so, the expert in the law looks back at Jesus and says, "Well, it's easy, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." In other words, what's in the Scripture. And the way I interpret it is what's most important to God, more than anything else, is to love God and love my neighbor. To love God with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength. But what does that mean, to love God? I mean, you love ice cream, you love The Cowboys, and you love a sunny day. Is that what it means to love God? Well, the word "love" actually means to have goodwill. To love God means my will is for His good and His glory. My will, my desire, my choices, my words, my actions will be in alignment for His good and His glory. To love God with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength means my words, my actions, my behaviors, my beliefs, where I go and what I do, my will is for His good. It means I've taken my will and submitted and surrendered it to the lordship of Jesus, and say, "No longer my kingdom come and my will be done." No. "Your kingdom come and your will be done." That's what it actually means to love God. And when I love God, I can't help but naturally start loving my neighbor as myself, because what God loves more than anything else is people.

So, if I'm seeking after His good, my goodwill is for His good and His glory, then I will get involved in the lives of the people around me because that's what He wants more than anything else. In fact, this is why it says, "We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he's a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen." We love because He first loved us. It's God's love for us that creates our love for Him. And if we say, "I love God, but I hate my brother, my neighbor, that person who is right there in front of me," I'm a liar. But what does it mean to lie? To lie is simply to deceive someone else and tell them something that's not true. I think the problem with this is I don't think we lie to other people about our love for God, I think we lie to ourselves. I don't think we're deceiving other people saying, "I love God," but hating our brother. I think we deceive ourselves. And we're convinced that we're an expert, that we're mature, that we've arrived, that all this is beneath us, that we're above it and beyond it. But it goes on to say, "It's impossible to love God, who you haven't seen, if you can't love your brother or your neighbor, whom you have seen." It's impossible to say, "I follow Jesus," if I'm not getting involved in the lives of the people around me. It's impossible to say, "I'm mature," if I'm not actually living on mission. And so, Jesus and this man had this little dialogue, and Jesus says, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live." But the man wants to

justify himself, so he says, "And just who then is my neighbor?" Isn't that what we all want to know? What's the least amount that I actually have to do? What's the standard? What's the bare minimum? I'm supposed to love people who look like me and talk like me and act like me, right? And I'm supposed to love people who are easy to love and have loved me first. Isn't that how it works? No. Love your neighbor as yourself. Who is your neighbor? Your neighbor is the person nearby you. Neighbor, nearby. Neighbor. Your neighbor is the person who is nearby you, right there on your road of life. It's the person that you live with, your family or your friends. It's that student at lunch that nobody invites to come sit at the lunch table, or it's that student that's getting excluded from the homecoming group, the drama. Every student in homecoming world knows exactly, every parent knows what I'm talking about right there. That's your neighbor. It's that person who lives in the apartment above you that is always really loud in the middle of the night. It's your next-door neighbor, and you don't like the way they do their landscaping or how they park their cars. It's that person that you work with that's really obnoxious and drives you absolutely bonkers. It's that person that's sitting three seats over from you right now during two minutes of kindness that you ignored. Nearby. Neighbor. See, we want to love our far-bor. There's a neighbor and there's a far-bor. We want to love the far-bors of our life. The people who are far away, the people who we see on social media and we see their highlight reels. Can I just tell you, it's really easy to love somebody far away on their highlight reels. They look really, really good because you don't have to deal with their failures or their flaws or their sins or their brokenness. But Jesus doesn't ask us to love our far-bor. He asks us to love our neighbor, the person close, right by, that we have to interact with. In fact, if you can catch this, it's really easy to love and hate people who are far away. It's really hard to love people and hate people who are nearby. It's really easy to love and hate people who are far away. Why? Because when you're far away, all I see is your highlight reel, so it's really easy to love you and celebrate you. It's also really easy to hate you because I can be a comment warrior, because I don't actually have to look you face to face, because I probably wouldn't say what I'm posting if you were nearby. But it's actually really hard to love my neighbor because I see their failures and their flaws and their brokenness. But it's also really hard to hate them because it's really hard to pick up a stone when I'm looking somebody face to face and eye to eye. Did you notice, all throughout the Scripture, Jesus never tells you to love your far-bor? He tells you to love your neighbor. Why? Because if we will learn to love the people that were nearby, then when the person who is far away comes close, they will be easy for us to love, because we've learned how to love the person right in front of us instead of pretending like we love the people way out there, deceiving ourselves. So, Jesus doesn't answer the man's question. He just tells him a story, and He says, "There is a man who is going down from Jerusalem, representing the city of God, to Jericho, the places of this world. And as he was going along the road, these bandits came upon him. They beat him. They mocked him. They ripped his clothes off. They took everything he had." And that's a great picture of the world. See, we get on this road of life and out of nowhere, destruction comes upon us like a bandit. And it beats you and it stones you and it mocks you and it robs you and it leaves you for dead on the side of the road. See, the world is a wide gate and a broad path, but it leads to a life of destruction. It's incredibly wide. Come one, come all. Do what you want, when you

want, how you want. It sounds so good. But as we go down, it gets narrower and narrower until eventually we become stuck and the world itself springs upon us, steals, kills and destroys and leaves us for dead. The world promises you everything, but in the end it will steal your soul. Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay. And so, the man is left for dead in the middle of the road. And a little while later, a priest comes walking along. And when the priest gets to the man, the man's right in the middle of the road. He's not off to this, he's right there. And the priest gets there, and honestly, he's irritated. "I got places to go, things to do. I'm going over there to go to my 98th Bible study of how to be a great person for God. I don't have time for this. In fact, I'm offended at you because now that I've seen you it's pricked my heart a little bit. So, you've actually violated my conscience because I feel like I should do something about it, but I don't want to. And why are you on this road by yourself anyways? Don't you know, this is a dangerous road? And why would you carry that much cash? This is your fault. In fact, somebody, somebody should do something about this. Somebody come and clean this up." A little while later, a Levite comes along and when he gets there, a man's right in the middle of the road, and he, too, is irritated. He was going to a special location to take a perfect selfie so that he could post on his social media about how revival is coming and we should love God. "I mean, I don't have time for this. You're in the way. Somebody should do something about this." And the priest and the Levite are a picture of the law and religion. See, the law demands everything from you, but it offers nothing to you. The law is heavy. It's hard. It's rigid. It's cold. It is exacting. That's why the Ten Commandments are written on stone tablets. They're cold. They're frigid. They're hard. They are unflexible in every way. The law can tell you, "Do not steal," but it can't make you generous. The law can tell you, "Don't commit adultery," but it can't help you love your spouse. The law can tell you, "Do not murder," but it can't create within you a heart of love, for not only your neighbor but your enemy. The law is exacting and demanding and offers you no help on the side of the road, but grace empowers what the law demands. And that's why a few minutes later, a Samaritan comes walking along. Now, you have to understand in context, when this Jewish expert in the law, here's the word "Samaritan". He probably twinged a little bit. Why? Because Jews and Samaritans hated each other. They were enemies. They didn't see each other as humans. They saw each other as enemies. This would be like Republican-Democrat, conservative-liberal, Ukrainian-Russian, Palestinian-Israelite. That's the level of hostility that exists when Jesus says this. And yet, that Samaritan, when he sees the man in the middle of the road, it says he's filled with compassion, empathy, love. And what does he do? He enters in and gets involved. He enters in and gets involved and gets down. Why? Because compassion is not a feeling, it's an action. And that's who our God is. In fact, our God describing himself, says, "The Lord, the Lord, Yahweh, Yahweh, Jesus, Jesus, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin." You want to know who Jesus is. This is who Jesus is. He's compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to you, forgiving your wickedness, your rebellion and your sin. He's a compassionate God. And all of these are actions. It's not just how He feels, it's how He acts. And if we're the people of God, if we're the people of the Lord, if we're

becoming like Jesus, then this should start to describe our life. Unfortunately, we are often uncompassionate and judgmental. Quick to anger, abounding in hate and unfaithfulness. We are so incredibly wishy-washy. We maintain love to the few people who love us the way we want to be loved. And we're not forgiving. We're often quick to exact judgment and condemnation and retribution. But our God is a compassionate God. And so, the Samaritan gets down and he takes oil and wine, pours it into the man's wounds, binds them up. Puts him on his own donkey, carries him all the way to the inn. Takes him, checks him in the inn, takes his own money and pays for everything that the man needs. And what I love in that moment is you see the definition of mission. He used all of his life. What he had, not what he didn't have. He didn't have to do anything that he didn't need. No, but he had oil and wine, and he had bandages, and he had a donkey, and he had two silver coins. So, he used all of his life to help that man discover and experience the goodness of God, the kingdom of God. It was if God himself stooped down in that moment and entered in and got involved into that broken man's life. He acted. He acted, which is why the Scripture tells us, "This is how we know what love is, that Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions, has stuff in this life, and sees his brother or his neighbor in need but has no pity, no compassion, is unwilling to get involved or enter in, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

Jesus laid down His life for you, and He calls you to lay down your life for them. And oftentimes, laying down your life for them is just simply getting involved. It's simply entering into their pain, to their brokenness. Loving them the way you wish someone else would love you if you are in that situation. And I love that it says let us not love with words, but with actions. Love is an action. It is not a speech. Love is more moving than it is monologuing. Love is about getting involved. Listen to me. Moral outrage is not supposed to lead to emotional rhetoric. It's supposed to lead to missional living. There is very real moral outrage in this world and in your life. You will see injustices on the road of life. But the point is not to sit there and become a monologue or pontificating, an expert in what everyone else should do. The point is enter in and get involved. Don't talk about everything and do nothing. Do something and don't say much of anything. You know who had a lot to say in that story? The priest and the Levite. Don't you know when they got to where they were going, they told everybody about how somebody needs to go deal with that? "Oh, yeah, will somebody needs to go? And somebody needs to teach those people, and somebody needs to make sure." They had a lot to say. You know the Good Samaritan? Had almost nothing to say. The only thing the Good Samaritan had to say is, "If it costs more, I'll pay it. If it costs more, I'll pay it." Because he got involved. He entered in. And so, Jesus looks at the teacher, the expert in the law, and says, "Which of these men was a neighbor to that man?" He said, "The one who had mercy on him," in a very humble broken posture. And Jesus says, "Now go and do likewise." What a humbling, convicting, challenging story.

And so, here's my question for you is, who are you in the story? Who are you in the story? Are you the expert in the law, thinking you've arrived? That you're mature in the moment? That you think that you're here to test Jesus as if you're going to catch Him and something that's wrong? Are you the man who has gone down from Jerusalem to Jericho and the world has left you for dead? You barely scraped in here today because you feel like you've been beaten, stoned, mocked, stripped, and robbed? Are you the priest and the Levite so busy doing your life that you don't have time or energy or interest to enter into other people's lives? In fact, you'd rather just judge and condemn and tell somebody else to do it. Or are you the Good Samaritan getting involved? See, here's a great question for you in the last couple of weeks. Did you throw stones or did you bandage wounds? In these last few weeks of your life, did you knock people down or did you pick them up? Did you show up and wound or did you heal those wounds? Did you come against or did you lift up? Did you knock people down or did you pick them up and carry them on their way? See, hurting people hurt people. Selfish people pass by people. Healthy people heal people. Who are you in the story? See, what I love about Jesus is that Jesus came to be the Good Samaritan in this world. In fact, when Jesus came to this earth, it says, "He took on flesh. He moved into our neighborhood with grace and truth." Immanuel, God with us. If you catch this, He's a big theological word called the incarnation. God poured himself out, He took on humanity and He walked among this world. The word, Jesus, became flesh and blood. He actually took on a human body, human form, and He moved into our neighborhood. And He came to show us the glory of God that we could see it with our own eyes. And from His fullness, He released grace upon grace upon grace. You know what that means? That means Jesus showed up. He took on flesh, He moved into the neighborhood. And when Jesus engaged with someone, it was if God himself was engaging with that person. When Jesus healed someone, it was if God was healing them. When Jesus washed someone's feet, it's as if it was God who was washing their feet. But when Jesus gave attention to someone, it was if God was giving attention to that person. When Jesus smiled on somebody, it was if God was smiling upon them. When Jesus listened to somebody, it was as if God was listening to somebody. When Jesus had compassion, it was as if God had compassion on that person. Jesus was God on this earth. And everything He did, it was as if God was doing it in the lives of the people. And then, Jesus went to the cross. He was dead, He was buried. Three days later, He rose again. And 40 days later, it says, "Jesus ascended into heaven." And in that moment, when the body of Jesus ascended into heaven, the body of Christ was released on this earth. I want you to catch this. When the physical body of Jesus ascended into heaven, it wasn't the end of the word becoming flesh and blood in our neighborhood. No, the Spirit was poured out and the body of Christ was now released into this world. So now, through your flesh and blood, the Word of God is in your neighborhood, showing people the glory of God, releasing grace upon grace, which means when you touch someone, it's as if God's touching them. When you heal someone, it's as if God's healing them. And you wash someone's feet, it's as if God's washing them. You enter into their pain, it's as if God was entering into their pain. You invite somebody to something, it's as if God is inviting them to something. The word is now flesh in every neighborhood, every school, every workplace, every place of business, every restaurant, every supermarket that you go. Why? Because you're the body of Christ, are

you not? Yes, you are. Now, you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. This is not subjective, flowery, figurative language. No, you are the hands and feet of Jesus. The body of Jesus ascended into heaven, but the body of Christ was released on this earth. Think about it. The moment you receive the Spirit, what happens? You become included in Christ, clothed with Christ, filled with Christ, a new creation in Christ. It's no longer I live. It's Christ who lives within me, for I have been crucified. And it's no longer me, but now it's Him. I am now literally His physical hands, His physical feet. I am His mouthpiece. I am His ears. I am His face. I am His finances. I am His time. And I have now been empowered by Him to enter into the people that I walk by every single day to their life as if God himself were entering into that situation. That's why Jesus says to the disciples as He's going to ascend, "As the Father has sent me, so I'm sending you." And with that He breathed on them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they're forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." That's profound. He says, "If you forgive people, they're forgiven. And if you don't, they aren't." How is that possible? Well, because you're now the body of Christ. You've been sent the way the Father sent Jesus, to be flesh and blood in the neighborhood. That's why it says, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith in me, you'll do what I have been doing. And you'll do even greater things than these." How is it possible for us to do greater things? Because the body of Jesus could only be in one neighborhood. The body of Christ can be in every neighborhood at the same time, entering into people's pain with the goodness and the grace of God. So, when you get involved in people's lives, it's as if God is getting involved. And not only do they experience God through you, you experience God through them. Look what Jesus says. "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me. I was dying in the middle of the road and you got involved. I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers, neighbors, nearbys of mine, you did for me. And I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." Jesus says that when we get involved and we wash feet, it's as if we're washing God's feet. And when we bless, it's as if we're blessing God. And when we smile, it's as if we're smiling to God. And when we give attention, it's as if we're giving attention to God. And when we're generous, it's as if we're being generous to God. Hear me. When you get involved in the lives of those people, you're experiencing God. You say, "How?" Because in Him, all things hold together. And in Him, they live and move and have their being. And they're made in the image and likeness of God. So, you experience God when you get involved. Which means when I pass by, there is a facet of God they don't experience, and there is a facet of God I don't experience.

This is mission. This is mission. Here's a great question. Does Jesus have authority over His body? No, are His hands and His feet doing what He wants them to do? Are His words and His ears saying and listening to what He wants to say and listen to? Are His eyes looking where He wants them to look? Are His resources and His time – if you've been crucified with Christ, it's no longer you who live. You are no longer you. You are now part of the body of Christ. So, does He have authority to do it with His body that which He wants to do? The body of Jesus could

be in one neighborhood. The body of Christ can be in every neighborhood. And the problem is, is I get so busy on my agenda in my life that I step right over the people that God has put along the way that He wants me to get involved with. I get so busy doing things in the name of Jesus that I miss the heart of Jesus on the side of the road. And I think, "This isn't really important or it doesn't really matter." No, listen to me. Those people you pass by? Everyone has a story you know nothing about. This man had a story. The Samaritan had a story. That person that you can't stand, you know what? Their whole family might be blowing up right now, and you don't know it. Yeah, they're a jerk. It's because their parents are getting divorced. This person at work that you just can't stand, you know what? They might have just gotten a cancer diagnosis of them or their loved ones. So, yeah, they're a little reactive. You don't know nothing about that story. It's very easy to judge and come against. I mean, everyone has a story you know nothing about. Mission is not the far board. It is not moving to the other side of the world. It is loving your neighbor who you don't really want to see, but you can't help but see along the way and doing to them what you wish they would do to you if you were in that same place. That's mission. That's mission. Are you with me on this? See, God touches you knowing you're the key to touching them. Just think of Moses with me for a second. God comes to Moses. He's a washed-out shepherd on the backside of the desert. And He shows up in a burning bush and He says, "Moses, I've seen the misery of my people. I've heard their cry. I'm concerned of their suffering. So, go, I'm sending you." And Moses reacts like we react. "What? Go? Not me, God. Send someone else." And we think, "Well, if God sees their misery and He cares about their suffering, why doesn't He go?" He is going. He's going through His body. He picks a man or a woman to get involved on His behalf. And Moses is holding the staff in his hand, the staff that represents his identity. He's a shepherd. It represents his security. It represents his livelihood, his safety. And when he says, "God, I can't go do it." God says, "Moses, what's in your hand?" He says, "A staff." He says, "Then throw it on the ground." Moses throws it on the ground and it turns into a snake. He jumps back. And God says, "Now pick it up." And in that moment, Moses has to face his fear, charm the snake. And when he grabs it, this thing goes from being a tool of insecurity to a missional weapon of warfare. Because that same staff becomes the staff that confronts Pharaoh, brings the 10 plagues, parts the Red Sea and leads people to the Promised Land. When God asks you to get involved with people's lives, He'll just tell you, "Use what's in your hand." And the problem is, is we hold so tightly to our insecurity, our money, our time, our energy, our reputation, our safety. "Me?" And God says, "Throw it on the ground." Which means "Surrender it to me." And when we do, it kind of turns into a snake. It's something we're afraid of because we found so much life in it. And then, we have to charm the snake. We have to face our fears. And if we will face our fears, it goes from being a tool of insecurity to a missional weapon of warfare that will set people free in Jesus' name. God has touched you knowing you're the key to touching them. And here's what we do. We think someone else should do it. "Hey, hey, did anybody see that guy? Somebody, somebody should do something about that." You're right, you should. Listen to me. We're a whole lot more like Home Depot than we are Burger King. This is not "have it your way," this is "you can do it. We can help." And the reason you saw that person is because you're supposed to get involved. And when you say, "Somebody should," don't you know the

rest of us? I'm over here dealing with this guy that's dying. "Hey, John, you should." "I'm sorry, bro, God showed you that one because you're supposed – I'm doing the one God showed me. This guy's dying, too. And this person who I know is involved in that person's life. And this person I know is in that person's life." And this is where joy comes from.

This is where joy comes from. Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross. How do you put the words "joy" and "cross" in the same verse? At the worst thing that's ever happened in humanity, the cross, and yet it released joy. Why? Because true love releases great joy. I have no greater love than to lay down my life. True love releases great joy. Love in its highest calling is to lay down your life that others might live. That's mission, that's purpose, and that releases a joy in your life. That's why God is the most joyful being in all of the universe. This is why He trained His disciples. After this the Lord Jesus appointed 72 others, sent them out ahead of Him to every town and place where He was going to go. And the 72 returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." If you don't go on the missions that God sends you on, there is a joy you will never know and an authority you'll never walk in. Jesus didn't need them to go do it. He's well capable. He knew they needed to do it so they could experience their purpose, their joy, their life, and an authority of treading on snakes and scorpions. Listen, this is why so many of us are so anxious and fearful and depressed and just straight-up just miserable people. Not to others, in our soul. Why? Because we think that life is about me, myself and I getting what I want, when I want, how I want, doom-scrolling, bed-rotting, greed, hoarding, all the terms, all the things. And that's when we start to wither up and die. Why? Because you're created for mission. So, it's impossible to have joy outside your created purpose. Things are created for a purpose. And when they're used for that purpose, there's great joy. And when they're not used for that purpose, there's great sorrow. It'd be like a tree. A tree needs to be planted in the dirt. You up dig a tree, you put it in the middle of the concrete. For a few days, it'll look good. It needs to be in the soil. A fish, you take it out of the water, you throw it on the ground, it looks good. Wow, it's got so much energy. It's flapping around. But eventually, a lot of us have been uprooted from our purpose, and we look good on the outside, but we are dying on the inside. Because it's impossible to be fulfilled outside your purpose. Your purpose is mission. Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. First thing God says, first thing Jesus says, "Come, follow me, I'll make you fishers of men." Last thing Jesus says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." Revelation, in the end, we will rule and reign with God forever. There is no life. There is no joy. There is no peace outside of mission because it's your created purpose. He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. The greatest way to find refreshing in your soul is to refresh somebody else. The greatest way to find hope is to give it to somebody else. Why? Because you're taking the intangible, you're making it tangible. You're grabbing the invisible realities of heaven, and the moment you give it away it just became visible and that refreshed you. The most joyful people in this church are the people who are living on mission. The most miserable people in this church are the people who live for themselves. People who are truly refreshed are refreshed not because their situation and circumstance in life is so great. It's because they're walking around handing cups of water to thirsty people and entering into other people's pain and picking them up and

carrying them forward, and in that God is restoring their soul. The most miserable people expect everyone else to bring them a drink. Because this is all about me, isn't it? Who are you in this story? See, I think to pull it all together, here's what we think. We think we're the Good Samaritan. That's the great conviction of the story is we're the expert in the law who thinks we're the Good Samaritan. The truth is, Jesus is the Good Samaritan and you're the man dying in the middle of the road. You left Jerusalem, the city of God, and headed towards Jericho, the ways of this world. And when you turned your back on God and you left Eden, and you rebelled against Him, you wandered away, you went out into the world and the world came upon you like a bandit. It stole, it killed, it destroyed, it left you for dead and didn't care. And the law and religion come walking by and they offer nothing to you. They actually shame you and remind you that it's your fault that you're in this place, and you should get yourself together. But then, Jesus, the Good Samaritan, the one whom you are an enemy with, hostile with, the one who've you've turned your back upon, yeah, He's the one, that He sees you and He's moved with compassion, and He acts and He gets down, poured himself out, took on humanity, came low and He pours oil and wine in your wounds. What does that represent? The wine represents the blood of Jesus, and the oil represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit. So, He forgave your sins and healed your wounds. He poured his blood to forgive you, and He anointed you with oil to empower you for a greater life. And He bandaged you up and He put you on His donkey and He carried you, because He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me carry you on my donkey and you'll find rest for your soul, for my way is easy and my burden is light." And He took you to the inn, and He paid everything that would be required for you to be healed, and fully canceled all your debts, credited your account, forgave your sins, healed your wounds, blessed you in the heavenly realms in Jesus Christ. And when that man wakes up and realize he's been healed, he can't help but go and do likewise. May you awaken to how Jesus entered into your pain on that road. Restored everything that was required. He loved his neighbor, you, the one nearby, which means you're close to Him. And He entered in and He got involved. And when you come to grips with that, you can't help but go and do likewise. Mission isn't about running around this globe. Mission is simply about loving the person right in front of us the way that Jesus loved us when we were right in front of Him.

So, will you close your eyes? Come on, what's the Holy Spirit want to say to you today? That story is worth reflecting on and wrestling through. He is the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Maintaining love to you and your children and your children after you. Forgiving your wickedness, your rebellion and your sin, and He has entered in. Today, I just see Jesus binding your wounds, pouring oil and wine on your pain, bringing healing and restoration and wholeness because He is good and He is good to you. So, Jesus, may we take a hold of that which You have done for us, and may that lead us to go and do likewise. In Your name we pray. Amen.