

Holy Spirit, we know that you are in this place and you are speaking, and you are moving, and you are drawing, and you are calling us back to Jesus. You are calling us to the cross. You are calling us to repentance. The consuming, uncontrollable, uncontainable fire of God is burning and available to any and every heart who want it in Jesus' name. Why don't you go ahead and just grab a seat with me for a moment? Whatever campus you're at today, I just want to take a moment to welcome you in and tell you that we're so glad that you are here. And I have no wise and persuasive words for you right now. I have no eloquent or entertaining words for you right now. What I have for you right now is Christ and Him crucified. You see, in our last service, whatever campus you're at, I don't know how to really explain it yet. There hasn't been enough time for me to process yet with the Lord. But through a variety of seemingly unrelated things, I felt like the Lord interrupted the last service. And about halfway through, we just kind of stopped and acknowledged that, and then tried to just say Lord, whatever you want to do, we want you to do. And so, it would be disingenuous and actually out of alignment with God to just press on and show you a little what's happening video and do my normal thing and get into the message and all the slides. That's all there, and I liked very much. I was hoping you were going to as well. But the only way I know how to explain it is that about ten minutes into the message in the last service, but through a variety of interruptions all the way up until that point it just felt like almost, the best way I can explain it is it felt like almost think of a heavy thing like a fridge or something that fell down, and it was too heavy for me to be able to pick it back up. It was like the train got off the tracks, and there was nothing I could do in my own strength to get it back on the tracks. And so, it was kind of like acknowledging that and saying that in some way, shape, or form, I got to believe that God is trying to interrupt our lives to help us maybe catch the gravity of what He is doing in this time, in this season of our lives, and as our church. I think one of the great problems that we can have is, is that we can have a conversation about all the wrong things. It's a conversation on fueling the fire is what we're in, so if you're new with us, that's what we've started to undertake this spring. And if we're honest, we talk about all kinds of things, things of the world, things we're frustrated by, we complain, we criticize, we grumble, we slander. We have awe, we curse. There's just so much of our conversation that actually quenches the very fire of God. And I think in some way today God is trying to interrupt the conversation we have with ourself and with the people around us so that we actually will have a conversation on that which is good and which is true and which is right. I mean, if you're honest with yourself and you just think about the conversations you typically have over the last three months, three weeks, three days, how about these three hours, maybe even the last three minutes that I've been talking, are those conversations, conversations that fuel the fire of God in your life? Are those conversations that quench the fire of God in your life?

You see one of my great prayers in this conversation on fueling the fire was that in some way it was going to interrupt the conversation you've been having and move the conversation of God to outside of this one hour together to the other 167 hours of your week. And what's really interesting to me is if you were here last Sunday, last Sunday was maybe one of the most profound Sundays we've ever had as a church because at every campus, at every service,

thousands of people at the end of service got up and streamed to the front not as an old school altar call but as a saying I want more of Jesus. I want the fire of God in my life. I am willing to submit, and surrender, and sacrifice, and open myself up to Him, to the consuming fire of God in a way that I hadn't planned on, in a way that I wasn't expecting. God moved in a profound way. Tuesday night prayer was the largest greatest Tuesday night prayer we have ever experienced. And so, we were having these incredible highs, and then the last service when the fridge fell over, and I couldn't pick it back up, I was in the moment trying to understand what God was doing and what was happening. And the best example I could give you is that sometimes, when you have a mountaintop experience, to keep moving on, you have to go down and go through a valley to carry on the journey. See, there is a great story in the Old Testament. We will probably use it in the course of the next few weeks. It is the story of Elijah. This is not a spoiler alert because it's already written. I hope you have read it at some point in time in your life. But Elijah is a prophet of God. And the people of God have rebelled against God. And Elijah says let's settle it like this. Let's both build a sacrifice and call down fire from heaven, and whichever God brings fire from heaven, He is the real God. Alright. They build their altar. They call all day, all night long, nothing happens. Elijah builds his altar and lays his sacrifice there. Calls on the name of the Lord. Fire falls down from heaven, consumes the entire thing, and people's hearts are cut. They are laid bare. They realize that God is the one and only God. He called fire down from heaven. And then the very next thing we see is he runs into the desert and wants to die because he is afraid of one little woman, mountaintop, valley. And that story has always helped me a lot because it seems like on my personal journey of faith, and as I have led this church for a while, what seems to happen is that when there are mountaintops, we often forget that we are not created to live on the mountaintop. We are created to keep journeying on. And to get to the next mountaintop, you actually have to go down and go through a valley to get back up to keep moving on. And so, if you were here last week and you had a mountaintop moment with God, but then Monday morning you woke up and you found yourself in the valley, and Tuesday you found yourself doing that thing you thought you wouldn't do anymore, and Wednesday you didn't think once about God, and Thursday you got in an argument with the people in your life, and Friday you went and did some things you weren't supposed to do, and Saturday you're exhausted, and today you didn't even think, and then you realize that and you're like oh what's wrong with me. It didn't work. I don't have faith, I'm not. There is nothing wrong with you. You are on a journey with God. And after the mountaintop, there is often, not always, a valley that we go through as we keep going on. And the same God who is on the mountain is the same God who is in the valley, who will be the same God that is in the pasture. And what we have to remember is that He is The Good Shepherd leading us to green pastures and still waters. He is restoring our soul leading us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. And even though you walked through the valley of the shadow of death, you do not have to fear any evil, for He is just as much with you there as He was with you on the mountaintop.

And so, I think there is something about today where the whole message that I had planned, you can read it on your own this week if you want. I don't know what I am going to do next

week yet. But it was Luke 24 is the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus whose fires just went out, but Jesus rekindles their fire. And so maybe the whole point of the interruption today is to capture our attention so we don't just keep moving on without the fire of God in our lives. The whole point of what I had hoped to do today was I have an idea of where God is leading us and I wanted to stop to help every person whose fire is out, whose fire is faded, whose fire is low, who is deceived and doesn't even realize their fire is out to stop and take a moment to let Jesus rekindle that fire so you can keep coming and going with us. But He had a different way that He wanted to do it. And the different way might have just been literally interrupting our services so that we can capture, so that we can, in our own way, think about our own life. Moses tells us to teach us to number our days, Oh God, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Like, in other words, catch the gravity of your life that is fleeting and passing by. Be a man or woman of wisdom because you don't have any more days left to live without the fire of God. You don't have any more hours left to just be smoldering. Your life, and your family, and your calling, and your destiny is too important to carry on as if you're just going through the motions. You didn't come here today for entertainment. You didn't come here for an event. You didn't come here for a performance. You didn't even come here for a message. You came here to meet with a living God. And He's a living God, and He's a consuming fire. And a fire flashes, and dances, and flickers. And if you've ever been around a real fire like a real hot fire, you can't control it, and sometimes it just jumps and does some things you didn't see coming. I think today the consuming fire jumped, leaped, danced. I don't even know what He is trying to catch on fire. But I would guess it would be something in your life and in mine. Sometimes there is something about being interrupted that actually helps us catch our bearings and open our eyes and open our minds and actually then take stock of what God wants to do. See, last week it took faith and humility to respond to God. And there's something about faith and humility in this season that seems to be where God's moving. Faith, being sure of what we hope for, certain of what we do not see. Without faith, it's impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him. Faith is believing that God is and God is here, and God is good, and God is available. And when I pursue Him, He rewards me with more of Himself. And humility, humility to say I don't really care about what anyone else thinks about me, or how they view me, or how they interpret my life. But I'm willing to humble myself before the Lord because He gives grace to the humble, grace. Undeserved favor, supernatural empowerment, and God acting in your life to do that which you could not do on your own.

So today, we have this moment together as a church where we're actually able to say, can we, can I, can you, can we allow the consuming fire to do something different than what we were expecting and still approach it with faith and humility because we just want more of Him. If we say we want to be a church that fuels the fire of God, if we say we want to be people who are consumed by the fire of God, if we say we want to be people who want an open heaven, if we say we want to be a people that walk with God to places we've never been before, if we say we want to be people that are submitted and surrendered to the lordship of Jesus, if we just say we want to be a disciple of Jesus, if we just say we want to go to heaven, then we must be

open to God doing that which He wants to do. Because He doesn't have to ask permission for what He wants to do in the gatherings of His people. All I do is try to lead and facilitate that which He wants to do. All they do is try to point attention to the one who is worthy of our voice, and our song, and our efforts, and our mind, and our focus. All our staff does is try to facilitate this experience where you can come in and the fire is burning, and you can come and get a hot coal and a stack of logs and take it home to your life. But if we really want to be those kinds of people, then there's going to be more and more moments amongst our journey together where none of us really know what's happening. You know the story in Acts chapter 2, right? They're waiting. The resurrected Jesus tells them to wait for the Holy Spirit. They wait 10 days. We'll get there, may be somewhere in this conversation. And they wait and the Holy Spirits poured out. It says tongues of fire come upon them. They're filled with the fire of God. They go out, they start prophesying and preaching and everybody thinks they're drunk. They're so confused by the fire of God that they literally they're like something wrong with all them people. Now here's a great question for you. What if everyone around us interpreted us as being drunk because the spirit of the living God was so active amongst us? I don't know that I'm even there yet, right? So that's okay if you're like. I know. What would that require is a level of faith and humility to say God, I give you my agenda. Like, you have an agenda for why you came here today. You may know it, you may not know it. You had a motive of why you came here today. You may know it, you may not know it. You have a hard posture towards the Lord. You may be totally aware of it. You may not be aware of it. You have a fire, or you have ash and soot and crumbling charcoal. You may know it, or you may not know it. But I know this, God is so good and so gracious that He leaves the 99 to come find the one. He will leave an entire church experience to stop it all for you, to call you by name, and come to your chair and say I know. I know your fire's out. I know you think it can never come back on. I know you think you're tricking and deceiving everybody that there's something there that ain't there, but I'm not tricked, and I'm not fooled. And I'm patient and compassionate and gracious and kind. Let me shovel those ashes out of there. Let me deal with the soot that's all over you. Let me take those crumbling pieces of charcoal and let me reignite the fire in your life because the human soul was made for the fire of God. It is the only altar on which it burns. The only altar the fire of God burns on is the human heart. He made it with His hands. The hands that were nailed to a cross, the hands that washed the feet of the betrayer, the hands that played with little children, the hands that shape you like clay, the hands that formed the earth. Those are the hands that made the altar in your heart, and He wants to set it ablaze. And He is so good, and He is so compassionate, and He is so kind that He doesn't care what He has to interrupt to get you.

So you might have come in here today, and you're like I don't all of it, I know. I just want to say to you, I think God is calling you by name. And some of you, you've been coming to church and to this church for years, but you're going through the motions. The fire went out a long time ago. And those closest to you, if they're honest, they kind of know it, but they don't really challenge you on it because maybe theirs isn't that vibrant either. I think the Lord wanted to cycle back to you today before we move on to rekindle your fire.

And some of you, your fire is so bright and so vibrant and so alive, and I think the Lord is saying if you want more of me, you're going to have to follow me into some places where you're not in control. I don't exactly know how to lead us from where we are to where we're going because it's a lot more of okay, Lord. And if this all sounds like man, that's a nice story, you just weren't prepared today. Man, I can totally appreciate that perspective. It's harder on me than it is on anyone else when God interrupts these things because it's very humbling. It's very humbling to be in the midst of what you spend your life doing and your whole week preparing for to have God do something different. But I really just want more of God. I don't want us to just do church, I never have, even less now than I ever have. I want God, and I want you to meet Him, and know Him, and experience Him, and walk with Him, and be consumed by Him, and to become like Him. And sometimes you just have to be interrupted from the train of thought, from the routine, from the expectations to be like God is clearly bigger than me, and more than me, and worthy of me. So I want all of Him. I just, I want to say this is this really interesting passage, and I'm not going to put it up. I'm just going to say it to you. There's this really interesting passage that talks about how Jesus won't break a bruised wick or break a bruised reed, and He won't snuff out a smoldering wick. Jesus won't break a bruised reed. He won't snuff out a smoldering wick. I think some of you are here today, you're like a bruised reed. Think of a reed, and it's bruised. It's like bent over, and there's not much that anybody can do for it. Jesus won't break it and say this is pointless. No, He will come and tend it. He will care for it, and He will strengthen it, and He will restore it to make you strong and true and right. And if you're a smoldering wick, what's a smoldering wick? It's like a little bit of fire, and everything is just about it was just a puff of smoke, and maybe, Jesus won't snuff you out. He will come, and He would take a little bit of tinder until the flame gets going, and a little bit of prepared kindling until that gets going. And He will blow on it with the breath of God, with the fresh wind of the spirit, and then He will take the right-sized log, and that will start burning, and another log, and another right-sized log. He's not going to take a big tree stump and throw it on your smoldering wick. I think for some of you, this conversation of fueling the fire, if we just pressed on, it would be like throwing a tree stump on your smoldering wick. So, I think Jesus is like we're going to stop. I need to put some kindling and some tinder and some small little sticks to get this going in this one that I love, in this one that I died for, in this one that I'm leaving this service right now to go and get and bring into what I am doing. To bring that to a flame so that you will be vibrant and healthy and radiant and whole in Jesus' name. There is no smoldering wick that He can't rekindle. And sometimes it's just catching that there is a faith and a humility to say that's me. That's me, and I want more of Him. And so, here's what we're going to do. We're going to take communion together.

So, our teams are going to get up, and they're going to start passing it around. This is how we were going to end the service anyways. And I believe the prophetic picture of this is profound because you didn't come to church for a message. You came to church to meet with Jesus. And the win is when we talk about Jesus, and we look to Jesus, we resolve to know nothing while we are together except Christ in Him crucified, that the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus is enough. It's the only thing. It's the main thing. It's the everything. And when it gets to

you, when you take it, all you're saying is I receive and believe that Jesus is, and that's Jesus is. He is what? He is. He just is. He is what? I could rip off 50 adjectives I don't need to. Jesus is. So, when I take it, I'm saying Jesus is. And what I want you to do for the next few moments, I want you to hold those. His broken body and His shed blood. If you're not there yet, if Jesus is not yet to you, that's okay. Just pass it on. I believe one of these days Jesus is. And I want you to hold it, and I want you to listen to them as they sing this song again for a moment. Our team wrote this song recently. I think it's the best song, like the most profound song maybe that they've ever written. It's a prayer. It's a cry. It's something we need to wash over our mind. It's something some of you need to sing in your house over and over for your prodigal son, or daughter, or husband, or wife, or mother, or father. It's like this sense of the goodness of God coming after me in my own pride, in my own arrogance, in my own rebellion, in my own self-reliance, and He's coming for me. And so, as they sing this, will you just hold that and maybe just close your eyes, listen to the words, and just look. Look to the face of Jesus. Look to the cross that is the knowledge of God on display for you to see. It's at the cross where we most clearly see who God is and what He is like. Holy Spirit, as we hold the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus in our hands, would you help us behold the face of Jesus in our hearts.

Can you hear it? Can you hear the voice of God calling you by name? Maybe for the first time or maybe for the first time in a long time. He sees, and He cares, and He has compassion and patience and goodness and grace. And He has come to intersect this very moment of your life. The resurrected Jesus has come to walk with you at this very step that you're in. And even though maybe you didn't recognize Him before you walked in, right now He is revealing Himself to you. This moment where heaven and earth intersect, where fire and fuel come together, where faith and humility open the door for The Good Shepherd to come in and take over our lives. Regardless of what you thought today was going to be like, truthfully, you probably didn't put much thought into it; you just probably came in routine. This is what God wants, and it's simply to meet with you. The gathering of the people of God are around one name, and one man, and one spirit, and His name is Jesus. And His spirit and His heart and His word because He is the all-consuming fire who today has come to consume you by grace. You see, on the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread, and He broke it, and He gave thanks, and He said this is my body which is broken for you. As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of me. In other words, never take your eyes off the cross. Never take your eyes off the face of Jesus. Never take your eyes off of Christ, and Him crucified. The finished work of God that reveals to us truly, fully, once and for all who God is and what He is like. Can we receive the grace of Jesus together? And in the same way, after the supper, He took the cup. He said this is the cup of the new covenant, my blood, which is going to be poured out for you. My blood is going to forgive you, and free you, and heal you, and transform you, and redeem you, and empower you, and bless you, and anoint you, and strengthen you, and change you, and make you who I have created and called you to be. So as often as you do this, receive all that I offer you. Can you receive the consuming nature of God by faith and with humility? So Jesus, we look to you today, in fact, wherever you are, whatever campus, will you just stand up with me, and can we, for just one more moment, can you sing this like you mean

it? Can you sing this like all of heaven is singing it? Can you declare this over your heart, and your life, and your marriage, and your children, and your family, and your future? Come on, let's give Jesus the praise that He is worthy of.

Here's the good news. You're a part of a church that believes that Jesus is real and that the Holy Spirit actually moves, and that we can have a relationship with Him lifetime in the moment. And He can do things that no one else in your life can do. I believe there was something about today that God wanted to do in your life to call you by name back to Him, to breathe on that smoldering wick, to remove the ashes of the past, and bring forth His fire into your life by faith and with humility. May you just receive it. You say, I don't get it. I don't. You don't need to. By faith and with humility, by faith, God, I don't see it. If you can see it, it's not faith. By faith and with humility, God, I humble myself before you because I want more of you in Jesus' name.

If you want prayer, in fact, if that's you and you're like, hey, I missed last week and should have responded, but I didn't, or I wasn't here, or I'm here today, and I'm that person. I'm ashy, I'm sooty. I've got this charcoal, would you let us pray for you before you leave? We just want to pray for you. We feel like at the end of every one of these conversations, there is an activation response moment. We're going to have leaders up here. Let us pray for you as part of that faith and humility to let God do what only He can do. For those of you that want to give, you can give at the boxes at the doors on your way out or online at valleycreek.org. But I love you. I am proud of you. I am grateful for you, and we just gave you all kinds of good things to have a conversation about this week in the midst of your daily lives. I love you. May the fire of God continue to be fueled in your life.