

Behold, the Lamb of God! His name is Jesus. The name above all names. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He is the Ancient of Days, the Lion and the Lamb. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Light of the World. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Bread of Life, the Spring of Living Water, the Gate, the Door, the Prince of Peace, the Great I Am. His name is Jesus, Jesus. And the Scriptures tell us that in the face of Jesus is the knowledge of God. In other words, if we want to know what God is like, all we have to do is look at Jesus. And in His face, we see exactly what God is like. Christ and Him crucified is the clearest picture of God that there will ever be. It was God unveiled, God fully revealed, God naked on display for all the world to see exactly what He was like. So look, because this is what God is like. He is compassionate, He is gracious, He is kind and patient, He is generous and loving, He is authoritative and powerful and wise and humble, He is a servant, He is the Lord. The Lord, the Compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love, maintaining love and faithfulness to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. And we're told to behold. To behold simply means to look, to gaze, to stare at, to fix our eyes upon, to turn the attention and the affection of our hearts towards, to meditate, to dwell, to attend to, to just simply lift up your head. Can you just lift up your head and look at Jesus? And see exactly what God is like. Can you look at the only one who is worth looking at? His name is Jesus. And so Jesus, we behold You. Jesus, we look upon You. Jesus, we look to You. And we say, "Would You reveal Yourself to us? Would You give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation that we might know You and that we might know You better?" Thank you, Jesus, for who You are. Thank you, Jesus, for what You've done. Thank You, Jesus, for the death, burial, and resurrection that changed everything. You are the only one worth looking at. And so today we look not just with our physical eyes, but with the eyes of our hearts. May we see You. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Why don't you go ahead and grab your seat at whatever campus you're at? If you can't find a seat, you can go ahead and just grab a spot on the floor wherever you are. And let me just go ahead and once again welcome you to Valley Creek. We are so glad that you are here with us today. Whether this is your first time with us. Maybe you haven't been in a while. Maybe you've left and recently come back. Maybe you're here every single week. It really doesn't matter. We have been praying for you. We have been preparing for you. And maybe somebody invited you to come. Maybe you just kind of stumbled in here today. But it doesn't really matter because here's what I believe. I believe that Jesus is real, that Jesus is good, that Jesus is here, and that He wants to meet with you. You see, it's Easter, and there's something about Easter. There's something about this time of year where the deep questions of our soul come to the surface. But whether you realize it or not, the deep things of your heart around this time of year, they kind of come to the surface, whether you're conscious of it or not. And we start asking all kinds of questions in here, like, is this all there is to life? And is this the best way to live? Like, there's got to be more to it than this. And who am I? And where did I come from? And where am I going? And what is my life really all about? And is there a God? And if there is, what is He like? And is it possible to have a relationship with Him? And what is my purpose? And why am I here? What is my why? What is my life all about? Whether you realize it or not, all

those questions are in there. And around this time of year, they come to the surface. Why? Because the cross of Jesus speaks, because the Blood of Jesus speaks. It is the loudest voice in the universe. And it is speaking and calling to you, and God is drawing you unto Himself. And so, our prayer for you today is that in some way, shape, or form those questions can come to the surface and be answered by Jesus's final words. You see, there's lots of things that we could talk about, but I just want to simply share with you The Statements of the cross. The seven final statements of Jesus on the cross. And how His final words can be the first words of the rest of your life. Today, in a sense, all I want is to let Jesus speak for Jesus. Let Jesus, the living word of God, speak to you the spoken word of God. The final things He said on the cross and why they change everything. You see, what's fascinating to me about Jesus is that during His three years of ministry, He had a lot to say. He preached the greatest messages that have ever been preached. He taught us about who God was, who He was, what we were created for, and what our life was supposed to look like. He taught us how to have a blessed life, how to have healthy relationships, how to handle finances, how to deal with our anger, how to overcome adversary. He taught us how to find victory in this life and live free. He had so much to say. And yet when He goes to the cross, He becomes almost silent. Scriptures say that like a sheep before its shears, He did not say a word and didn't open His mouth. He said seven final simple things, incredibly simple and yet incredibly profound. And so, this isn't a message. And you don't need to take notes. All this will be on social media for you later. I just want to let Jesus speak for Jesus. Because His word is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. And it can pierce to the deepest parts of your soul and answer the questions of your heart. So may you have eyes to see and a heart to receive the final words of Jesus.

You see, the first thing He said on the cross was simply "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This is incredibly profound. Jesus has just been betrayed by His best friends. He's arrested. He's accused. And even though He did nothing wrong, He was condemned and sentenced to death. And so, they took rods. And they beat His body until it was bloody and bruised. And they took a whip, and they whipped Him so much that it literally ripped all of the flesh off of His body. They took a crown of thorns, and they shoved it into His head, and they spit on Him, and they mocked Him, and they persecuted. And they scorned Him. And then they nailed Him to a cross. And while those nails were in His hands and His feet, and that crown of thorns in His head, His body so disfigured and marred that people literally had to turn away from it because it was so gruesome. He looked out over the crowd, the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the greatest, the least, His betraying disciples, the Roman soldiers, the religious leaders. And His response was to declare once and for all, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And in that moment, Jesus declared forgiveness for all humanity, for all time, all sins - past, present, and future, to all who will receive it. You see, what's amazing about humanity is that when you go through a trial, when you're squeezed, whatever is inside of you comes out of you. When you go through a hardship, when you go through a valley, when you go through suffering, when you are squeezed like a sponge, whatever is inside of you comes out of you. And when Jesus was squeezed on the cross, what came out of Him was forgiveness. Because that's what was inside of Him. He said, "Father, forgive them," not, "Father, get them

back." No hostility, no vengeance, no anger. Forgiveness. He has forgiven your wickedness and remembers your sins no more. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed your transgressions from you? He forgives all of your sins and heals all of your diseases. Blessed is the man or woman who God will not count their sins against. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. All of your sins, all of the past, all of the present, all of the future in that moment were forever forgiven, and you were set free in Jesus's name. Like the things from 20 years ago that are secret in the dark that nobody knows about. Like the very public shaming things that you have paid a high price and a lot of consequence for. Like every thought, every deed, every word, every action, everything you've done, and everything that's been done to you, all the things you did and all the things you should have done and didn't. Every one of those things were forgiven in that moment in Jesus's name. Can you receive that? And He said, "Forgive them," which means not only you, but also your ex and your dad, your boss, and your enemy. The cross was big enough to forgive them, too, in Jesus's name.

The second thing that He said is, "I tell you the truth. Today, you will be with me in Paradise." You see, when Jesus was crucified, He was crucified next to two criminals, one on His right and one on His left. Two wicked, evil, vile men who were getting the consequences of their actions. And while they hung there, it says these two criminals mocked Jesus, and they scorned Him, and they persecuted Him, and they said things like, "If You're the Son of God, save Yourself, get down from that cross, and save us also." And yet somewhere along the way, one of the criminals, maybe when Jesus pronounced forgiveness, maybe when He looked over, and him and Jesus made eye contact, and in that moment in the face of Jesus, he saw the knowledge of God. He had a heart change. And he said to Jesus, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus's response to that man was, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise." And what Jesus reminds us in that moment is that the kingdom of Heaven is not tomorrow, it is today. It is not then, it is now. It is not not-yet, it is already. That the kingdom of God is not somewhere way far out that we have to go and find it. No, it is here, and it is available to anyone and everyone who wants it. That Paradise is not a place, it's a person, and His name is Jesus. What He is reminding us is that in His presence is fullness of joy. That the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy. And the Holy Spirit, The Psalmist says, "Because I saw the Lord at my right hand, I will not be shaken. This man saw Jesus at His right hand literally, and because of that, he was not shaken even though he was in the worst trial of his life. We're reminded that even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we do not have to fear any evil, for He is with us and His grace is sufficient. See, what we wish Jesus would have said was, "Father, quick get him down." But today you will be with Me in Paradise. Jesus didn't calm the storm out there. He calmed the storm in here, which is a much harder storm to come. And offered Paradise, a picture of the Garden of Eden, a picture of the garden city. God and man walking together in goodness and beauty and life. See, I don't know what kind of trial you walked in here with today. I don't know what kind of brokenness or pain your marriage, your body, your job, the situation, the storm, your life. I don't know, but I know

this: if Jesus could offer Paradise to that man in that moment, it is available to you today if you will take hold of it in Jesus's name. Today, His kingdom is here.

The third thing that Jesus says, and this one might sound a little weird, as He says, "Dear Woman, here is your son," and to the Disciple, "Here is your Mother." You see, when Jesus was hanging on the cross, amongst the crowd that had gathered was His Mother, Mary, and His best friend, John. Can you imagine? Mary and John standing there together, a mother and a best friend watching the one they love the most literally die right there in front of their eyes? The brokenness, the devastation, the anguish, I mean, this is Mary. This is Mary who the Angel came to and said, "Hey, you are highly favored, and the Holy Spirit is going to come upon you. And you're going to give birth to a son. His name is going to be Jesus. He's going to save His people from their sins." And so, She gave birth to Jesus, and She cared for Him, and She loved Him, and She protected Him, and She prayed for Him. If anybody knew who Jesus was, it was Mary. And then, here is John, Jesus's best friend. John gave up everything to follow Jesus. He's the disciple whom Jesus loves. And they're watching Jesus die. And as He's hanging there, propping Himself up, just to get a breath, He is not concerned with His suffering. He's concerned with their suffering. Amongst all these people, He sees them. He sees their misery. He hears their cry. He's concerned of their suffering. So, He speaks, and He provides, and He gives them each other. He gives His Mother another son to meet her needs in that moment. Because He wasn't focused on His suffering, He was focused on their suffering, which reminds us that when Jesus went to the cross, He wasn't worried about His suffering. He was worried about your suffering. He sees your misery. He hears your cries, and He is concerned of your suffering. He is the God of all comfort and all compassion, and my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. In other words, it's from the cross that He sees, it's from the cross that He speaks, and it's from the cross that He provides anything and everything that you will ever need. He sees, like, right now in this room, amongst all these people, right now, online, amongst all those people, He sees you. He sees you. And He is so filled with compassion and provision. He sees the disappointment of your marriage. He sees the pain in your body. He sees the sadness of you thinking, is this all my life is really about? There's got to be more than this. He sees the storm. He sees the trial. He sees the disappointment you have in your own family, just even coming and being a part of this today and all the dynamics, like, He sees. And He speaks because He is the God of all comfort and all compassion. Can you receive that?

The fourth thing He says is simply, "I am thirsty." So, on the cross, Jesus became incredibly thirsty. Oh, He was beaten, and He was whipped, and He's literally bleeding out. He had to carry His cross up that hill, and He was fighting the greatest battle that had ever been fought. He's fighting sin, death, and the grave. He's carrying the heaviest burden that anyone has ever carried. The weight of the world, the weight of humanity, the weight of all sin of all time upon His shoulders. And so He cries out, "I am Thirsty." Why? Because in that moment, Jesus became thirsty so that you and I could be forever satisfied. In that moment, Jesus was poured out so you could be poured into. He became thirsty so, springs of living water can well up

inside of you and satisfy your deepest longings and your deepest thirst. This is why He says to the woman at the well, "Woman, if you would ask Me, I would give you a drink and springs of living water will rise up inside of you and you'll never be thirsty again." So I -- He says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty. This is why Jesus can say, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." How can He say that? Because on the cross He became weary and burdened, so you could have His rest. We are a thirsty people. We are a thirsty people, and we do all kinds of foolish things to satisfy our thirst. All the man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied. We go, and we drink of all kinds of things. We drink of the world, we drink of work, we drink of money, we drink of success and beauty and performance and hobbies and pleasures and comforts, and we drink of all these things. And while they might taste good at the first sip, the more they go down, the more thirsty we become. And so, Jesus offers us living water. He offers us the satisfaction of His soul. And He satisfies your desires with good things, which is Himself. He can bring streams to the wasteland of your Soul. He can bring rivers to the drought of your heart. And He can bring rain to the desert of your life. Can you receive that in Jesus's name?

The next thing that Jesus said is simply, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken?" This is incredibly profound to me because if you read the Gospels, one of the things that you discover is Jesus never refers to God as God. He refers to Him as Father. Father, A loving Father and a beloved Son. An intimate relationship, one, communal. They walk together. They love each other. They're an intimate friendship and relationship. Jesus is the Father's beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Jesus only goes where He sees the Father going, only says what He hears the Father saying, only does what He sees the Father doing. And then He gets to the cross, and He declares, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken?" And in that moment, the Father became a distant God to Jesus so He could become a loving Father to you. In that moment, the Father forsook Jesus on the cross, so He will never have to forsake you. God made Him, Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin for us that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. In other words, Jesus was rejected on the cross so you could forever be accepted. This is why He says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." This is why He says, "I will be with you always." This is why He says, "I will be to you a Father, and you will be my sons and daughters." He is the loving Father. You now are His beloved sons or daughters and whom He is well pleased, all because of the cross. You see in this moment what happened: the Father looked away from Jesus, so He could forever turn His attention towards you. The ancient Israelite blessing just goes like this, "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn His countenance towards you and give you peace." When you love someone, when you're connected with someone, when you're close to someone, when you're intimate with someone, you look at them face-to-face, eyes-to-eyes. You want to turn the affection and the attention of your life towards them because you love them and you are pleased with them, and you enjoy them. But when you're mad at somebody, when you're offended at them, when you don't like them, when you want nothing to do with them, you turn away, don't you? You don't want to make eye contact with

that person. You don't want to look them in the face. You don't want to give them dignity or value or honor. So, the fact that the Father looked away from Jesus, so He could forever fix His gaze on you. So, it's everything you will ever need to know about who you are and what God is like, you are fully known, you are fully loved with no fear of rejection. Why? Because on the cross, suspended between two worlds, rejected by man and rejected by God, Jesus became an orphan, so you could forever be the Father's beloved son or daughter, and may you receive that in Jesus's name.

The sixth thing Jesus says is, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." As He's breathing His last breath, as He is dying, there is no anger in Jesus. There is no resentment. There is no hostility, and there is no fear. He's not afraid, He's not asking questions, "Why?" He's not saying, "I don't understand." He's not saying, "Why did this have to happen--?" "Into Your hands, I commit My Spirit." He trusts the Father with the deepest part of who He is, with the greatest thing in His life. Why? Because then He knows the Father is Love. And love is not a feeling. Love literally means goodwill. He knew the Father's will towards Him was good. So, He could trust the Father with the Spirit. Trust in the Lord. With all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight. Commit to the Lord your plans, and whatever you do will succeed. I will not be afraid, for I trust in God. We can trust Him. Because His will towards us is good, and because Jesus gave up His Spirit to the Father. The Father could then take that spirit and pour it out on us. The only reason the Holy Spirit is available to you and I today is because Jesus gave it up to the Father, who could then take it and release it to you and me. You don't have to live with the spirit of the world. You don't have to live with the spirit of offense. You don't have to live with the spirit of fear. You can live with the Spirit of God, the holy set-apart anointing, empowering Spirit of God has been released to humanity. So, what are you holding on to? What are you clinging to with everything you got because if you don't, no one else will? Your marriage, your children, the job, the finances, the situation, your reputation, the situation, the circumstance, the season? Into Your hands, Jesus could surrender His Spirit; I can surrender this into Your hands. And I choose to trust.

And the final thing He said as He breathed His last Breath is, "It is finished." Everything that ever has been or ever will be required from you has been paid in full. No more striving, no more earning, no more performing, no more behaving, no more being a do-gooder, no more trying to get things right, and trying to hold it all together, and trying to put on a good face. No more trying to meet all the demands you think God has placed on you.

No more trying to meet the demands of the law. No more trying to meet the demands of the world. And no more even trying to meet the demands I place upon myself. Why? Because everything that ever has been or ever will be required from me was paid in full in that moment. You are now the Father's beloved son or daughter in whom He is well pleased, which means you don't have to spend your life trying to get the world to say what the Father already has that you are loved and He is pleased with you. You don't have to spend your life trying to get

yourself to say about yourself that, "I am lovable and maybe someone might be pleased with me." Why? Because it's finished. Finished. Seven Statement. Seven is the number of Completion. For six days, God creates all things. On the seventh day, He rested. Jesus said six statements. He said the seventh one, gave up His Spirit, rested and looked out at the new creation that He just created, and saw that it was very good. So, where oh, death is your victory? Where, oh, death is your sting? Thanks be to God that we have victory in Christ Jesus, our Lord, for we are more than overcomers, for I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither Angels nor demons, neither the height nor depth, neither the present nor powers, nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God, in Christ Jesus, our Lord. For if death reigned through that one man, Adam, how much more will those who receive the abundant provision of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in this life through Jesus Christ? It is finished in Jesus's name. No more condemnation. God can't condemn you because He already condemned Jesus. The world can't condemn you because you're now included in Christ, which means you can't even condemn you. Because it's finished. Seven statements. Really simple, really profound. It's really all you need to know.

This is the gospel. The good news that the kingdom of Heaven is available in the here and now for anyone and everyone who wants it. That Jesus, the Son of God, stepped out of Heaven, came to Earth, and took on humanity. And He showed us what God was like, and He showed us who we were created to be. He showed us what it was like to be fully human and fully alive. And every place where you and I fail, He got it right. And He went to the cross even though He did nothing wrong. He took our place. He died. He was buried in the grave. Three days later, He rose again from the grave and poured out His spirit and offers new life to anyone and everyone who wants it. See, what's so important for you to understand is that Jesus didn't die so you could go to Heaven when you die. No, He died, so you could live in the kingdom of Heaven today and forevermore. This isn't like a one-day, I don't know how you think of Easter, or what you've heard before. But this is not about going to Heaven when you die. In fact, in the only place where Jesus defines eternal life, He says, "This is eternal Life that they may know You, God." Eternal life is not about going to a place when I die. It's about literally knowing and walking and living and being with God now and forevermore. He has restored your identity. He has reconciled your relationship with God. And He has redeemed your purpose. Restore. You're now a new creation. You're forgiven, you're free, you're righteous, you're holy, you're victorious. He's reconciled your relationship with God. You're now the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. You're the temple of God. You walk with Him through this life, and He has redeemed your purpose. He's put it all back together for you to now create the future with Him, to rule and reign, to make disciples, to be an ambassador, to actually have a life worth living. See, it is a really hard life to live, not knowing who you are, who God is, or what you were created to do.

And what I love is that Jesus invites you to be His disciple. To come and walk with Him and follow Him and become like Him. He wants to show you how to live a good and beautiful life in your life, not trying to take your life away and give you a different. No, no. You've been

crucified with Christ, and I'm now included in Christ, and everything is true of Him is not true of me. And He's like, "Come and follow, come be My disciple, come walk with Me and become like Me and enjoy Me. And I will shape and form and mold you into exactly who God created you to be." See, what I love about Jesus is He will never make us choose Him. He gives you a free will to pick anyone or anything to be your king. And you have lots of choices. You can let the world be your king. You can choose sin as your king. You can choose money or work or your hobby or your looks or your family or a relationship or pleasure or comfort, all those things. You can choose them as your king. The only problem is this, they're really hard masters. And they drive a really hard life. You can choose yourself as king, but what a heavy burden to bear. To be responsible to hold it all together. To be responsible to make it all happen. To be the one that has to provide for everything and protect everything and somehow take care of your past, somehow secure the future, and somehow give you a life in the present. What an exhausting way to live. Or you can choose Him as king. The wise, humble servant, one who invites you unto Himself, because everything has already been done.

So, I simply invite you today to behold. To behold Jesus. The only one worth looking at. The only one who is deserving of being in the center. The only One who can do all of the things that your heart longs for. May Jesus give you the grace to desire Him and realize how much you need Him. May Jesus give you the faith to believe in Him and to follow Him. And may Jesus give you the humility to take off your crown and say, "I don't want to be king. I want you to be my king." So, will you close your eyes with me? Can I just ask you, what do you feel like is stirring in your soul? What do you feel like the Holy Spirit is trying to say to you? Do you have satisfactory answers to the deep questions of your soul? Is this all there is to life? Where did I come from? Why am I here? What's my purpose? Is there a God? Who am I really? Are you weary and burdened of the life that you've been living, trying to be king and make it all happen? I don't know what's stirring in your soul. But I know this the first time the gospel was preached after Jesus rose from the Grave, it says they were cut to the heart. Not cut to the mind. Jesus is not reaching you through logic, reason, and understanding. He is touching your heart. The message of the cross is foolishness to the world, but to those of us who are being saved, is the power of God. It's foolishness to the world because it's illogical and we can't always understand it, and we can't get our arms all around it, but He can touch our heart and raise it from the dead. And He can give us His Spirit and give us new life. And as they were cut to the heart, they said, "What shall we do?" And the Disciple says, "Repent and be baptized." Repent, change your direction. It doesn't mean have this beat down, feel bad about your life. No. There should be a Godly sorrow, though that says there's a different way to go, there's a different life in front of me. Turn and be baptized, signifying that you are now part of the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus. This is for the forgiveness of your sins. Receive the Holy Spirit. This is for you and for all who will call on the name of the Lord. All we wanted to do today was let Jesus present Jesus to you. And there is no Song, there is no video, there is no light, there is no message that can capture the beauty, the majesty, and the glory of Jesus. But in some way, I'm believing that as we just look to Him, He is revealing Himself to us. And that today He is calling you back to Himself. In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen.

Easter at Valley Creek
April 5, 2026 | Pastor John Stickl