

"Are You Enjoying God in the Midst of Storms?"

June 21, 2026 | Eric Sommerhauser

Well, how are we doing, Valley Creek? Good morning! Man, I am so excited to be with you guys. If we've never met before, my name is Eric. I get to serve as one of our associate campus directors over at our Denton Campus. Man, I'm genuinely so excited to be with you. See, when I found out that we were going to do 60 days of summer – 60 Days of Enjoying God and the Life He's Giving Me – I was like, "This is going to be the best summer of my life. I mean, I get to spend 60 days just looking for God and His goodness to me. I get to spend 60 days not trying to fight for my life, just enjoy my life." I was so excited for what God wanted to do. And so I realized as I got up here right now that we're like 21 days into 60 days, which if I'm doing the math right, I think that's like a third. So let me ask you, how's your summer going? Are you enjoying God and the life He's giving you?

Because you realize that God actually created you to live in a state of enjoyment, right? You realize that actually God's will for you is to, "Rejoice always... this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." That God's will, we talk a lot about what God desires for us, He wants for us. And we talk about obedience and surrender and trust. But you realize that one of the primary things that God wants for your life is for you to rejoice always. Rejoice. Think re- like return, redo, to go back and experience joy – to go back to a sense of well-being, to go back to a settled soul. That's God's will for us. I find it interesting that the world tells us to chase happiness almost to like move forward with our flesh and yet God says, "Go back to joy. Just go back to joy." And I think that actually might be one of the most beautiful mantras we could carry throughout this entire summer. What if we just literally kept saying to ourselves, "I'm going back to joy." Like, someone cuts me off in traffic. I'm going back to joy. I get the Chick-fil-A and they forgot my Chick-fil-A sauce. I'm going back to joy. It's 105 degrees outside. I'm going back inside because that's where joy is.

Seriously. Someone hurts me, I'm going back to joy. The opportunity didn't come that I really wanted. I'm going back to joy. Maybe joy is not a thing we chase? Maybe it's a person we just go back to and rejoice always? And if this is God's will for us, then let me ask us a really fair question. If He desires that I rejoice always, does this verse mean that it will always be easy for me to rejoice? Does it mean my circumstances will always be easy for me to find joy to go back to joy in? And as I was thinking about that, I was reminded of a story in Mark 4. So it's Mark 4. The disciples have been journeying with Jesus for three whole chapters and they've seen Jesus do amazing things because Jesus does amazing things. He starts healing the sick. He raises up lame men to start walking. They go to Matthew's house and they eat really good food. They've gotten to leave their jobs. They get to follow the Messiah. They're enjoying God and the life He's giving them.

And then Mark 4, Jesus is preaching as He does. The crowds are gathering as they do. And Jesus simply says, "Let's go to the other side of the sea." And so they gather up their boats. They get in the boat. They start to head out. And it's a normal, beautiful day. And then a storm hits violently, suddenly, out of nowhere, a storm hits their boat. And they're panicked. I mean, pause. Do you think in that moment the disciples are like, "I am just loving God and my life

right now?" No. They're terrified. They're seasoned fishermen. And they are dealing with a huge storm hitting them right now. And they start to panic. They start to freak out. They start to wonder, "What am I supposed to do right now?" Water is crushing over the boat. And they're like, "What do we do? Where is Jesus?" And you know where Jesus is? He's asleep on the back on a cushion. And they literally in that moment they have to – they're terrified – and they ask a really important question. They say, "Teacher, don't you care that we're about to drown?" Which is not a theology question. It's a heart question. It's a, it's a question that all of us would ask in any storm of our life. And you know what Jesus does? He gets up, stands up, rebukes the wind and the waves, says, "Quiet, be still." And it says, "The waves settle completely calm." And then He turns to the disciples and you know what He says? "Why were you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

I think about that story and I think we're so, we're so similar to the disciples, aren't we? We enjoy God and the life He's given us. Jesus finds us where we're at and He heals us and He restores us and He shows us the joy of His kingdom and we're enjoying God and the life He's giving us because honestly it's easy to. And then a storm hits – like all of a sudden your parents can't take care of themselves. All of a sudden a diagnosis comes. All of a sudden a layoff – something I wasn't expecting. All of a sudden grief starts to fill my boat. I thought I had dealt with it and it hits me like a storm. And in that moment, that's our decision point. Decide what do we do with the storms that come in our life, right? Like what do we do? Can we rejoice always even in that?

And that's the invitation of what we're talking about today. Jesus gets up and that story sounds so familiar and it makes you actually even ask the question, is it even possible to rejoice when there's a storm happening around me? Is it actually possible to enjoy God in my life when there's a storm swirling everywhere? Like if this is God's will for me, can I rejoice always? See, here's the thing I want us to think about. If God's will, if God is good and God wills us that we should rejoice always, then not only is it possible – like what it means to actually rejoice is actually has to be totally possible. Not only is it good for us to rejoice, it actually has to be possible for us to rejoice. Here's what I mean by that: if God is good and He wills us to do something, He can't set us up for failure. That would make Him a terrible father.

Simple example: if I will for my six-year-old son to learn how to read, that's both good and it's possible. But if I willed that by tomorrow my six-year-old son would understand the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and be able to explain it to me, I would be a terrible dad. Not because *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy isn't great, but because it's not possible. See, if God wills something in our life, then it must not only be part of what we can experience. It has to actually be the possibility that's available to us even in the midst of a storm. But in order to actually live like that, we need to reorient sometimes what we believe a storm actually is. So here's what I mean. What, what is a storm as we're talking about today? And here's how I would define a storm: a temporary hardship God didn't send, but is using to help me be with Him and become like Him. This is a storm as what I'm talking about today. It's temporary.

See, the first thing is every storm is temporary. Some storms feel like they last days, some last weeks. Some are unexpected extended storms and they last years. But you realize that how, how is every single one of our storms going to end? They're all going to end the exact same way. They're gonna end with Jesus got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, "Quiet, be still." Then the wind died down, and it was completely calm. Every single storm in our life will be calmed by Jesus. Either in the here and now or in the then and there, every storm will be calmed by Jesus. And so, the first lesson for us in a storm is don't call something permanent that God says is temporary. Don't label your storm as this is how it's always going to be. A storm is a temporary situation, but it's also a hardship. When we're talking about storms today, we're talking about the outside hardships that come out of nowhere. We're not talking about the internal things that God's working on us.

Here's what I mean: we're not talking about the normal, difficult parts of life. Like storms are not necessarily some of the parenting decisions that we have to make that are difficult. It's not dealing with a difficult boss. Those things are actually internal to us and those are not storms to endure. Those are parts of life to be disciplined in. Like those are parts of my life where all of a sudden if I'm super busy during the summer – that's not necessarily – it'll feel like it. We might describe it as a storm of busyness just hit my life, but the reality may be more something like I just haven't been trained yet on how to actually arrange my schedule. So that's not a storm. We're talking about storms like a diagnosis, like something that we didn't expect, didn't plan for, and it came into our life, that's the temporary hardship.

And this is so important. God didn't send it. Think about this. If Jesus gets up and the first thing that He does to the storm is rebuke it, and Jesus and the Father are one, then Jesus can't rebuke the Father. So, the Father didn't send it. God doesn't send dark things into our life. It's not even the nature of God. You realize that the nature of God is God is light. In Him there is no darkness at all. So everything that God does, if His nature is light, everything that comes out of Him must be light. Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of heavenly lights. There is no darkness in Him to send into your life. This is so important. This is so important because He doesn't send the storms in us. So, it's okay to say, "This storm stinks." God can – God's not offended when we go, "This storm is awful. God, do you see what's going on?" He's not offended because He didn't send it. He wants to rescue you in it. He wants to be with you in it. And that's the whole point is God actually wants to in His goodness use the storms of our life to help draw us near to Himself. Do you realize even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me?

Perhaps the biggest repentance is realizing that in the storm, Jesus is in the boat. That He will use all things, even the storms of life, to draw me to Himself. This is the with-God kind of life – a temporary hardship God didn't send, but He's using to help me be with Him. You know, you know what the easiest parts of life it is to be without Him? It's surprisingly not a storm. The easiest parts of life that are actually to be without God is usually when the skies are blue, the

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sun is shining, life is going good because we so drift. We drift from the God who made the sun and the skies and our life. I literally feel like this is a word for our church that sometimes the without-Him life is Satan is as happy to send a storm if it disconnects us from God as He is to let us sail through our entire life completely storm free but without joy. I think he's, he's so content because that Satan is not interested in just making your life hard. He's interested in disconnecting you from God. He knows God is the source of life and so he's less interested in just sending storms. He'll even use a good life that never gets to experience joy in it. God is not pro-storm. God is pro-nearness. He will use every storm in our life to draw us and to be with Him.

And the last thing is He'll use it to become like Him. He'll use it to actually shape us. You realize it says this in James, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." Jesus will use the trials and storms of our life to form us, shape us, mold us more into the image and likeness of Jesus to make us mature, complete, not lacking anything. And I was praying about this verse all week because I was like, this is a, this is a hard verse. This is, it's one of those like disciples come to Jesus, "This is a hard teaching, Jesus, and I need Your help to help me think through it." And I realized that the path to maturity, the path to a mature disciple with-God kind of life is actually doesn't start with storms, testings, trials. It doesn't even start with joy. It actually starts with, "Consider it." The path to living like Jesus – the mature with-God life – actually starts with thinking like Jesus. Consider it. Mull it over. Meditate on it. Think about it. That the invitation for us in the storm is actually to think like Jesus so we can live and enjoy Jesus even in the midst of the storms of our life. That's a storm or that's what a storm is: it's a temporary hardship God didn't send, but is using to help me be with Him and become like Him. And it's so important for us to actually consider this because if every storm in your life, if you consider it an eternal punishment God sent into my life because I'm nothing like Him and I'll never be like Him, then you're going to hate every single storm and you're never going to enjoy Jesus. But if you actually see a storm as a temporary hardship God didn't send, but is using to help me be with Him and become like Him, then I don't have to like my storm to still enjoy Jesus and enjoy my life in the midst of it.

See, my wife and I, her name's Kate, we got married, we were 21 years old, so we were like children, basically when we got married. And two years into marriage, uh, my wife comes to me and tells me, "I'm pregnant." And at 23, I'm just going to be totally honest with you guys, that felt more like a storm than a blessing. I was, I was like, "I am not ready for that. I don't know how to handle a baby. I don't know what I'm doing." And so, here we were. And the night after she told me she was pregnant, she had a miscarriage. And I remember walking into the hospital room and my wife was crying. The doctors were all gone. It was just us in the room. And she's shaking and sobbing. And I didn't, I didn't have anything in that moment. I, I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to do. And in that time of my life, I actually had no interest in following Jesus and had no interest in Him at all. And, and yet in that moment, it was

like I considered it. I, I considered my life and I realized and I had this much – I had such little faith. But by the little faith I had, I remember that was one of my first honest prayers to Jesus. And I said, "Jesus, I think I've heard about You, but I have never actually wanted to follow You. Please, if, please tell me if I follow You, You'll make a way better life than I know how to make by myself." I considered it.

And then two years after that, we actually had another miscarriage and that one felt different and was hard and, and brought out different things that we had to grieve and work through. And then two years after that, we got pregnant again. We went in and we found out that that baby also did not have a heartbeat. But something had happened between our second miscarriage and our third miscarriage, which is we found Jesus and we found this place like we found the people of God. We found worship. We found a place to actually enjoy God and the life that He was giving us. And so I remember we came to the doctor on that third one and we said something that he probably was not expecting. We said, "Can you give us one week? One week to just pray and fast and seek that the Lord might start our baby's heart because we don't think He sends storms. We believe He actually is for life and He wants our baby to experience life." And so we prayed and we fasted and we sought the Lord with everything that we had for that one week. We went back to the doctor and before we got out of the car to go see them, I turned to my wife and we just said, "Hey, if, if the baby's heart doesn't start beating, are we done with God?" Like, are we, are we done with this? We were, we were really considering it. And we just looked at each other and we both knew, no, even if our baby's heart does not start right here, we cannot deny the goodness of God that we've experienced in our life. We can't, no storm is actually taking away from all the life, joy, peace, the life that Jesus was giving us. And so we said, no matter what the results, we're not turning our back on God. So, we walked in and we found out that the baby's heart didn't start.

And so, we had three miscarriages. And that was painful. And in some ways, it still, it still is painful. But I think the Lord wanted me to show you that story because we walked out of the doctor's office, but we didn't walk out on God – and that I really just want to give you permission that you don't have to choose. You don't, you don't have to choose between pain and enjoying God. Like you don't have to choose to let pain be the thing that you have like I just have to focus on my storm and my pain or I have to just focus on enjoying God and ignore my pain. You can actually hold both things at the same time in Jesus' name. And, and even as I share my story, I, I really feel like there's people in this room right now that you are, you are in a storm. You're in a very real storm. And, and I feel like you may not even want to look at me right now. And so I just want to ask for a moment like would you just, would you just look at me really quickly just for a moment? You feel too weak to enjoy God. And I say to you, then do it weak.

Who told you you had to do it strong? Who told you you had to stop crying before you started worshipping? Who told you you actually had to understand your storm before you lifted your hands in praise to Jesus? Who told you you couldn't do it weak? Who told you? My power is

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made perfect in weakness. That is the beauty of the God that we serve. And if you do it weak, because here's what the enemy will do. The enemy will say two things. Don't do it. Don't do it. You're too weak. Or he'll tell you, do it strong. Actually go forward in your flesh towards that which you're trying to chase. And instead to actually choose to do it weak, you're choosing to do what the people of God have done for thousands of years. They've just been doing it weak.

I mean, one more story for you is – you remember the story of Paul and Silas in Acts 16? So, Acts 16, Paul and Silas, disciples of Jesus have actually been kind of doing the things that Jesus did. They're healing people. They're helping people. And there's actually a city of officials that don't like how they're disrupting their life. And so they gather up people and they come together and they pull Paul and Silas together and they beat them and they strip them and they actually put them in prison. It's a storm, but it's not like a storm of water. It's an actual storm in their bodies, in their circumstances. A storm like the ones we deal with all the time. And Paul and Silas are sitting in prison weak. They're not sitting in prison strong. They've been beaten. Their bodies are weak.

And do you know what it says that they do in Acts 16? About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. They were praying and singing. Some storms you shout, "Jesus, where are You? Jesus, don't You care?" And some storms you sing. You sing to the Lord. You sing and not from a place of strength. Well, like I said, if you're picturing in their mind that they're jumping up and down, singing to the Lord, I don't think it looks like that. They're just bringing their weakness, the faith they have, and they're finding that they can still enjoy God in the midst of a storm.

Have you ever seen someone singing in a storm? Like, like in your life, have you ever seen a woman with cancer start worshipping Jesus? Have you ever seen a dad who feels like he's losing his kid raise his hands in worship? Have you ever seen a student who's been called the worst names – loser – and they've been isolated and ostracized and they still hit their knees in worship to Jesus? It takes your breath away. It takes your breath away to see them because in that moment you look at them and you're like, it's no longer they who live. It's Christ who's living in them. There's something going on there. Their power's, power is being made perfect in weakness. And what's going on? They've stopped looking at their storm. They're just looking at Jesus. They're just enjoying Jesus.

So, can I invite you? If you're in a storm right now, are you looking for Jesus? Are you just looking at Jesus or are you looking at your storm? See, I have people that God might literally be asking you, "Look at me by singing hymns to me right now." Like literally in your storm, you might have to practically walk out. I need to gather around the people of God. Not in my strength, but I'm also not gonna not do it. I'm just going to do it weak. I'm going to show up and worship Jesus with the life and the faith that I do have. For you, it might mean literally saying, "I'm going to meditate on scripture." You know, the Word says, "Earth and heaven will pass away, but your Word will endure forever." Right? So, I'm not going to meditate on the

things that will pass away of this world. I'm going to spend time meditating on the Word of God. I have dear friends that in their storms, you know what they did? They just brought their little the little bit of faith that they did have and they said, "Every day during this storm, we're going to take communion together." You know what that is? That's literally saying, "We're going to focus not on what's being taken from us. We're going to focus on what's already been given to us in Jesus." The broken body and the shed blood of Jesus. There's so many ways. The question is: are you willing to even ask Jesus in a storm? Like I think, I think everything about a storm leads up to this moment where are we just, are we willing to ask Jesus how do you want me to seek You? We said that, that James verse, "Consider it." I think that's the question we actually need to, to consider, to think about, to meditate on, to spend time on. Are we thinking about, "Jesus, how do You want me to seek You?" Because You say if I seek You, I will find You. And if You find Him, guess what? You don't really care what the weather is like. If you find Jesus, you don't really mind if it's a sunny day or it's a storm. You're just with Jesus. And He's all that matters because He's all that's ever actually mattered. Do you find yourself in a place where you can just literally say right now, "I want to enjoy You. So, how do You want me to seek You, Jesus? How do You want me to seek You right now?"

Here's the thing that actually is my favorite part of the story. It goes on to say, "Suddenly, there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once, all the prison doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself. We are all here.'" If you've ever heard this story taught before, we focus a lot on if you worship, your chains will break and you will be free and you'll be able to run after Jesus, which is true. But here's what blew my mind when I read this verse: they're just singing. Paul and, Paul and Silas are just enjoying God. Even though their bodies are broken, they're hurting. And then when we, when they experience the chains breaking and the doors opening, do you know what my first reaction would be? I am getting out of here like, "Oh my gosh, God is delivering me from the storm."

What did Paul and Silas do? They could totally have gotten out of the storm and they were decided basically to say, "Let's stay in the storm for the jailer's sake." Like, we could leave the storm right now, but I would rather stay in this storm for the jailer's sake. You realize we serve a Jesus? That's not Paul and Silas. That's the Spirit of Christ. They no longer live. It's Christ who lives in them. You realize you serve a Jesus who could have been the only person in life to actually stormproof His life? He's the only, He's the only person with the power, the authority, the ability to completely stormproof His own life and never go through a single storm. And He's the one that actually decides for the sake of the jailer, for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross. The only one that could have stormproofed His life is the one that was basically saying, "I would rather be in a storm with You than on a mountain without You." And so, I just want to speak to the Spirit of Jesus that's in this room right now, that's in our church right now. I want to speak to you. Sometimes the storms you're invited to are for the sake of the jailers in your life. That's a different kind of joy to experience to literally say, "For the sake

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of the jailer, I could walk out of the storm right now, but we're still here. There's been a storm that walked through my finances, but I'm still here. There's been a storm that's walked through my relationships and brokenness, but we're still here." A movement of hope for the city and beyond. We're still here regardless of the storms going around us because for the sake of the jailer, the Spirit of Christ in you longs to live like that.

So, Valley Creek, rejoice. Go back to joy. If you've forgotten how to go back, just go back to Jesus and say, "How do You want me to seek You in this season?" And you will find that He is so close to the brokenhearted. He's so close in your storm or out of your storm. So, Valley Creek, rejoice. Whether it's sunny, whether it's raining right now, may you enjoy God and the life He's giving you.

Would you pray with me? So Jesus, all that's on my heart right now is to say, my heart says, "Seek Your face." So Your face, oh God, I will seek. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of heavenly lights. And regardless of what's going on, You offer us a joy that is complete in You, Jesus. So would we seek Your face? Would we see that You are greater than every storm, every reality that's around us? But we say, "Jesus, You are more valuable than life itself because You are Jesus. We love You. We're so grateful that You call us Your beloved sons and daughters. May You bless this church to experience You this week. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.