

Oh, yes. Hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek Church. I'd like to take a moment and welcome in all of our campuses from wherever you're joining us from. If you are in Lewisville, Denton, Gainesville, online, Flower Mound, somewhere in the world, let's welcome each other together today. It's good to be the people of God. It's good to be together. And hey, hope is here. Everyone is welcome. Jesus changes everything. Hope is here. Hope is here for you right now. Hope is a person. His name is Jesus. It's available for you and for me. So, next week, we get to start a brand new thing called an Invitation to a Beautiful Life. Pastor John kicks it off next week. That's going to run through most of this fall – super excited about that.

But today, my friends, I got a fire in my bones. And it's time to declare in Jesus' name that Jesus wants to restore your hope. There's going to be hope restored today in the name of Jesus. There's going to be hope for you, your family, for us, for our church. Hope restored because hope is here. Isn't it interesting? Sometimes we can say something like, "hope is here," and uh we immediately feel this, like this dissonance inside of our soul like yeah hope is here. Yeah. But then it's like, but what about for me? Is it, is it mine? Is it everybody else's? Why does it feel like hope sometimes is uh it's like being the last person getting past the mashed potatoes of Thanksgiving? Hope. Hope. You want a little hope? You want a little hope? Gets to you. You're like, "That it. That's all that's left." Hope is here for you. It's not just for everybody else.

And as a church, we've been, um, sensing this kind of erosion of hope over this past season. Erosion of hope – it's like um when you have enough disappointment, when you have enough, enough unmet expectations, when you uh when your eyes are looking for like these, these finished moments and these completions and these times and the things that you have been longing for in your heart don't come to pass, some hope can erode inside of you. It's a little bit like erosion that happens in your yard. Sometimes it starts as a, as a trickle and then every once in a while you notice you're like, "Ah, is that, is that kind of changing? Is there a divot there?" Comes off the roof and over a period of time it, it's like a stream that comes through that part of your yard. And maybe even worse, you can get to the point that you don't even really realize that it didn't used to be like that. And suddenly you're looking at the back of your yard and you're driving your mower one day like and you're coming over these little, these little divots and you're like scalping your grass and you're like, "That's weird. That – I don't – wonder what that is?" Maybe worse is when the grass starts to grow over top of it and you start to think like, oh, well, that's just the way my yard is. That's, that's just the way my hope is. It's just the way my life is. It's just the way that things kind of don't work out for me. And uh this erosion of hope can start to eat it – can start to eat of what you believe about God and the goodness of God in your life.

And I think we as a people have experienced a little bit of that erosion of hope. Jesus warns us like this: He says um if your house is built on sand, sand can erode. And when sand erodes, the entire landscape of your life can change. And so hopelessness, my friends, is, is not normal in the kingdom of God. You know what is? Hope. You know what's normal in the kingdom of this

world? Hopelessness. You know what is not normal? Hope. And so every, every place where our, our hope has eroded, where little chunks have gotten taken out of our heart, where we've had like this like we're just the way it is, I'm used to kind of being a little hopeless of things not working out. In Jesus' name, we renounce that and instead we agree with what it says in Isaiah when it says, "Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills. Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places."

In Jesus' name, He's going to fill in some of the valleys of hopelessness in you and me. He's going to fill, fill in some of the valleys of like despair, depression, discouragement. He's going to level those mountains – the mountains of, of pride, the mountains of fear, the mountains of impossibility. He's going to make a straight path for Jesus to come and meet with us today. He's going to come like straight to us and bring His hope. And He is going to smooth out those rough places inside of our hearts.

So, Holy Spirit, would You come and would You renew our hope? Would You restore it? Would You fill in every valley that's, that's created this, this erosion of hope in our lives and our minds? Would You remind us that You are riding in and You are bringing Your hope with You? Every mountain of pride of us trying to do it on, on our own – we lower that. We just, we submit to You. Every crooked path in our minds and places where we believed the way of the world, we come into alignment. We say we prepare the way of the Lord – straight paths for Jesus. And would You, just would You just smooth out the rough places inside of us? Come and restore our hope, Jesus.

Okay. Valley Creek has a vision and it's a good one. We exist to be a movement of hope – hope for the city and beyond – a movement of hope. So if you were going to attack us, what would you want to attack first? There it is. You'd want to attack our, our hope. And if you're an individual within this movement, then maybe you've experienced some of that yourself? I certainly have. In recent seasons, I've experienced an attack on my hope.

What is hope? Hope is the confident expectation of the goodness of God. So, check this out. We are a movement of the confident expectation of the goodness of God. Notice what it doesn't say. It doesn't say um the confident expectation of the goodness of people, the goodness of my situation is working out the way I want it to, the goodness of my body always being reliable. No, no, no – the confident expectation of the goodness of God. God is so good. And God is good even when the world is not. And God is good even when my thoughts are not. And God is good when situations are not. And God is good. Even when the things don't work out the way that I thought they were going to, He's still good. He's still good.

So, I wonder as I've been thinking about this, is it possible that, that some of what we're experiencing is, um, is not even just like an erosion of hope, but the erosion of what we think is hope? Is it possible that part of what we're experiencing is this erosion of like misplaced trust? Because certainly the goodness of God is secure. We know that that's secure, that that's real,

that's always going to be. Could it be that my expectations of what it would be are the things that are really eroding? This, this misplaced trust, this sense that I thought it was going to work out differently – that people would be different, that my life would be different. And uh this one really hits home for me because it's been a season in my life when I feel like I probably fought through and struggled through uh fighting for hope more than any other season. It's the expectations and, and the disappointments and the things working out the way I, I either thought or didn't think they were going to. Uh, and so this is a really meaningful moment and a really meaningful message because I know that God wants to restore deep places of hope inside of me. And He wants to remove my unmet expectations of people, things, places, situations. And uh, if I'm really honest with you, I've been a little bit disappointed when I think about it of just like the problem has been what my eyes can see – what I'm looking at, what I'm, what I'm looking towards. My eyes have been low. They've been down. They've been looking at the people, places, things. I think Jesus wants to raise, raise my gaze. I think He wants to raise and, and have us look up to Him and see Him high and lifted up.

So He is so good. We can take confidence in that and we can look to the Lord because, "Why my soul, are you downcast...? Put your hope in God." Have you been placing your hope in everything other than God? It's a great question to ask. Why am I downcast? Why am I feeling this way? Listen, the author here in, in the Psalms asks the question, why am I downcast? And then immediately answers the question, put your hope in God – so good. Why are – You are my refuge. You are my shield, God. You're my protection. I have put my hope in Your Word. When I put my hope in God's Word, I have protection. He's my refuge. But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in You. My hope is only in You – not in people, places, things, circumstances changing. It's in Jesus. My hope is in You.

What do I look for? It's a fascinating question to ask yourself. What am I looking for? What, what have I, what have I been searching? What have my eyes been looking for? What have I been desiring? The very first question that Jesus has ever noted as asking in John chapter 1: hey, what is it that you're looking for? He looks at two men. What is it you're looking for? Can I ask you what have you been looking for? Have you been looking for hope in all the places it can't be found? In the situations changing? In, in, in people suddenly not disappointing you? In your in, in, in, in the health of your body? In all the places that we can't actually find hope because it's not available there. What are you looking for? Put your hope into God. And I know that even as I say that, I recognize that sometimes, uh, those seasons, the situations, the realities of what you're facing, man, those are real. Those are real. And the grief is real. And the loss is real. And when they said that, it really hurts. And when they did that, that really hurt. And when you said that, that really hurt. And when you did that, that really hurt.

And that's why there's an entire book of the Bible that's just about taking stock of like what's been lost. It's, it's about lamenting. It's called Lamentations. No, it's not about lambs. It's about

lamenting. Here it is: "The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss." Pause. Isn't it so good to know that there's real people who really felt those things that really helped write the Bible and were inspired by God and that the Scriptures hold all the kinds of real things that real people actually go through? I'm thankful for that. And, "Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: the faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease."

In Jesus' name, may we dare to hope again. May we dare to hope. Like dare to hope. It's like take a risk. It takes courage. It takes boldness to say like I dare to hope even in the midst of it. I dare. I dare to believe in God, to hope in Him, to trust in Him. Man, that's bold. That's beautiful. It takes courage to dare to hope. It takes courage to say, "I still trust in God even when my eyes can't see it and my heart is struggling to believe it." Because sometimes it is just an awful time. And sometimes there are bitter people and bitter words that spit bitterness all over you. And sometimes it's genuine suffering that you're working through. And yet, and yet, and yet, I still dare to hope.

Isn't it beautiful to know that grief and hope are supposed to coexist together? Grief and hope are not mutually exclusive. "So you will not grieve like people who have no hope." It doesn't say you will not grieve or you can't grieve or you're not supposed to grieve. It says, "You will not grieve like that, that, those that have no hope." Thank You, Jesus, that grief and hope are not mutually exclusive. They're actually intertwined together. Sometimes when I grieve, that's the perfect time to put my hope in God and think, God, I got a confident expectation that You are good even when none of this is. Because it's not. It's not. My season, my situation, the way I feel, it's not good. But You are. And I still dare to hope and I still dare to believe that You're good even when the world is not.

So if I was working through a season of hopelessness, if I was struggling through that there's erosion of it in my heart, how would I begin to know that maybe some of that's happened? If the grass has grown over the divot, if it's difficult to remember what it used to be like, what would be like a breadcrumb? What would help me understand that maybe I was working through some hopelessness? Well, there's really two things that give us insight into what's really going on, and they're this – if I'm experiencing control or apathy, I may be, I may be dealing with some hopelessness. Control and apathy are byproducts of a hopeless heart.

Start with the first one, control. If I don't believe in the goodness of God and I don't see the goodness of people around me, then I have to be good to me in order to change the situation. And the only way for me to be good to me is to try to control the people, the things, and the places around me so that I can experience some of that goodness. And we see this all over the Scriptures. We see it like in the story of King Saul and the prophet Samuel when King Saul was facing a massive battle and Samuel's like, "Okay, here's the deal. I got to leave for seven days. I'm going to come back. When I come back, I'm going to do the burnt offering. God is going to win this battle for us. Everything's going to be great. You just have to trust the process." So

Samuel leaves off, kind of pulls like a Gandalf thing in Lord of the Rings, and then he comes on back to, to, to Saul. And Saul's in the middle of the battle and he's found out that Saul – because he saw his, uh, soldiers rapidly slipping away – decided to offer the burnt offering without Samuel there. He tried to control the situation. Samuel comes back and he's like, "Hey man, what'd you do? What's going on?" And Saul's like, "Yeah, no, it was bad. My army was like slipping away. We were losing the battle. So I, I, I gave the burnt offering and you know, I knew the Lord would help us out." Samuel's like, "Yeah, no, no, that's, that's actually not it." You try to control the situation because of that you're going to lose your kingdom. And then we see the same thing in Abraham when Abraham is trying to control having a kid and so he sleeps with his maidservant Hagar. We see the same situation of control with Moses when he's not trusting the provision of God. He hits a rock. He smacks it. That makes it so that he doesn't ever go to the Promised Land. And I wonder how many times in our life we make things like 10 times worse than they already are because we're tightening our grip on control on the people and the situations and the circumstances and on our family. So, have you noticed a tightening grip on those things in your life recently? If so, it's God's goodness. It's like a breadcrumb to try to show you you might be dealing with places of hopelessness inside of your heart.

And then there's apathy – apathy. Why does it matter? Why should I care? It's not going to be any different. They're not going to change. It doesn't work out for me anyways. You know, what's, what's the difference? Apathy is insidious in our hearts. And the reason it's insidious is it flies in the face of the truth that there's always more in the kingdom of God. And so apathy is another one of those things that if I if I'm experiencing a little bit of like it's okay, it's fine. It's God's goodness to you to try to, um, to try to reveal a place where hopelessness may have taken over. Check this out: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.'" I bet you know that verse. "Then you will call on me and come to me and pray to me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek me and you'll find me when you seek me with all your heart."

What it's saying here is it's like no, no, no. You, you don't let apathy come in. You, you do it wholeheartedly. You go for it. And what's really crazy about this passage is that this is coming at a time for the Israelites when apathy should have been like at an all-time high. They had just learned from God that they were going to be stuck in Babylon for another 70 years – 70 years. So, I don't know about you, but if I'm realizing, oh, me and every generation that's probably standing here right now, we're not even going to go back to our homeland. And yet God says, "No, no, I still got plans for you, though. I got, I got a hope and a future for you". I'm just telling you that would be a time for me that a lot of apathy would start to creep into my life. And yet God says, "No, no, no. But seek Me with all your heart." Can I ask you, have you been doing it with all your heart? It, it – have you been working with all your heart? Have you been in school with all your heart? Have you been engaging your parenting with all your heart? Are you engaging your marriage with all your heart? Whatever you do, do it as unto working for the Lord, not as men. Right? All your heart. Do it with all your heart. Because apathy is sneaky. It's

insidious. It tries to creep in and it reminds us that maybe there's some place where the Lord wants to heal our hopelessness. So control, apathy – both byproducts of a hopeless heart.

If that's true, then what would we need to look to in order to like, like have hope rise inside of us? What would help us like experience more hope on the inside? Well, I'm so glad you asked. Check this out: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." Endurance and encouragement – the two sides of the coin that we can start to like experience and, and, and, and regain some of the hope that's been lost.

Endurance – sometimes in the kingdom of God, it just takes some like I'm not going down from here. I'm sticking to it. Grit – like I'm not leaving and I'm not stopping and I'm going to endure and I'm going to keep going. And so there's something to be said for like kingdom endurance. Just saying like I'm going to endure with God and I'm going to reign with God and I'm going to walk through this season with patience and I'm going to believe in the goodness of God and I'm like in it. I'm convinced that for many of us there's like, uh, we always think about like oh you finished so well, you complete, yeah you like won, and like you know what winning is. Sometimes in the kingdom enduring – just like faithfully like enduring – is saying I'm not going to stop and I'm not going to stop believing in the goodness of God. And there's something about endurance that helps raise our hope, lift our head, give us more hope in Jesus' name.

I mean look at this: "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes, hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Endurance – patient endurance – there's something about being like, I'm just going to keep waiting on the Lord – waiting on the Lord – cultivating hope – cultivating hope – waiting on the Lord. This passage, I've read this my entire life. To be honest with you, I still don't quite understand what it means. I have no idea on some of this. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? What it seems to say – that the cultivation of hope inside of us is more important than getting the thing. We want the thing. God wants us to become people of hope. We want the have. God wants us to hope.

Do you get it? Because once you have it, you don't, you don't hope for it anymore. Like on this side of heaven, you know what happens when you hope for something and you get it – there's just something else you want to hope for later. And when that thing gets done and when the problem gets solved and when we complete it and when the person's, you know, the relationship finally breaks through, then, then something else comes to your heart and your mind. Have you ever noticed that it seems like it's like trying to, trying to cultivate hope inside of us by leading us to these situations that we're going to have to rely on God and endure and build hope? It's almost like God cares more about the hope than the have – the cultivation of being people of hope than the, than the completion of the thing or getting the exact thing that we want.

Check this out: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." We care more about the have – God cares more about the, the hope. And here's the really wild thing. Someday when you have everything you've ever longed for and when you've seen Jesus face to face and when you know even as you're fully known and when there's nothing else to wait on, or hope for, or wish was occurring – when every tear has been wiped from the eyes, when we see Him for who He truly is, and He sees us for who we are in Him. Someday when there's nothing left to hope for, you know what's still going to be left? Hope. Hope. Hope will still remain because these three remain faith, hope, and love. So, even when there's nothing left to wait on, to endure, to, to, to wait for, to, to wish would occur, we're still going to have hope because hope will never die. Because hope can't die. Because hope died 2,000 years ago on a cross, was dead and buried, and raised to new life. And now hope is seated at the right hand of the Father and remains forever more because the confident expectation of the goodness of God will never die, will never cease, will never pass away because even in eternity when we go glory to glory, we're going to continue to experience more and more and more and more and more and more of the goodness of God.

So, isn't it great to know that we're part of this neverending kingdom of hope? And that when we cultivate hope as a people, we're actually practicing for forever because in eternity, hope is one of the most important currencies of the kingdom of God. Literally, uh, hope springs eternal. That's correct. That's correct. Hope springs eternal on this earth. Hope is a rare mineral in the kingdom. It's abundant because it's Jesus and because it's only found in Jesus. And so the whole point of that is maybe we have this wrong definition of hope. We think about it as the completion of the thing, the circumstance, the relationship, uh, the things I'm, I'm, I'm longing for and wanting and desiring. And God is thinking, "No, no, no. I'm going to turn you and I'm going to encourage you to become a person of hope that learns endurance because the whole point is we're teaching, we're training, we're becoming people of hope that will experience hope eternally and forever more."

May we endure with Him so that we can reign with Him. May we endure with Him so that we can live this hopeful life even now and forever more. Endurance – I will wait for the Lord. My whole being waits and in His Word I will put my hope. So there's endurance – waiting patiently with God. And there's encouragement – encouragement that comes from His Word and His people. I believe that endurance and encouragement are the two primary ways we can cultivate hope.

So let's talk about the, the encouragement for a second. At Valley Creek, we know that God's Word is so encouraging and we love God's Word and we value His voice above any other voice. So, when you came in, you got a reading plan. You got a card. That's the updated reading plan. And this is something we've been doing all year long – a chapter a day, jumping into God's Word together, believing that as we, uh, grow and cultivate this love for God's Word, we're also going to cultivate more hope inside of Valley Creek. So, I would really encourage you, don't miss this chance – a chapter a day in unity with all of us here at Valley

Creek all together, all the people of God. I think He wants to cultivate hope inside of our hearts through His Word. And He wants us to become people of His Word that love His Word deeply. And even if you've been here a while and you do some other reading plan or you're on something, I would just encourage you, just consider joining with us on the chapter a day. There's something to be said for the unity. If we're going to be attacked together because we are a movement of hope, then man, in Jesus' name, we're gonna fight with His Word together and we're going to use His Word to speak to us, to encourage us, to build us up. And so I want to encourage you, be encouraged through the Word of God. Let that speak to your heart deeply.

So encouragement through His Word and encouragement through His people. Encouragement through His people. One of the most important things that happens when we gather together as the church, by the way, that you don't go to church, you are the church. You gather together as the church. We didn't go to church today. We gathered as His people. One of the most important things that happens when we gather together is that we encourage one another and we encourage another, one another to spur on hope. "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another daily." There are people here who desperately need your encouragement, and there are people that you desperately need the encouragement from. So when we get together, let's be people that just say, "I'm going to profess some hope. I'm going to talk about the confident expectation of the goodness of God spurring one another on."

What I'm really talking about is being a hope carrier. A hope carrier – a disciple of Jesus who lives on mission to change their world. Not necessarily change the whole world – that's really big. But I got a, I got this world, this portion that God has entrusted to me, and it can be changed in Jesus' name through the hope of the gospel. And so when I'm a hope carrier on the weekends, when I come to receive and to give hope, it's not quite like what you're thinking. We often think about that phrase and we think about it like almost like a mail carrier. Like I got a little satchel of hope right here. Like here's some hope. There's – you want some hope? Here's some hope for you today – as if we're like pulling it out of a bag somewhere. But it's not a bag beside you. It's a real, it's a reality that's here inside you. It's not like I'm trying to pull it from the outside of me. I'm giving for what's already true inside of me because Christ in us, the hope of glory, Christ in us, the hope of glory inside of me is this treasure chest of hope. And I've received so much hope from the author of hope that now I actually have something I can give you. That's what I'm talking about. Let us let us profess hope to one another. Let us spur one another on. Let us let us lead each other and be like, "Hey, there's encouragement, man, that God has your season. I see you. I see your hard season. I see, I see the endurance that you're walking through. And I just speak to you and I say, 'May you hope in Jesus' name.'" Not putting your hope in the situation – putting your hope on Him.

What if we did that so much more? What if we carried hope to one another? Can I just ask you, is it difficult to encourage people with hope? Because maybe, maybe you haven't yet received it for yourself? It's really hard to give something I haven't received. It's really hard to be a hope carrier if it's on the outside of me versus if it's on the inside of me. In Jesus' name, may you remember that in Jesus – He is Christ in you, the hope of glory, a hope that will never die, that will never run dry, that will never run out. And may we spur one another on to love and good deeds.

How do we cultivate hope? Endurance and encouragement. So, I want to just even take a moment to recognize that all sounds fine and well when I come up here and I smile and I sound excited and I say, "Yay, hope." But that doesn't really work if, um, if at a deep level you haven't chosen to believe it. So in Jesus' name, I speak to the parts of unbelief inside of you. And I say may the God of all hope fill you with joy and peace as you trust in Him so that you radiate with the hope of Jesus in Jesus' name.

I believe that we have had an attack and erosion on our hope. I certainly have experienced it in recent seasons. But I know today God wants hope restored – hope restored – hope restored in you and in me. So may we cast off control and apathy. May we rise in endurance and encouragement. And may we see Jesus high and lifted up and receive His hope afresh one another.

So would you close your eyes with me? And I want to give some time to just let the Word of the Lord just settle on our hearts. And I want to just ask you, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you? Let's listen for His voice. Maybe He's speaking right now and just He's lifting your head away from the circumstances up to Him. Maybe He's reminding you that maybe, um, maybe you have some misplaced trust? The hope can't be in the thing, the people, the circumstances. It can only be in one place. I think for some of you, He's just saying, "I am with you." He's with you. You don't have to endure it alone. He's with you. And people of God are with you.

So Jesus, we just declare that You are the anchor for our soul. You are our strong tower. We run to You and we are saved. And for any place that there's been an erosion of hope in any of us, I declare that every valley will be raised up and every mountain will be made low. And You're going to make a straight path and running – You're running after us with Your hope. You're chasing after us with Your hope. So, may we just have this strong sense that God is pursuing. He's with us. He's, He's, He's coming with us. We're not alone. He's chasing and making a straight way, smoothing out the places where our heart has had chunks taken out of it. For every heart that's heard this, I declare a healing in the name of Jesus – that you're being healed, heart, soul, mind, and strength. For what was done, said, for what was not done and not said, for what was hurtful and left you scarred. May you be healed in the power of Jesus right now. May you be made whole through His Word, through His life, and through His Spirit. And may you have a sense that even now God is coming and He's bringing His hope with Him and He's, He's carrying it to you and your treasure chest is starting to be filled up again. Now

"Hope Restored"

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you have some currency of heaven on the inside. You actually have something that you can spend in this life on behalf of other people. You have hope. Thank You, Jesus, for Your hope. Thank You that You are our firm foundation. Thank You that You are the anchor for our souls. We just declare that hope is rising. Hope is rising. Hope is rising in the name of Jesus over Valley Creek Church. We will continue to joyfully be a movement of hope – a movement of the confident expectation of the goodness of God for the city and beyond. Thank You, Jesus, for what You've done today. In Your name, amen. Yes. May hope be restored in your life in Jesus' name.