Yeah. All right. Hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. We're so glad that you're here with us. Wherever you are, whatever is going on in your life, whether this is a season of faith, hope, and love, or doubt, despair, and fear, I just speak over your life today that God is good, that Jesus has forgiven you, that you are loved, and everything is possible in Jesus' name. And as I was praying for you this week, I just felt like the Lord wanted to say to some of you, just keep going. Just keep going because He is with you and He is for you, in Jesus' name.

Hey, last week we pressed pause on everything we were doing to talk about Neighbors and Nations to just take a moment to remind ourselves of this missional calling that is upon our lives as followers of Jesus. One of the greatest privileges of your life is that God has entrusted you with His name, with His kingdom, with His Word, and with His mission. We're called to make disciples. We're the sent ones. We're, we're witnesses of who Jesus is and what He has done. And so we need to remind ourselves of this missional awakening that needs to take place in our lives and and in our church. And so whether it's inviting somebody to church, walking across the street, living as a hope carrier in your place of life, going on a mission trip somewhere around the world. Mission isn't something you do. Missionary is who you are. You have been commissioned by God to have a missional life to tell people about who He is and what He has done. And last week our intent was simply to inform you, to inspire you, and then to invite you to be a part of the mission of God that is flowing through this church and this people in this time in this place.

And one of the ways we do that is not just as individuals, but together as a collective community. And and one of the ways we've been doing that is Missional Move: Create the Future. Biggest thing we've ever done as a church – we started it almost two years ago. We said we want to do five things in the next five years. Create a future that doesn't exist for the good of others and the glory of God. We want to start a Prayer Center, start VC College, Argyle Campus, University Campus, and the 7 Continent Strategy. Biggest thing that we've ever done, stepping out in faith, on mission for other people. And we are are are about 18 months into our two-year financial commitment that we made together as a church. We said that it's a $25 million investment. And so we invited people to commit and go on that journey. 18 of the 25 million has already been given.

And so in two weeks, we're going to have our missional move update weekend. And every year over these five years, one weekend around November, we do a Missional Move offering where we give to create the future that doesn't exist for the good of others and the glory of God. And so I want to invite you to pray and ask God – I boldly ask you to boldly ask God how He would have you be a part of creating a future that doesn't exist for others. Maybe you've made a commitment and you want to give towards it. Maybe you finished your commitment and you want to give above it. Maybe you weren't here and you don't know anything I'm talking about. Go on the website. You can see it all. But I'm believing that God is going to continue to move amongst us as we create a future that doesn't exist. And the updates I have

for you in two weeks – I mean, you may or may not want to just drive to the physical locations and just just look.

And part of creating that future is becoming the kind of people that can live in that future and steward that future. So, we've spent all fall in this invitation to a good and beautiful life, a conversation on the Sermon on the Mount. And I don't know if it's been meaningful to you, but I love it. Oh my gosh, I love it. For the last three, four years of my life, this is what I've been working on in my heart with the Lord, and it is changing my life. It it's captivating to me. It has captured me because it is the greatest message that's ever been preached. It's the most important thing Jesus ever said. And yet, it's the, it's the least applied, most misunderstood thing. And this Sermon on the Mount is not a try harder, behave better, do more speech from Jesus of rules and regulations and religion. No, it is an invitation from a good and beautiful God into a good and beautiful kingdom to have a good and beautiful life.

It is an unfolding revelation of what life in the kingdom looks like, of what it means to be human, of what it means to be alive, of of what we were created to do. And if you just look at the treaty that He goes through in the Sermon on the Mount, it covers everything you would ever want to know – like who or what is blessed and then how do I get into the kingdom? And He deals with anger and lust and lying and vengeance. He helps us work through pride and treasure and worry and judgement and security. And if you even look where the Sermon on the Mount is placed in Scripture, it is the first thing Jesus teaches in the first gospel of the first book of the New Testament. It's like we get to the New Testament, Jesus shows up, merry Christmas, and then He starts talking. And what does He say? The Sermon on the Mount. It's almost as if God is even saying, "Hey, even where I've placed this in order is the most important thing that you need to hear. You need to know this because this is life as it was meant to be."

And if you made me summarize for you what the whole Sermon on the Mount is really all about, I would summarize it for you in this: It is a… it is a message about the heart. The entire Sermon on the Mount is a message about the heart. It is not a try harder, behave better, do more. It is not rules and regulations. It is not Jesus trying to create behavior modification or some type of conformity within you. The entire thing, the entire thing, if you just step back and look at it and read it, you will discover the entire thing is about the heart. And we know what it's like to have a hard heart, an offended heart, a broken heart, an unhealthy heart, a wandering heart. But what about a good and beautiful heart? Because the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus's declaration, an invitation to us to say, "If you want to have a good and beautiful life, it comes from a good and beautiful heart."

In fact, after He starts and He talks about who is blessed, He goes right into how we get into the kingdom – Him. And He says, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." You see, the Pharisees, the religious people, had righteous externals, but unrighteous internals. That's what

religion is, just in case you've ever wondered. It's external action that doesn't align with internal realities. Oh, they did all the right things on the outside, but in here, their heart was far from God. That's why Jesus says, "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." He says, "Oh, they say all the right things. They do all the right things out here, but they have a heart that is far away, that is turned away. They have no affection or no attention for Me." And what He is saying is, if you want to have a good and beautiful life, it starts with a heart that's near to God. A heart that is turned towards Him, that has its affection and its attention and its focus placed on Him.

And then He goes through that whole run where He says, "You have heard it said, but I say to you… You have heard it said, it's all about behavior, but I say to you, it's all about the heart." "You have heard that it was said do not commit murder. But I tell you, do not be angry." What is He saying? He's saying, "Hey, it's great that you haven't killed anybody, but just so we're clear, you're really angry in your heart." Where does anger live? It's in the heart. So let's address that anger in your heart because anger is the root of all human evil. And then He says, "You have heard it said, do not commit adultery. But I tell you, anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Oh, He says, "That's great that you haven't had an affair, but your heart is full of lust. You've been cultivating lust in your heart. And the problem with lust in your heart is lust is ready to act should the opportunity present itself and the consequences be perceived as low. He goes, "So why don't we deal with that lust in your heart so you can actually be free?" This is why He goes on to say, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off." What is Jesus telling you? To dismember your body? No. But what He's doing is He's giving you an absurdity to say lust is not in your eye or in your hand, it's in your heart. And even if you got rid of every part of your body, even if you were in solitary confinement, even if you could never see an attractive man or woman in your life and all that could be shut off, you could still have a heart raging with lust because it's not out there. It's in here.

Then He goes on to say, "You have heard it said, keep your oaths, but I tell you, do not swear at all." In other words, don't lie. He says, "Lying comes from the heart of using our words to manipulate other people to get what we want. You have heard it said eye for eye and tooth for tooth. You have heard it said love your neighbor, but hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you." He says, "Hey, it's great that you love your family and your friends, but in your heart you have bitterness and offense and vengeance and unforgiveness towards those around you. Let's deal with that so you can be free."

And then He goes into the section on pride and people pleasing and performing and He talks about these holy activities that we do, uh, giving and prayer and fasting. And He says, "It's great that you do all those things, but if your motive, which is in the heart, is to be seen and appreciated by other people, you've already missed the whole point."

Then He deals with treasure. And He says, "Where your treasure is, there your…" Huh, I'm seeing a pattern here. Seems to be that this is about the heart. "…there your heart will be also." What we treasure, we treasure in our heart. And He says you either treasure money or God in your heart but you can't treasure them both at the same time.

Then He goes to worry. Where does worry live? In the heart. And from my heart I can worry or I can worship but I can't do both. And then He deals with judgement. And judgement comes from the (heart). Oh, and that's great that maybe you don't gossip about people but inside you certainly are judging them. It's about the heart. The entire thing is about the heart.

In fact, He goes through all of that and He gets to the end of the Sermon on the Mount. And here's what He says in the Sermon on the Mount at the very end: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."

A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. What is Jesus saying? He's saying if you have a good heart, you'll live a good life. But if you have a bad heart, you'll live a bad life. At the end of the day, your roots determine your fruit. And we know it. We know no one picks grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles. We know apple trees produce apples and orange trees produce oranges and and pineapple trees produce pineapples. We know that you do not pick peaches from cherry trees. And you do not pick pears from walnut trees. In other words, whatever the condition of your heart is will determine the reality of the world around you. You are your heart, and out of the heart everything overflows and releases into the world around you. The Sermon on the Mount is a message about the heart. If you have a good and beautiful heart, you will live a good and beautiful life. But if you have an unhealthy and broken heart, you will live an unhealthy and broken life. An unhealthy and broken heart cannot produce a good and beautiful life. And a good and beautiful life cannot produce an unhealthy and broken heart. This is what He's trying to tell us.

I mean, I want you to just think about Jesus for a second. You remember when He's going to the cross, they nail Him to the cross. He's got nails in His hands and His side, crown of thorns on His head. He's bloody beaten and bruised. And what does He say from the cross? "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Was that hard for Jesus to say? I want you to think about that for a second. While He's hanging on the cross, the people that are crucifying Him are right there. And He says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Was that hard for Him to say? No. What would have been hard for Him to say was, "Father, get them back and get them good." Why? Because that wasn't in Him. What was in Him was

forgiveness. So when He was squeezed, what was inside of Him came out. You can pretend all day long, but when you're squeezed, what's inside of you ultimately comes out of you.

But when the Samar the the Samaritan village didn't want Jesus to come and they rejected Him, the disciples said, "Jesus, you want us to call fire down from heaven and smoke those guys?" That was easy for Peter and John to say, cuz condemnation was in them. Jesus rebuked His disciples and said, "I haven't come to condemn the world, but to save the world." That was easy. Why? Because that's what was in Him. Or how about when Jerusalem doesn't want Him and He goes up on the hill and He weeps over Jerusalem. Jerusalem, how I long to gather you. This compassion that's coming out of Him for the very people that are rejecting Him. Was that easy for Him to do? Yes. Because that's what was inside of Him. And what Jesus is teaching us and modeling to us and showing us is that the condition of your heart will determine the reality of the life that you live.

I mean, think about it like this with me for a second. Just think of the Sermon on the Mount, everything Jesus teaches. Can you picture Jesus angry? Like raging, like flipping off the handle and just like absolutely losing it. Can you picture Jesus lustfully leering at a woman as she walks by? Can you picture Jesus lying to people to get what He wants? Do you picture Jesus holding on to unforgiveness and bitterness and resentment in His heart? Do you picture Jesus? Can you even see Him trying to do everything He's do to doing to to be seen and appreciated by other people? Can you picture Jesus being greedy and loving money? Do you picture Jesus like worrying and stressed out about how His life is going to go and what the future is going to be like? Do you picture Jesus judging people? We can't even picture Him doing it because it's so not in Him. There's no way for it to come out of Him. And if we are His disciples, a student becomes like their master and He says, "The things I've been doing, you will do even greater things than these." Then you can become the kind of person where those things don't even reside in your heart. So they're impossible to come out of your life.

This is a great mental flip for most of us. And the mental flip is this. Don't try to do all the things Jesus talks about. Try to become the kind of person that naturally and effortlessly just does them. Don't try to not be angry and not be lustful and not love money and not worry because the more you try to not worry, the more you… right. So, how about just become the kind of person that naturally and effortlessly worships so there is no space for worry. Good roots will bear good fruit. We spend so much of our life running around trying to rip off all the bad pieces of fruit of our life. Oh, that anger, it showed up again. Oh, that lust. Got to get rid of it. Oh, that worry. Oh, that judgement. And we're like constantly ripping off bad fruit. That is an exhausting way to live. That is an exhausting way to parent by ripping off the bad fruit of your kids' lives for whatever that's worth. That's an exhausting way to do marriage to constantly see your spouse's bad fruit and be ripping it off the tree. It's like, no, it's going to keep coming back. Why? Because the root hasn't changed. So, don't focus on the fruit. Focus on the root. And naturally and effortlessly without even trying. Some of you don't believe this, but this is what Jesus is teaching. Does a pear tree wake up in the morning and think, "Ah,

don't grow an orange."? That's the absurdity that Jesus is using in this metaphor. A a a a grapevine doesn't wake up and say, "Don't produce thistles." It just wakes up and bears grapes. A pear tree just wakes up and bears pears. A good and beautiful heart just wakes up and releases a good and beautiful life.

"Above all else, guard your (heart) for it is the wellspring of life." It's one of the most important verses, I think, in the Bible. Guard your heart. You're commissioned and and called and responsible to guard your heart above all things. For it is the wellspring of life. In other words, the the reality of your heart will determine the condition of your life. Whatever is going on in here will flow out into here. It's like a stream. And whatever is in the stream, it seeps out into everyone and everything around you. And we're convinced we can hide our heart from people. But make no mistake about it, whatever is in your heart, it seeps out into every interaction, every facial expression, every word, everything you do, everywhere you go. And over time, oh, make no mistake about it, we all pick up on what's actually in your heart. Because you can't hide it. It's a stream and it flows out to everyone and everything. And so, we're told to guard our heart, which means to intentionally watch over, to look after. The problem is is we allow the unhealthy and broken into our heart and we keep out the good and beautiful. I'm convinced that we don't guard our heart from the things of this world and we gate our heart off from God. Have you ever seen those ranch gates that it's like you got to meet the rancher or the farmer at the gate and it's got like nine locks on it and only he knows the combination and the key and how to actually get in. I think we gate God out and sometimes, and He never knows when it's going to be. It's just like today's the day God, open up. Come on in for an hour. That was great. See you later. Bye. Close it all up. As opposed to guarding our heart. What does that mean? It means to be a watchman. To look over and be like, I'm not looking at that. I don't want to be around that. No, I'm not going to go over here because that's not good for me. I don't want this. This. How did you get in here? You are not supposed to be in here. So, I'm throwing you out and I'm guarding. Which means I'm looking for things I want in. Oh, the Word of God, come on in here. Grace of God, come on in here. People of God, come on in here. Spirit of God, come on in here. Presence of God, come on in here. I'm called to guard my heart. Why? Because your heart is you. Your heart is not a muscle. It's not this ethereal, subjective, random thing over here. No, your heart is your will, your spirit, your character, your nature, your persona, and you do who you are. Identity determines behavior. Fish swim. Birds fly. Cows moo. Dogs bark. Sinners sin. Righteous people live righteously. Unhealthy and broken hearts do unhealthy and broken things. Good and beautiful hearts live good and beautiful lives.

You are your heart and so you have to guard it. And when it's good and beautiful, you won't wake up in the morning and say, "Don't be lustful today." If you have to wake up every day and say, "Don't look at porn." It's not about porn. It's about the heart. If you have to wake up every day and say, "Don't worry today." It's not about the situation. It's about the heart. This is why Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." The kingdom in you will always become the kingdom around you. Whatever rules in here will reign out there. So if the good

and beautiful King reigns in my heart, rules in my heart, excuse me, then good and beautiful things will rain, come down, have influence over my life out here. But if an unhealthy and broken king, myself or anything other than Jesus rules in here, then unhealthy and broken things will reign, become the reality of my life out here. It's not about out here. Your problem is not out here. Your problem is in here.

Now, this verse is a familiar verse. Maybe you've seen this before. "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the (heart)." Okay. So, if the Lord looks at the heart, then that's an interpretive key for how to read the Sermon on the Mount. If the Lord is looking at the heart, then you can't read the Sermon on the Mount and say Jesus is all about behavior modification. It literally means everything Jesus is teaching us is about the heart. And He uses different ways to get there, but it means He cares about the heart. So the interpretive key of the entire Sermon on the Mount is Jesus addressing our heart so that we can have a good and beautiful life. He's not trying to make your life harder with rules and regulations and religion and conformity and all this stuff. No, it's it's all about the heart. So that's really important as you wrestle through the Sermon on the Mount in your own life.

But it says man looks at the outward appearance. So yes, the Lord looks at the heart. But make no mistake about it, we – you're man, which includes you – we, you look at the outward appearance. And we look at everyone else's outward appearance, but who do we look at outward appearance the most? Ourself. If you ever go on social media, which I'm sure none of you in this room ever have, what's really sad is you can see the orphan heart at work. Social media is a digital community of the orphan heart screaming, "Aren't I pretty? Aren't I important? Don't I matter? Don't I have something to say? Look at me. Aren't I funny? Aren't I worthy of love?" We take 20 photos to post one. We curate it. We we crop it. We blend it. We get rid of all the blemishes and all the wrinkles to to portray this reality that is not real. I was thinking about it this week. Just thinking. Imagine after every time you posted something on social media, you had to do one swipe to the left or the right, whichever way it's called, I don't care. You swipe the thing and you had to post a picture of the reality of your heart. So, here's the perfect me. Here's the condition and the reality of my heart. How congruent would those two things be?

This is what Jesus is trying to deal with in the Sermon on the Mount. See, in the Sermon on the Mount, He uses the word hypocrisy. And He uses it multiple times. You hypocrite. Hypocrisy. Now, when we hear the word hypocrite, we often hear it condemning, judgemental, harsh with this angry tone behind it. We put it in a religious construct. But when Jesus uses the word hypocrite, what it actually meant in Jesus' day was actor, player, stage performer, someone who would get on a platform and play a part for a period of time. That's what the word hypocrite actually means. An actor, a player, a performer, someone who plays a part that is not who they actually are. It's like I put on a mask and for one hour I'm Cinderella. I I put on a mask and for one hour I'm Gaston. I put on a mask and for one hour I'm Hamilton. I play a part. I'm

an actor. I'm a performer. I'm a player. I I do this role and when it's over I take off the mask. What Jesus is saying is He's saying don't live your life like that.

How many times do we come in here on a Sunday and we get in the parking lot and we get in the car and we put on our mask and we come in and for one hour play a game that's different than the internal reality? We go to our Circle and for one hour we put on that mask that's very different than the internal reality. We join our serve team and for one hour we wear a mask and play a part that's very different than our internal reality. We get around other people who are walking with Jesus and for one hour we put on that mask and we we we we play a game. And what Jesus is saying is He's saying don't play that game. That's religion. That's religion. External action that is not in alignment with the internal realities of the heart. He's saying don't play that game. He's saying whatever is in your heart, just be honest about it. Just be honest about it. What would it be like if we were a church and a community of people that just never played a part? I know that word hypocrite's strong, so just leave it off to the side. You were just never a player. You were never an actor. You never got on a platform in front of people and tried to present something that's different than the internal reality of your heart. What if we just took it off and we were just honest? What if you went to your Circle and you just said like, "Guys, I'm just going to be honest. Like, I just I love money straight up. I just need to say it. I love money more than I love God." Oh my gosh, I would love to be in Circle with you. Because there's more hope for your healing and breakthrough than the person who puts it on and shows up and pontificates or theologically argues about little nuances to validate themselves. Just take off your mask and say, "Guys, I'm just going to be honest. I struggle with lust. I I'm worried all the time. I judge everyone. In fact, I'm judging you right now." Why don't we do that? Two reasons. One, it's very humbling. And two is you're now responsible to do something with what you just said. I actually think we would rather be humbled than be responsible. Like, okay, you took a shot at my pride. That's fine, but don't make me responsible because I don't actually want to do something with that. I know. And Jesus is saying though, if we want a good and beautiful life, it's never going to come from playing a part, wearing a mask, playing a game. I try, I've tried to tell you for probably over a decade. Like, just say it. Like, if you don't want to follow Jesus, just say it. If you don't want to worship, just say it. If you don't want to be a disciple, just say it. Why? Because because honesty is the beginning of breakthrough. When you're a player and you're wearing a mask, God is going to wait until you put down that mask. He doesn't rip it off and He doesn't deal with you on who you pretend to be.

He He's not going to play. He He's not interested in your performance. He's interested in your heart. And so He will keep saying, "Hey, you ready to put that down yet? And then We can work. No? Okay. Carry on. Go back to your monologue. Let Me know when you get tired. Let Me know when the audience dries up. Let Me know when no one performs or applauds for your performance anymore. Then we can do something with this."

Oh, what would it be like to be a community of people where there were no players in the room? Oh, I want to be a part of that. I don't want to be a player. I don't want you to be a player. I want us to be honest. And I don't want us to be honest and then just be like, "Yep, that's just who I am and what I'm going to do." I want us to be honest and then be like, "And I need the grace of God to give me the desire to even go in that direction. Because right now, I love money and I love money. So, I need God to help me break through. So I love Him or whatever that might be." Does that make sense?

I mean, look at what Jesus says: "Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, and inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will also be clean."

Huh? See it? Huh? Heart, life, heart, hands, inside, then outside. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!" You actors, you players, you pretenders. "You are like whitewashed tombs." Your your your tombstone is perfectly white, chiseled out, looks awesome. "...which looks beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

Here's what Jesus is saying. He's saying, "Clean the inside of the cup, and the outside of the cup will also be clean." Have you ever had a bowl of spaghetti or macaroni and cheese or oatmeal? And you finished it and like your mom probably taught you, you didn't put water in it at first, you just let it crispy. Yeah. Every mom in the room is like, tried to train them. Okay. But now imagine you, all you want to do is clean the outside of that thing? No. No. If I clean the inside of that thing after it's gotten crusty, and you can picture it, it's going to take some work. But by the time I'm done cleaning the inside of it, guess what? The outside will be clean, too, won't it? Because the amount of water and and and detergent and all this, if you clean the… This is what Jesus is saying. He's saying, if you have a good and beautiful heart, you'll have a good and beautiful life. He's saying, if we work on cleaning out your heart, your whole life will be cleaned out. You won't have to chase down these bad pieces of fruit on the extreme parts of your tree. No, they'll just be gone. Why? Because the only thing that will be growing on your tree is the good and beautiful realities that are inside of you. Says you you you Pharisees, you hypocrites, you have these tombstones, but inside you're full of dead man's bones. In other words, don't be worried about how other people perceive you on the outside of your body. On the inside have the spirit of revival and resurrection, not dead and unclean things.

This is why I love this verse. "...having a form of godliness but denying its power." That's religion. Form with no power, a mask without any heart. And this is how we live. We live so much like this. And this is what the Sermon on the Mount confronts. It's like, it's great you're not having an affair, but your heart is full of lust. And it's great that you're not killing people, but man, you're angry all the time. And yeah, you haven't gotten divorced, but let's be honest,

you stopped loving your spouse a long time ago. And yeah, you may not lie to people, but boy, you use your words to manipulate. And sure, you may love your friends and your family, but you have so much bitterness inside of you. It is stealing, killing, and destroying. And yeah, you do all kinds of holy activities, but boy, you want everyone to see them. And yeah, you give and you even tithe, but in your heart, you still love money. And sure, you you don't have anxiety presenting to others, but in here, you know, you don't worship, you worry. And yeah, you don't gossip about people to others. But we all know that you judge them from the heart. We've got to take off this mask and be honest and let Jesus address the heart because when the heart changes, everything else follows.

This is why it says, "May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and (holy)." So where does holiness come from? Only the heart. Holiness does not come from your actions or your behaviors. Holiness comes from the grace of Jesus changing your heart. And holiness, not what we can't do, the good and beautiful life we're now empowered to do naturally and effortlessly flows out of our life. Radical holiness comes from radical hearts. We think radical hol, oh, they're just religious and they, you know, they're like curmudgeons and they don't they just they're real tight with their kids and all. Nah, nonsense to all that. Radical holiness comes from a heart that's actually radically alive. Radically good and beautiful in here. So radical good and beauty comes out here. And they don't have to try. Jesus didn't wake up every day and think, "Be nice to people. Be nice to people. Don't look at her. Don't take the money from Judas' bag." I mean, He's not, He's not thinking that ever. Like, not one time. What would it be like to have the kind of life that you didn't actually have to every day think thoughts on what you should and shouldn't do? That's what Jesus offers in a good and beautiful life. He's basically saying, you don't have to wake up every day and talk yourself out of what you shouldn't be doing. You just get to wake up every day and live in the Spirit with a heart of grace in this interactive relationship with God being free. And it's all about the heart. It's all about the heart.

Let me see if I can try to pull this together for you. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" You read that verse and you're like that. Whoa. Whoa. Yes. This is your heart without Jesus. This is your heart before Jesus. It's wicked. It's deceitful. It's beyond cure. And no one can understand it except Jesus. And when you submit your heart to Jesus and enter into His kingdom, here's what happens. He sprinkles clean water on you and you will be clean. "I will cleanse you from all impurities and from all your idols. And I will give you a new (heart) and put a new Spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and I will, I will move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep all My laws."

In other words, when you put your faith in Jesus, He removes your dead heart of stone that could only do broken and unhealthy things because it was broken and unhealthy. And He gives you a heart of flesh, a heart that is good, a heart that is beautiful, a heart that is alive, a heart that now has a desire to walk with God and live in the kingdom. A kingdom heart that

wants to do kingdom things. When you come to Jesus, you get included in Christ and everything that's true of Him is now true of you. As He is, so you are. Consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. You're a new creation. The old is gone. The new has come. You're now the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. His divine power has given you everything you need for life and godliness. And you are now partakers of the divine nature. That's who you are.

In Jesus, you already have a good and beautiful heart. I want to say that again. In Jesus, you already have a good and beautiful heart. What is salvation? Salvation is not going to some random place in the universe when you die. Salvation is God removing from you your heart of stone and giving you a heart of life in the here and now. And if that doesn't change you, what's the point of salvation?

You have a new heart. And the heart within you, the Spirit within you wants to obey more than the flesh that's against you wants to disobey. The new heart within you wants to walk with God more than your old self wants to live in the world. And this is where we have to renew our mind. And this is where it is so hard because in our digital age, if you go on digital stuff, you will see lots of preaching online. And I would call it sin-focused preaching. It's a lot of preaching that has emotion and angst and anger with it. And it's very condemning and shaming and guilt inducing. You're a sinner and you're not worthy and you're not enough and you can't and you need to try hard and you need to behave and all the things. And there's something about that when we hear it that our flesh loves. Our flesh loves it. We we, I I hear people say things like, "Oh man, it's, they just say it like it is." Yeah. Everybody needs to hear that. And and if you step back and think about it for a second, you're like, that's preaching to the flesh. And the reason your flesh loves it is because your flesh knows it's not good enough. And your flesh knows it can't do enough. And your flesh knows it's not measuring up. And your flesh loves to see other people's flesh rebuked. So yeah, say it like it is so they can hear it. The only problem is is, that requires no faith. And without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Listen to me. Doesn't it take more faith to believe you're a beloved son or daughter than a worthless sinner? And doesn't it take more faith to believe you're the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, even when you're failing? And doesn't it take more faith to believe that you have a good and beautiful heart, even when you're struggling with unhealthy and broken things? Listen to me. You're either included in Christ or you're under the curse of Adam. You're either a new creation or you're not. You're either the righteousness of God in Christ or you're a sinner. But you can't be both of those things. And what happens is we get included in Christ. We get this new heart, this new reality. And now we learn, we learn to live according to who we now are, by taking off the old self and renewing our mind with the new reality that we have in Christ and awakening to this life that we now have in Him. Yes, you've been conformed by this world. Yes, you're in an unhealthy and broken world. Yes, you have years of conditioning of how to behave and react and respond. But when you start becoming aware of the good and beautiful Jesus who has given you a new and beautiful heart and brought you into a new and

beautiful kingdom, I now no longer have to deal with those things or address those things or focus on those things. I focus on Him, and believe by faith that the Spirit in me has given me a desire to walk with Him that's greater than my flesh wants me to live like the world.

You have to renew your mind. You have to think differently about this stuff. Don't get caught up in flesh preaching, flesh thinking, flesh living. No. Is this true according to the new reality that we have in Christ? If it's not, don't get all caught up in it. Don't get all caught up in it because it's tearing you down. It's bringing you down. We don't change by trying harder. We change by looking at Jesus and renewing our mind and coming into agreement with what He says is already true. So if I already have a good and beautiful heart, then I need to focus on that reality and say, "Then Jesus, every part that's unhealthy and broken, that's still in my treeline, that's still in my branches, I ask you to start removing it cuz I've tried and it hadn't worked. And the more I focus on not being angry, the angrier I seem to become. So I'm going to focus on You and Your kingdom and let You make my tree good, believing that You will make my fruit good."

This is why it says, "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more."

He has forgiven your wickedness, remembers your sins no more. You now get to know Him. And as part of knowing Him, He has literally inscribed His laws into your heart and your mind, His ways. See, again, I think it's so… ahh! You have to understand the why behind the church you're a part of, or the preaching you listen to, or these things, because otherwise it doesn't make sense. You don't get it all. My why is I believe the Spirit in you has given you a desire to walk with Jesus. If you don't have that desire, you have to question, do I have His Spirit? Because He literally says, "I've written my ways upon your heart." Doesn't mean you do it every day. It doesn't mean you're per, I'm not I'm not saying anything like that. I'm saying I believe that in Christ the Spirit in you is stronger than the flesh that's against you. I believe that your new nature, your new creation, the old is gone, the new has come. I believe that that is stronger than all the things of the world that want to tear you down. So we preach to that and try to lift your head up so that you can see it, because you don't need your faith in the power of sin to grow. You need your faith in the power of God's grace to grow. That's what changes you. So if every week, you can't, I mean, man I could flip this thing on a script and send it and you would hate it but your flesh would love it. If every week you came in and I tried to tell you how bad you were. I, you want, I'll let, I… some days when I'm discouraged by sometimes how it's going, I have these little thoughts during the week and I think maybe this week I'll just do it and 10 minutes in and see if we all catch, like hey, this isn't, I, we don't like this. But I don't want to deal with the aftermath of that.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died…" Huh? "...you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." If your life is hidden in Christ, then He is your roots. Therefore, He can bear your fruit. This is why it says in John 15, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit…" That's not just a verse for like quiet time or secret place or like, yeah, you should like spend time with Jesus and then you're married. Sure. This is literally the Sermon on… This is what He's talking about. He's saying, "I am the good tree and when you remain in Me you will bear My fruit." You're not going to, you don't bear your good fruit. You bear His fruit. You will bear much fruit. Not your best works. Not your best efforts, not your greatest significance, not your talents, unrefined and in their purest form. No, you bear, you bear His fruit. You bear His fruit, which means your life becomes good and beautiful because He is a good and beautiful God. So you start to naturally and effortlessly do the things that Jesus did. You don't wake up in the morning and say, "I'm a pear tree. Don't grow an orange. Don't grow an orange. Don't grow an orange." You wake up in the morning and say, "Good morning, good and beautiful God. Thank You for this good and beautiful kingdom and this good and beautiful heart that You've given to me. Help me guard it today. And anything that's in here that's not of You, help me see it so we can get it out of here. And anything that is of You that's in my my life path today, oh, help me bring it in as a watchman would. Because You matter, and You matter to me, and and this is the life I not only, I I I don't have to live, I get to live. And this is heaven on earth today, right now in this reality.

Which is why He says, "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." If you can catch this last thing with me, it's simply this. The kingdom of heaven is like yeast. It's an active ingredient. And when He gives you a new, good, and beautiful heart, the kingdom of heaven is in your heart. And it starts to work through your heart and then it starts to work through your mind. Then it starts to work through your eyes, then it starts to work through your ears, then it starts to work through your mouth. Then it starts to work through your hands. Then it starts to work through your feet. Then it starts to work through all of your life until one day you wake up and your life is fully immersed and included and representative of the kingdom of heaven. It is a picture of the character and the power and the nature and the reality and the anointing of Jesus Himself because He is the King of the kingdom of heaven. He is the vine and you are the branches. And when you just remain in Him, His life starts to flow through you. This is why the Sermon on the Mount is not a try hard or behave better speech. This is why He ends it by saying, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good. But if a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad."

And so at some point in time, you have to get to this place where you're willing to pray a prayer that just says, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. And see if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Like, God, help me. Search me. I open myself to You. Know me. Anything that's in here that's not of You, I don't want it. I don't want a thought. I can't afford a thought about God that isn't

true. I can't afford a thought about myself that isn't true. I can't afford a thought about my life that isn't true. I can't allow bitterness or lust or anger or greed or worry or judgement or people-pleasing. I can't allow even a, even a flake of that in my heart because it's a contagion and it steals, kills, and destroys. So, search me, God. Know my heart.

Some of you just need to like this week, search me, God, and remind me of what Jesus' heart looks like, because that's the heart You've given me. And some of us need to say, "Search me, God, and expose the places of hypocrisy where I'm an actor, a player, and help me put down the mask." Ah, for some of you, the freedom this week, tell your wife, "Put the mask down." Tell your boss, "Put the mask down." Tell your Circle or your friends or your parents, "Put the mask down." You say, "Yeah, but but I might lose my job and I might lose my… Yeah, you… Yeah, you might. But just so you know, you you don't, you don't even have it now. If you're in a marriage that is only held together because a secret hasn't been released, you don't have a marriage now. So yes, you might lose it in sharing it, but you've already lost it. In sharing it, you might actually get it. Yes, you might lose your job, but you already don't have a job because you don't have a purpose or a calling because you're living in darkness. So you you're not able to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. So yeah, you might lose your job, but you might actually get your purpose back. Catching what I'm saying? Yeah, your parents might take away your car or your phone, but you already don't have a healthy relationship with your parents because you're living in a secret. So So yeah, you may lose some things, but you may get back the thing that Jesus promises will give you a long life, that it may go well with you honoring your parents. These are the kinds of things we're thinking about.

And we only will do them. We only will do them if we believe He is a good and beautiful God. And if we believe that His kingdom is a good and beautiful kingdom and that the narrow road and the small gate actually leads to life. See, this whole thing is not about trying to get you to do anything from Jesus or me. It's just trying to help you think and think differently and come to conclusions of grace and truth in Jesus' name. May your heart be free. May your heart be alive. May you stop focusing on the fruit of your life. And may you come to grips with this invitation to have a good and beautiful heart that will naturally and effortlessly create a good and beautiful life in Jesus' name.

So close your eyes with me. Come on. What's the Holy Spirit want to say to you tonight? Spirit of God is in this room. He's moving. He's speaking. He's loving. What's He saying?

It is not a voice that's condemning. It is not a voice that's fear inducing. It is a love that can be trusted. I really do believe that some of you, this is your week to take off the mask. Ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to do that. I think for some of you, this is the week to renew your mind about all these things we've been talking about. That Jesus isn't trying to make you religious, but that He's trying to heal and free your heart. For some of us, maybe have walked with God a long time. Maybe we've lost sight of the grace of God, and this this profound sense of 'I'm included in Christ' and all that what it means and I've gotten lost in the things of

the flesh. Maybe this is a renewal of your mind moment to be reminded that what you have in Jesus is so much greater than what you lost in Adam.

So Jesus, would you make our tree good that we may naturally and effortlessly produce good fruit, Your fruit? Jesus, would You renew our mind and help us think differently about all things in this good and beautiful concept? Jesus, would You offer and would You give people the grace and the courage to accept this good and beautiful heart that You freely give, that naturally and effortlessly produces the good and beautiful life? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.