

Hello Indian Creek!

If we haven't had the chance to meet before my name is David Brush and it is my pleasure to serve this campus as spiritual formation director.

Our campus pastor, Ben Stears, has spent the last week in Alaska teaching at a family camp and enjoying some time of relaxation. He will be back with us next week to wrap up our All In series!

I truly hope that during this series you have found yourself challenged to take the next step in your spiritual growth.

It does not matter whether you have been a follower of Jesus Christ for as long as you can remember, or if you have just recently begun that journey, we all have an opportunity ahead of us to take the next step in our faith.

Even if you are here today and you aren't sure about this whole Jesus thing, or at least the whole church thing I hope and pray that today is the day you find God's forgiveness and presence in a deep and real way.

In preparing for today's sermon I had the opportunity to look back and reflect upon those times in my life in which I have gone 'all in' with God.

When it comes to submitting to God there is always that first step that we take; but it is never our only step, nor will it be our last step.

Throughout my life God has continually called me to go deeper, and to run longer; rather than a destination each 'all in' commitment was a doorway that led to the next chapter of God's work in my life.

One of those first all-in moments occurred one evening when I was just a small child, I felt the pull of God on my heart and in that moment I turned toward him and gave my life to him. It is something I remember clearly to this day.

At the age of 18 I again had the call to go all-in with God. As I entered college I was unsure of what was next in my life, but the summer ahead of my freshman year God asked me to give him my life in service.

Again, in 2007 I had the call from God to pursue him at an even more committed level. It was from that experience that I began the road towards attending seminary, and into the current chapter of my life.

Today I stand before you knowing that sooner than later there will be yet another 'all in' moment for me in the days, weeks, or years ahead. I am not sure what that looks like yet, or how it will play out, but I know that if I want to continue following Jesus Christ I must always be prepared to take that next step into the unknown.

From a child, to a college student, and into adulthood my life as a disciple of Jesus has been a continuing journey of growth.

To be a follower of Christ is to always be on the move.

We seek to follow our Lord and savior as he moves, and as he guides and shepherds us. As we follow our Lord, and as we spend time at his feet, we are seeking to become more and more like him.

It's not a whole lot different for us today then it was for the apostles of Jesus. They were often on the move, unsure of what the next step would bring; however they new this. They wanted nothing more than to be with the one who had called them out from their past lives. Jesus was everything to them.

Friends, what if we followed Jesus with the same passion, and wonder today that the first twelve did so long ago? What would it mean to go all in, for the all in all?

There are so many things that have priority in our life. Our families, our friends, our careers, or maybe our hobbies, or even ourselves. Our attention and dedication is spread out over so many different areas of life what does it mean that we would call God our 'All in All'?

If you have brought a Bible with you, or you have one on your phone we are going to start by looking at a few verses in 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

If you don't have a Bible and would like one Mary has a few to hand out, so please just raise your hand. If you do not have a bible of your own you are welcome to keep the Bible as our gift to you today.

1 Corinthians was written to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a city at a crossroads of trade for the Roman Empire, and it had quite a wild reputation. It was

the Las Vegas or Reno of the Roman world. *What happened in Corinth stayed in Corinth.*

It was in this city of notoriety that Paul had visited on his missionary journeys and a local church was established.

You can imagine, being in this crossroads setting that the church in Corinth would have been made up of people from a variety of ethnic, and religious backgrounds; and with this diversity of backgrounds, opinions, and world views their eventually came conflict. It was this conflict that Paul is addressing in his letter to them.

In chapter 15 of 1 Corinthians Paul is discussing the nature of who Jesus is in light of what Jesus has done for us through his life, death, and resurrection.

As Christians we firmly believe that Jesus Christ didn't just come to live here on earth as one of us and then to be crucified. We also believe that Jesus then rose from the dead as the victor over sin, death and Satan.

We also believe that Jesus Christ will return to this earth again to finally set right all things and to establish his everlasting kingdom.

Some of the people who were part of the church in Corinth were arguing over whether or not those who had died already were going to be resurrected once Jesus Christ returns. Paul seeks to assure the young Corinthian church that indeed those who have died before Christ's return will be raised to take part in the celebration of God's fulfilled kingdom at the end. And the way he explains this is by showing that God is the final authority, even over death.

If we think back to the middle ages we know that a kingdom is ruled by a king or a queen and that everything within the kingdom falls under the authority of the King. If you are a citizen of the kingdom then you are to be submitted to your king.

With that concept of authority in mind listen as Paul writes to the Corinthians: beginning in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 25, and here is talking about Jesus.

25 It is necessary for him (Jesus Christ) to rule until he puts all enemies under his feet. 26 Death is the last enemy to be brought to an end, 27 since he has brought everything under control under his feet. When it says that everything has been brought under his control, this clearly means everything except for the one who placed everything under his control. 28 But when all things have been

brought under his control, then the Son himself will also be under the control of the one who gave him control over everything so that God may be all in all.

What Paul is stating is that all of creation has been given to Jesus Christ to bring under his authority as the son of God, and that once all of creation has been brought under his control it will be likewise submitted to God so that all of creation is brought into God's heavenly kingdom.

In the church we often refer to Jesus as Jesus Christ. Christ isn't a last name; rather it's a title that means King. To call Jesus the Christ is to proclaim him as King of all.

So, just as a citizen submits to the king, so we, as followers of Christ, submit to our heavenly Father in all things.

God's goal in Jesus isn't just to save our souls; indeed it is the reclaiming of all of creation for God.

When Paul speaks of God as our all in all then it isn't just a remark about one aspect of our life or the other. It means a complete and utter surrender. To make God our All in All is to give up our-entire-selves to God without holding anything back.

In the book of Galatians Paul refers to this surrender as being crucified in Christ. We find our identities no longer in and of ourselves; rather we only live because and for the gift we have been given through Jesus Christ.

As Christians we should living each day with the knowledge that in the end all things will be made new in Jesus and submitted to God's authority. Each day we live is a chance to go all in, for the all-in-all.

So, what keeps us from going all in? I think the problem is that we aren't a whole lot different than the church in Corinth. We are a diverse people, and especially in our culture there are so many different viewpoints about what it means to follow Jesus.

So, what does it mean to become that person that God desires us to be? Or, to ask the same question in a different way, what does it mean to become spiritually mature?

Some people see spiritual maturity as knowledge of the Bible; knowing who's in it, what they did, and what it means.

Others focus more on a particular theology, of knowing the correct answer to the questions of who God is and how he works in the world.

Still others focus on living by a strict moral code by which we set up a fence around the faithful so that we can clearly know who is a true follower and who isn't.

There are others who see spiritual maturity as an internal and personal journey, one that doesn't greatly impact how we actually live out our daily lives.

And lastly there are those who would say beliefs aren't all that important, God just judges our motivations, or our actions; so we should be trying to do the most good we can.

The reason each of these distinct beliefs on spiritual maturity exist is due in part to the fact that in each version there is some grain of truth.

Certainly God wants us to study the Bible, to know him and his ways better, to live lives of integrity, and to see the internal change that he has brought about in us become evident in how we live.

All of those things point to a spiritually maturing person. But if we are honest the idea that all of those things should be actually required of us scares us a little bit.

It is far easier to take the path of least resistance, and to find a definition of maturity that agrees with the way we already think. We want to follow a Jesus that is easy to picture, to get our mind around.

If we are big on social justice issues we will latch onto how we as Christians care for the poor, and the abused.

If we are concerned about social morality issues we will focus on issues of public behavior, civil governance, and rule making. The examples could go on and on.

However if we focus on one area to the detriment of another we only ever end up with a small, human-sized, view of what God's plans and purposes are for the world.

The obstacles we often face in becoming more spiritually mature are not the number of chapters of the Bible we have read, or the hours we have spent in prayer.

It is not determined by the number of times we have served on Sunday.

It's not determined by the political causes we are concerned with.

The main obstacle we face in maturing spiritually, in becoming more like Christ, isn't how much we do or don't do. If we are really honest here, the obstacle is that rather than striving to look more and more like Jesus we instead want Jesus to look more like us.

I've got a series of pictures here of Jesus that I think illustrates this point well.

Perhaps when most of us think of what Jesus looked like we think of someone who looks like this picture... **(show the White Jesus Picture)**

This Jesus Looks like a lot of us, right? White Jesus. Long flowing hair that always looks washed. A rugged man that can take charge.

And yet, when you travel to Ethiopia you might find a Jesus that looks like this...

(show the Ethiopian Jesus Picture)

In the African country of Ghana you can find pictures of Jesus that look like this one...

(show the Ghana Jesus Picture)

Next we have Russian Jesus, which to be honest scares me just a little bit...

(Show the Russian Jesus Picture)

If you traveled to China in the 1800's you might have seen this picture of the nativity...

(show the Chinese Jesus Picture)

Here is a mosaic reflecting a Korean imagining of Jesus and Mary...

(show the Korean Jesus Picture)

Just a few years ago some forensic anthropologists did a study on what Jesus most likely could have looked like given his ethnic background and the appearance

of the population at the time and they found it's far more likely that he would have looked more like this.

(Show the Ethnic Jesus Picture)

I realize that for many of us seeing this face as a likely image of our Lord and savior is a bit of a cultural shock for us.

Our core tendency as humans is to make Jesus our own, to personalize him in such a way that he fits easily into our lives when and where we need him.

We want Jesus to be the kind of God that looks like us, so that we can serve him easily. We want the Jesus that already agrees with us, that thinks like us, and that acts like us. We want a little Pocket sized Jesus that we can tote around with us for when we need him, and the rest of the time he be safely put away until the next fight, the next crisis, or the next time we make a mess of our lives.

If we are going to grow in our faith and become more like Jesus, if we are truly going to serve the All in All then we need to set aside the Jesus we have made in our own image and instead begin to focus on Jesus for who he really is, the one and true King.

Our American culture is such a compartmentalized one, to claim that Jesus is indeed Lord of All is a radical statement for us to make as his followers.

We live our lives within the contexts of home, work, public, events for our kids; there any number of places in which we move to and from in our day to day lives. And within each of those realms of life we are pressured to fit the mold for the place we are in.

At church we fit a church mold, at work we fit into the work mold, when we are at home we fit yet another mold. Even more so, we are not just encouraged to act like different people from one place to the next, but to actually be different people depending on where we are at and what we are doing.

The effects of all this compartmentalization in our lives is that we find it easier to section off areas of our identity. Often public figures like celebrities and politicians speak of their 'private' or 'personal' beliefs, as if what they think on the inside has no real bearing on what they do on the outside.

And to be honest we have all done that too. How many of us are truly the same person in all situations? What does it matter if we live as one person around our coworkers and another person around our families, or as yet another around our brothers and sisters in Christ?

So many of us live in worlds where whole parts of our lives are separated off from others.

At the core it is a defense mechanism. We use it to justify our actions in one area of our life that might seem completely incompatible in another area.

So what is the result when Jesus is Lord of only one or two parts, but not all of them? What happens when we live in this compartmentalized way?

As we compartmentalize our life it becomes easier to hide off those areas we don't want others to see.

Above all what we want to hide, to leave undercover is our weaknesses, our hidden sins, those things which keep us awake in worry should others find out about it.

What we are attempting to deal with as we compartmentalize our lives is the feelings of shame that come when we have sinned, or when we have believed the lies of our enemy.

I want us to look at a story from the gospel of John that illustrates two ways of living; one in which we go all-in, and another in which we attempt to shut out our shame, and to live a compartmentalized life.

Let's turn to John, Chapter 12, verse 1.

Jesus and his disciples have arrived in Bethany at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Lazarus had been brought back to life only days before in a miracle performed by Jesus. I imagine that in many ways this was a celebration feast, a joyous occasion. Let's read in verse 1.

1 Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. 2 A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him. 3 Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from

essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance. 4 But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, 5 "That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor." 6 Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself.

Amidst this dinner of joy Mary enters the room with the men, something not usually done, and in a beautiful foreshadowing of Jesus' washing of the disciples feet, and his sacrificial death, she anoints Jesus with a costly perfume and drying his feet with her hair.

Within two days of this dinner Jesus will enter Jerusalem to shouts of praise. In six days he will be gathered in the upper-room with his disciples for their last passover meal together. That same night he will be betrayed by Judas and turned over to the high-priests and Romans for judgment, and the very next day hung on a cross and executed.

I want us to keep that timeline in mind here as we focus on the two individuals Mary and Judas. Within this story Mary and Judas are set up to contrast each other.

For those of us over 30 we might remember the Tom and Jerry cartoons, where their inner struggles with morals would often be illustrated with a devil version of themselves on one shoulder and an angel version on the other.

On one side we have Mary, who has sacrificed her precious possession for her Lord; and on the other we have Judas who is so preoccupied with money that he can't see Mary's sacrificial gift as beautiful.

But wait, you might say, of course Judas would act like that! He's a scoundrel! But let's take a deeper look here at Judas' motivations and hopefully shed some light on what it means to live a compartmentalized life.

While Judas Iscariot plays prominently in the story of Jesus's crucifixion we do not know a whole lot about who he was. Of the twelve apostles called by Jesus, most scholars believe he is the only one that was not a Galilean. Judas was most likely from the town of Kerioth, which is in the southern part of Israel.

Judas appears by name in the four Gospels and in the book of Acts. And in all of these he is always connected with his act of betrayal. It is important though to

remember that even though he is introduced as the one who would betray Jesus, that is not a statement about his legitimacy as a chosen Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Just because Judas is remembered primarily for his evil act of betrayal that does not completely define who he was during his time with Jesus or his motivations for accepting Jesus' call to be his disciple.

In this passage and others about Judas we read that he had a weakness for money. He embezzled money from the disciples' common pocket book. So, certainly Judas was a thief; but we can look to the other disciples as well and find they were not perfect.

Peter would soon deny his relationship with Jesus Christ.

John and James sought to be glorified at the right and left hands of Jesus in what they thought would be his earthly kingdom.

On a number of occasions Jesus rebuked his disciples as they sought to limit access to him by the sick and the young.

We need to remember that at their core all of the disciples were human, no different than you and me, even Judas.

We also need to remember that Jesus was the one who called the twelve to himself, and Judas was one of them. We may find it hard to believe but Judas was probably not wholly different than many of us.

When Jesus was calling to him the twelve I do not think he looked upon Judas and said, "Hey, you look like a shady guy that would be willing to sell me up the river! Have I got a job for you!"

No, I am sorry if it offends our sensibilities here; but I don't think that Judas was all that different from you and from me. Certainly when Jesus called him to follow it was an 'all in' moment for Judas.

Judas had a knack for money. He was trusted enough by the apostles and by Jesus to be their treasurer. The problem is that Judas also had a weakness for wealth and the finer things in life. Wealth can often become a temptation for those who know it's value.

When Mary pours the perfume on Jesus, Judas is thinking that this lady has just wasted \$35,000 dollars! I can hear him saying, "Jesus, don't you know what I... I mean WE could have done with all of that money Jesus!"

The struggle Judas presents you and I with is not that he was a wholly evil character. Despite our mental images, I don't think Judas ran around with a black cloak and twirled his mustache while laughing like a villain.

No, Judas looks like the white collar worker who finds himself alone with the books and an easy way to make a few quick-bucks by shifting a few line items around.

I really think the core problem with Judas, is that if it was 2,000 years ago one of us could have been him!

The problem Judas got himself into was, that while he took some steps towards Jesus, he never truly made God his All in All. Just like we do today he separated off part of himself from the whole disciple thing.

Despite his treachery, there was the Judas who loved Jesus, who spent hours listening at his feet, who longed for the day when Jesus would be made King of all; and yet he had held back a portion of his shame. He never revealed his inner weaknesses when it came to finance, and sought out healing and forgiveness.

The reason it is so important as followers of Jesus to go 'all in' with the 'All in All' is that when we hold some portion back, when we hide our shame and forgo forgiveness, it leaves open a door for Satan to take root, and if we are not repentant, for him to take over as the lord of our life.

Judas fell to the temptations to steal, and through these smaller acts of sin he was not strong enough to run away when Satan came calling. He was so scared of what would happen if everyone knew that he was a thief, that he loved money more than he loved people, that in the end he had no ability say no to Satan's plans to kill Jesus. Because Judas lived a fragmented life he had unwittingly cultivated fertile ground for Satan to plant his seed and destroy him.

What I hope today friends is that we come face to face with this simple fact. To hold anything back from God is to leave wide open the opportunity for temptation and to be drug down into sin, and death.

God has made each and every one of us to be in his own image. That is that God longs for the day when each of us would fully become who he wanted us to be before sin corrupted our lives.

But what about Mary, the other person in our story? What can we learn about living a whole and integrated life from her?

What we know about Mary is that she was sister to Martha and Lazarus. We also have other accounts of her being 'at Jesus' feet'. Mary was a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ; not one of the twelve, but a follower of his to her core.

Mary was once admonished by her sister Martha for spending too much time listening to Jesus when she was preparing a meal for Jesus and the twelve; however Jesus chastises Martha, and not Mary.

Mary wanted to learn all she could from this man she knew as her teacher.

Through the pouring out of the perfume; and the letting down of her hair to wipe his feet (which was a symbol of submission) what Jesus sees is not a waste of a valuable resource, or a woman acting out of her place. What he sees is a human child surrendering all she is to her King. Through this act of anointing Mary has proclaimed for the whole world to see that God is all in all to her, and that Jesus is the King.

Judas held back, he compartmentalized, he made Jesus a small Jesus; but Mary went all in.

You see, true spiritual maturity can only occur once we realize that there are no divisions to our existence, there is only one whole reality and it is the reality that Jesus Christ is the rightful Lord of all.

When we segment our lives, when we hide back our shame and guilt. In hiding away parts of ourselves we are not following Jesus, we are still only following ourselves.

God's design is that Jesus would be Lord of all, King of the all creation, healer of all of our lives. If we are not submitted in all things to God, then we are missing out on the fullness of God's forgiveness and the fullness of God's blessing in our lives.

I am not sure where you are at in your life today, in your walk with Jesus, but I do know that there is more than enough room today at the feet of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Your perfume, your gift, your all, is welcome here today.

We have before us the elements of communion. The remembrance of Jesus' covenant with his disciples in that upper room 2,000 years ago, and it is just as fresh today as it was the night the wine was poured and the bread was broken. And in just a moment you can come forward if you like and receive those elements.

We also have prayer partners ready and willing to pray with you today. We have paper, and pens available down here for you as well to write out your prayers today and pin them to the crosses.

Judas was a follower of Jesus Christ, and yet he was still tempted to great evil because he held back from going all in. Mary was a follower of Jesus Christ and gave him all that she had; and in that process of surrender found in her Lord all she ever needed. That is my prayer for you, and for me today my friends, that we would find all we need at the feet of our Lord and go all in, for the all in all.