

## STEP THIS WAY - ENCOUNTER SERIES

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Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you this morning on this beautiful time of the year. Thank you so much for being here. Today we are continuing our study of 'Encounter,' the tabernacle of Moses, the tabernacle in the wilderness. And as we continue to look at this we are now drawing to the apex of the series, but also to the intimacy of the encounter that was possible because of the tabernacle and all that it represented.

You know people are famous for erecting barriers. You know we just do that. What do people do when they move into a new neighborhood? What does everybody do once they move into their new house? They build fences, don't they? We may call them polite, just making sure they know where their property line is, and those kinds of things, but there is something about having a fence that kind of makes a statement, and that kind of provides a little bit of barrier, or protection.

We like fences around our yards. We like security systems guarding our homes. And sadly we have taken that to a lot of other levels in culture, in countries and so forth. We have created barriers of race and socioeconomic status. We have barriers of education, national origins, political affiliations and even where you were born in what part of the country. We have barriers with denominations and even with dietary preferences.

It seems like everywhere we go we want to wear tee shirts and have bumper stickers and buttons that declare our differences between each other, these things that make us separate. Sometimes in our own thinking we think it makes us better than those on the other sides of the barrier. And often barriers can be signs of broken relationships.

I read recently where a couple of neighbors who were fussing and feuding over something had started off with a erecting a regular picket fence. Next it went to a high boarded fence. And then there was even barbed wire added. It kept getting taller and taller until it was ridiculously out of control so that the homeowners association had to step in and tell them to '*Cut it out.*' But they were making a statement by erecting a fence that was to be a barrier, that said, '*We are not friends. We are not getting along.*'

I remember counselling a young couple many years ago and the guy said this to me, '*I always know when I am in trouble, when I come in at night and get ready to get in bed, and there is a pillow right down the middle of the bed. That is how I know it has not been a good day.*' What do we like to do? We like to create barriers. And barriers often say the relationship is under stress, or it is broken.

Thus in a world where at one time there were no barriers, no gates, no walls, no curtains, sin destroyed that harmony. And it left in its wake these lines of demarcation that we now see today - barriers between death and life, and right and wrong, and good

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and evil, and darkness and light, and wickedness and holiness. And yes, between God and man.

In the tabernacle, as we have studied it, we saw the walls of the tabernacle complex made up of four types of skins and fabrics. We walked through the courtyard to the tabernacle proper that was again composed of heavy sheets of fabric. And then you enter into that and there was yet another barrier. And it was called 'The Veil.' And before we can go into the last chamber of the tabernacle complex, I want us to stop today and contemplate 'The Veil.'



It was that barrier that separated Israel from God. It was a reminder to all who knew of its existence that Israel was in a fallen condition, and by proxy, all of mankind. It was a separation from the Holy God who would not, and could not be polluted by the profanity of man's rebellion and wickedness. It was that part of the tabernacle that separated the presence of God from the stench of sin. It was the wall that screamed to Israel as a nation, and to all who are human, you must be reconciled. You must be redeemed. You must be restored.

And so in your mind's eye today, as we have walked through the tabernacle step by step, I would like to call all of us to pause for this moment, this hour, pause before the veil, and recognize what it represented. What was on this side, and what was on that

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side? Who must stay on this side and who could go into that side? And who resided on the other side of the veil?

Today it is still sin that separates us, it tears apart marriages, it destroys nations, it divides friendships, it strains partnerships, it causes war and divorce and fistfights and feuds. It causes people to do crazy, evil, wicked things like construct bombs and mail them, and even walk into synagogues with guns. It is that thing which separates us from all that is right in the universe, all that is good, all that is holy, all that was in the mind of God when He created us.

It is that veil that reminds us that we are fallen, that we are broken, that every single one of us are capable of noxious sins that have offended a holy and righteous God. And we really don't like to talk about that in our culture today, do we? Because we like to think, *'I'm okay and you're okay, right? I feel good about myself. I'm not broken. Maybe it is you, but it is not me.'*

We are told to *'Believe in yourself and follow your dreams.'* We are all told this, and unless we get a good glimpse of the separation that sin causes between us and He who created us we will walk in a state of non-belief, and interminable separation, and we need to pause at the veil and remember the consequences of our sin.

And I think that is why we need to stop today and think about the veil. I was very tempted to jump into the Holy of Holies because there is a lot of cool stuff in there, and it is the culmination of the whole tabernacle. I am already ready to preach on that next week, and if you give me an extra hour I will go ahead and preach next week's sermon today, and then we could take next Sunday off. Is that okay with you, because I am ready to go? But no, we really need to step this way and learn about the veil.

Before we can do that I think it is important that we understand the reason for the need of salvation. And what Christ Himself has done to the veil. In the tabernacle complex, there were three barriers and I think it is really important that we not forget this. There was the outer curtain wall that was separating the outer courtyard from the inner Holy Place. Then there were the curtains around the tabernacle, and finally you have the veil inside the Holy Place to separate the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

The outer curtain represented a separation from the secular and the sacred. And this is important. By the way the principle of separation of church and state that we talk about in our country is as all old as the Old Testament. And God always designed it as such. You need to understand that even the king could not go into the temple. The king was not allowed to go into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. He was not allowed there. There was this separation, and God wanted man to make sure they understood that He was unique, He was special, He was the ultimate authority and even kings bow before Him.

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It is interesting that the priest could go visit the king in the palace, but the king could not go visit the priest in the temple. There was that distinct separation there. God wanted to make sure of it. The king may have temporary secular authority, but God was the most high. He is the 'I am.' He is the God of the universe. He is the creator of all. And they will bow, and they will respect, and they will acknowledge His authority.

So when God placed this wall around the tabernacle it was just one more reminder that all in the world is not under the power of the king. It was a reminder that there is a division between that which we see as secular man and secular government and secular authority and secular economy and that which will last forever. Those things are temporary and that which is of God is eternal. So there was that barrier there.

Next there was the inner curtain that separated the priests from the people. The people could come and be in the courtyard. They could bring their sacrifices but they would stand outside at the Altar of Sacrifice with their family and their little lamb. And as the lamb's blood was shed, the father would place his hand on the head of the lamb so that the sacrifice would be symbolic of the transference of the sins of his family and himself. And as the blood was collected and placed on the horns of the Altar, and as the meat was burned and sacrificed, the priest would then leave and cleanse himself at the Bronze Layer. And the people could observe that but there was that separation between the Israelites and the priests about what was going to go on inside.

When the priest was finished there, he would go inside to perform his priestly duties for the people, but the people stayed outside. There was a barrier. There was a process that God had set up and it was incremental. Once the priest cleansed himself outside he would go into the Holy Place where the three items of furniture that we have discussed over the last three weeks were - the Golden Lampstand, the Table of Shewbread and the Altar of Incense. And the priest could interact with those three pieces of furniture. There was much symbolism that was there as they went about their priestly duties. But we need to understand that no common priest could go beyond the veil. That was reserved.

We will talk about this at length next week, but there was only one priest allowed to go into the Holy of Holies, and that was the High Priest. There was only one who was chosen by God. There was only one in that role, and he had to be so very, very careful. And only one time per year on one day of the year could the High Priest dare walk behind that veil and approach the very presence of God, begging for the forgiveness of the sins of the priests and of the people.

So even in the Holy of Holies there was separation. There was this division that separated man from God. It was that veil that reminded us that at this time our sin was so egregious, the cost of it was so high, the penalty was so severe that man dared not come

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boldly into the presence of God because he had no right. And so as we look at the veil this morning, I want you to look at it from a New Testament perspective as well. As we look at that veil, I want you to understand that today where we live, where we are, the veil is no more. The veil has been broken. The veil has been torn asunder, ripped apart, thrown open. And today the Holy Spirit of God says to mankind, to every man, woman, boy and girl, to everyone who was created, that the veil has a different message and it is this - '*Step this way.*' Step this way.

Have you ever been to a theatre, or have you ever been to a museum where you are kept outside, and there is a barrier between you and the main attraction? You know you kind of gather out in the vestibule with the rabble. Everyone is out there just kind of mingling around. We know where we want to go; we know we want to be inside. And then finally, finally someone emerges. Maybe it is a tour guide or an usher but it is the person that is going to give us access.

Sometimes they have a little flashlight or sometimes they do it with a dramatic flair, but at the right moment the doors open and the guide steps back and says, '*Step this way.*' I want you to understand this morning that every single person in this room, every single person who is alive today has the privilege, has the opportunity to encounter God at His invitation. He calls us to '*Step this way.*'

Let's look if we could in a couple of passages. The first one is in Exodus Chapter 26. We keep going back to these five chapters in Exodus because they tell us the architectural plan that God put into place. And when we read the passages in Exodus they feel a little technical, maybe even a little cold. It is kind of like reading the instructions from your Ikea chest of drawers, right? You look at them and they kind of make sense, but it sure would help to have a picture. I always have to look at pictures, and that helps me be able to understand what I am supposed to do next.

So when we look at the Exodus passages they feel a little bit like an instruction manual. And then we are going to look at Hebrews and that is where we get to see the finished product. Then we have the explanation. '*Oh, now I get it! This is the full picture. Now I am more fully aware.*' So we are going to be in both passages today.

Exodus Chapter 26 and verses 31 through 33 says this: "***And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubims skilfully worked into it. And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy,***" or what we would call The Holy of Holies.

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Now turn with me, if you will, to Hebrews Chapter 10 and verses 19 through 22. As we look at this passage understand that as we read throughout Hebrews that Hebrews was written to the Jews, so that they could understand some of the symbols that they had been keeping as a culture, and as a nation, and civilization for thousands of years. But now these symbols were fully exposed, fully completed so now the Jews needed to understand what they had represented. And for some it was a bit confusing, because they had been observing these rituals for so many years, but they had never quite gained their significance and their meaning.

Listen as I read Hebrews Chapter 10 and beginning in verse 19. ***“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus.”*** Now hang on, hang on, this was news to the Jews. The writer of Hebrews said, ***“You now have confidence.”*** If we put that in our language today it would be ‘*You can now come boldly into this holy place with every right and privilege.*’ And why can you do that? ‘*Because of the blood of Jesus.*’

Now remember the only time the High Priest could go into the Holy of Holies was to offer the sacrifice, the annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. I will explain that to you in detail next week, and please don’t miss it because it is absolutely fascinating. The imagery is so beautiful of what Christ did for us. Always before the only reason they could go in was because someone went in as their proxy and they brought in a sacrifice that represented their sins. But they were never allowed to even see in there. On this day someone else went in for them and now the writer is saying, ‘*No, no, no. You can now go boldly. You can go into the holiest of places. You can come before the presence of God.*’ And why can we do that? Listen to what he says: ***“By the blood of Jesus.”***

***“By the new and living way that He,”*** look at the next word because it is a key word, ***“opened for us.”*** Jesus Himself said, ‘*Step this way. You are now restored. You are now reconciled. You now can come boldly unto the throne of grace.*’ ***“He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh.”*** He opened for us through the curtain, or through the veil. Next we are going to be talking about priests, not just a priest, but the great high priest over the house of God. Who is that by the way? That is Jesus Christ.

***“And since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, (absolute confidence) with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”*** Do you remember that the veil separated the stench of sin from the holiness of God, and yet now the writer of Hebrews is telling them that he wants Israel to understand that they can with confidence walk in with all joy, knowing that they have been made pure, and made clean. And they can now approach God themselves, not through a priest, but through Jesus who

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shed His blood and died for them. They now have access to God. So that is that a beautiful picture, that is beautiful imagery.

Now let's pause and just look a little bit at the veil itself. There are a couple of things I want you to note about the veil. The first thing is this - it was the only way into the presence of God. It was the only way for Israel, for this High Priest, for Aaron who was the initial one, to be able to go into the presence of God.

Now remember how God revealed Himself and identified Himself as the God of Israel during this time. There were two things God did. During the daytime it was a column or a pillar of cloud, a supernatural action that God did and it endorsed these people with His presence. At night when they wouldn't be able to see a cloud, it was illuminated by fire. And so this cloud by day and this pillar of fire by night was the reminder to all who would see it that this was a special people, a chosen people. These were God's people, and God Himself was overseeing them, He was watching over them. He was taking care of them and He was guiding them. His authority rested among them, they were His and He was theirs.

And so this was the way that God had identified them. But understand that the only way to get into the absolute presence of God was to go beyond the veil. Now there were three opening in the tabernacle complex. Do you remember them? On the eastern side there was a gate. We talked about that gate and how God always talks about separation. The Israelites had to go through this eastern gate.

And whether we talk about the gates of Jerusalem, or the exit from Eden, or we talk about the gate on the tabernacle, we know that the eastern side was significant because the only way to get into the tabernacle was through the eastern gate. But even when you got into the courtyard of the tabernacle there was only one entrance into the tabernacle proper called the Holy Place. It wasn't an actual door, it was made of fabric, but it was referred to in Scripture as a door.

So you first had a gate, then you had a door, and then in order to get between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies there was no other way to get in but around the veil. There was no emergency exit. The veil was made of one piece, so the High Priest had to go in from one side or the other.

Now I think this is really significant, and I don't want you to miss this, because there is a great lie that spiritual and theological pluralism people want to share today, and it is part of our responsibility as truth seekers and truth tellers to make sure that we are accurate in what we are explaining. And that is this - there is only one way to Heaven. There is only one way to salvation. There is only one way to reconciliation and redemption. And God made it very, very clear from the symbols to the Scripture that there is but one way, and that one way is through the person of Jesus Christ.

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It was Jesus who declared in John Chapter 14 and verse 6, “*I am the way*, (not a way, and not one of the ways), *the truth and the life and no man* (no exceptions, not some men, not a few men, not most men, but no man) *will come to the Father except by me.*”

Now those are very narrow, very declarative, very exclusive terms. We don't like that in our culture. We don't like that in our post-modern age and way of thinking. We want everybody to be right. We want there to be many paths to Heaven. We want all gods to be equal. We want to be able to just 'come as we are,' 'who we are,' 'how we want,' and 'when we want.' And that's not God's plan. And we can believe the lie and face damnation and separation, or we can believe the truth and find redemption and restoration.

And the question today is - do you have courage enough to say the truth and act on the truth? And the truth is this - there is but one God; it is Jehovah. There is but one door; it is Jesus. There is but one plan; it is the plan for our salvation. There was but one sacrifice; it was the sacrifice of Calvary. There was but one resurrection; it was the resurrection of Christ to life and life everlasting that He offers to us.

There is but one plan that God has given us; it is that we as men and women through the reality of our sins and the separation that the veil represents realize this: *'I cannot save myself. I cannot be good enough. I cannot be devout enough. It doesn't matter whether I am baptized or confirmed, whether or not I offer sacrifices to my dead ancestors, or am baptized in their name, or they are baptized in my name. It doesn't matter how many good works I perform, there is no cosmic scale that God has in Heaven.'* And either we follow His plan and find redemption or we ignore His plan and reap upon ourselves the consequences of sin which is damnation.

Now again, we want to live in a culture, in a society where we don't talk in such absolutes. We want everybody to be comfortable. It seems intolerant, it seems narrow. But the Scripture says this very clearly: *“Wide are the gates to Hell and narrow is the path to Heaven.”* And so what we must do is at least be honest and accurate. Maybe you say, *'Well, I don't believe that.'* That's fine, but are you willing to accept the consequences of that belief? What exploration have you done? Is it just a feeling you have, because feelings ought to be subservient of facts.

We all are going to have to believe whether something is right or wrong, true or false. What investigation have you done as to the authority of Scripture, the story of salvation, the redemption of Calvary, and the resurrection of Christ? Are you really serious about knowing what happens when you die? This veil was the only way. There is one God, one Savior, one plan, one Calvary, one resurrection, one salvation, one sacrifice, one way, one truth, one life, and one veil and that is the path to God.

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The second thing is the veil had great symbolism. There were four columns and the columns were made of acacia wood, which is a very hard desert wood. The four columns were covered with gold similar to the other furniture there as well. I think it is interesting, and I can't prove it, but some have suggested the four columns represented the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, because the gospels very, very clearly share for us the plan for our salvation. And that is kind of symbolic, but whether it is right or not I guess we will have to wait and find out in Heaven someday.

So there were these four pillars or columns which held up this veil separation. And then there were three colors that were used in the veil. These colors were again regal colors. There was the color blue which often is used when describing Heaven as Christ came from Heaven. And blue is the color of Heaven.

Then there was the color purple, which is always a symbol of royalty and kingdoms. And then there was the color scarlet. The Scriptures says, "***Though your sins be as scarlet He shall wash them white as snow.***" So scarlet symbolizes Jesus' blood covering our sins. The blood sacrifice of Christ is what gave us the cleanliness we needed to be able to approach God.

So the blue, purple and scarlet colors were represented. And on the veil it was woven in such a way that there were cherubim's in it. And we will be looking at cherubim's in a couple of weeks, and the symbolism of those, because they are also on that piece of furniture behind the veil.

The veil was a beautiful work of art. It was thirty feet long, thirty feet tall, and it was probably somewhere in the area of three inches thick, although some have suggested it was as many as six inches thick. It wasn't like fabric you would make your clothes with; it was thick woven fabric that was intricately designed. It was very beautiful artistry, and it was a symbol of separation.

And yet, when you think about it right now I don't want you to see it intact. I want you to see it for what it is today. I want you to step this way, because at Calvary the veil was forever changed. In the temple that existed during Herod's time, this great curtain, this great work of art, this extremely heavy fabric that was thirty feet by thirty feet was estimated to weigh hundreds of pounds. It was several inches thick and it separated Israel from God and it separated man from His Creator.

And then in Matthew Chapter 27 here is what happened. In verses 50 and 51 we have Jesus hanging on the cross in the throes of death, gasping His last breath. And the Scripture says this in Matthew Chapter 27 and verse 50: "***And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His Spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.***"

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Now if you or I would have gone into the temple and been assigned to split this veil in two pieces, first of all we would not have tried to tear it, because you can't tear fabric that thick. It would be like tearing a phone book in two, back in the days when they had phone books. So it couldn't have been split by tearing it. You would have had to use a knife, or scissors, or a saw. But the Bible says it was torn from top to bottom.

And if you or I had gone in to split the veil where would we have started? We wouldn't have gone thirty feet up in the air to start. We would have started at the bottom because that would have been much easier to start there. *'You take this side and I will take that side and we are going to cut it until it gets to the top.'* But the Scripture says it was torn from top to bottom. God Himself, with His very finger of authority, ripped it from top to bottom. And in doing so He made a statement.

God was making a dramatic statement about what had just occurred and the impact of the crucifixion on the symbols of the tabernacle and of the temple. No longer did we have to remain separated from approaching God. No longer would an annual sacrifice be required. No longer was a symbol of His blood through an animal sacrifice needed to be displayed.

No longer were we dependent upon a priest in order to approach God. We could go for it ourselves. We could approach with boldness. We could find mercy and seek forgiveness because the ultimate sacrifice, the one above all others, and the price for all through Jesus Christ had been made and found acceptable to God. The accounts were settled. The veil was split. And God was now inviting us to 'step this way' into His very presence.

So I want us to look at the tattered remains of that once regal veil that declared us damned, separated, broken outsiders and realize that the price has been paid. The veil calls us today. Now only does it call us to step this way, but it calls us to this - it calls us to reflection. What is your condition before a holy God? When you see Him face to face, what will you say? If He were to ask you the question - why should I let you into Heaven, what would your response be? Think about that.

*If you were to say, 'Dan, I'm telling you I have been good. My dad was a pastor. I served in Kid Life. If anything will get you to Heaven serving in Kid Life will do it, right? That is the most important job there is. And I give every week. I am a tither, ten percent goes right to the Lord's work. I was baptized. I was confirmed. People laid hands on me.'*

All of those are fine and dandy answers, but they are not THE answer. The answer is this: *'I realized I am a sinner and I could not save myself. I threw myself at the mercy of God and begged forgiveness, repented of my sins, and trusted in the Lord Jesus*

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*Christ as my Savior. And He reconciled me with my Heavenly Father, because it was His blood that paid the price of my sins.'*

The veil also brings us to reconciliation, that reconciliation where God says, 'Come. Come.' Like Jesus said to the little children, 'Come,' our Heavenly Father says to mankind, 'Come. Come boldly. Come with confidence. Come because I have invited you.' And so that reconciliation occurs. That moment, that sweet moment when you have been fussing with your wife and finally you stop, the fussing is over, and you hug each other and say, 'Let's never do this again.'

When you have that friendship that is just right on the edge of forever being broken and you grab their hand, pull them in for a good old back thump, and you say, 'Man, I am so glad you are in my life. Let's never get crossways again.' It's when you pick up that child after you have had to discipline them and they are still sobbing. Little tears are running down their cheeks and you hold them and say, 'I am so glad we worked that out, sweetie.' It is that moment of reconciliation when God said to come boldly, come here, it's good now. It is good now.

The veil calls us to restoration because it puts things back in order. God always desired that we be one with Him. God always desired that we fellowship with Him. God always desired that we could know Him. God wanted that for us, and sin messed it up. And God has paused eternity and put a plan into effect at great personal cost so that you and I could be restored.

The veil also calls us to a relationship. And that relationship is with our Heavenly Father, our Creator, our Jehovah, our healer, our comforter. He is every single thing that we need. And then the veil calls us to remember. You look at that brokenness, that tattered veil and you remember that until Christ died that veil was intact. That veil was there separating us. We couldn't get behind it. We couldn't approach God. We had to go through someone else. But now we have a great High Priest and His name is Jesus.

Hebrews Chapter 4 and verses 14 through 16 says this: "***Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***"

And that is what Jesus has done for us. That is His invitation. We pause before the veil and we remember. And Jesus also called us to keep remembering. Not in a temple, but at a table. Not in the glare of pageantry but in the simplicity of fellowship. All we have to do to accept His invitation is step this way.

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We are going to stand in a moment and I am going to pray. We are going to sing a couple of songs and my invitation to you is to join the family of God and encounter Him. While we are singing, some will be praying, some will be giving, some will go and take communion, and those are all wonderful things that we invite you to do.

But if you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, if you have never received the gift of eternal life through Him, would you please go right over here to this spot where there will be some people that will take you to a private room where they will open the Bible and show you what the Bible says you need to do. There won't be any pressure, don't bring a check book, and you won't have to sign anything. This is just about encountering God.

You just need to say something like this: *'Lord, forgive me. I am a sinner. I want to trust you as my Lord and Savior. I believe and I ask you to make me one of your own.'* It is as simple as that. Will you do that today? Encounter God. The veil has been torn asunder. The high cost of forgiveness has been paid. All that we need to do is receive it. And you can do that right now. Let's stand as we pray.

*Father, we love you. Thank you for your Word. Thank you for Jesus who paid the price of our sins. Help us, Father, to walk out of here remembering that the veil no longer separates us from you, and that we can now come boldly to your throne and have fellowship with you. Father, for those today who need to encounter you and become one of your children, let them with courage come forward. Let them step this way and pray with someone and get that free gift of eternal life. And Father, may no person who hears the message of your love walk away without having an encounter with you. For it is in Christ's name I pray, Amen.*

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*