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Good morning Life Fellowship. You all are looking perky this morning, like you got an extra hour's sleep or something. Except for the few of you who showed up for the service a little early this morning, but then I am glad you got a really good seat today.

I bring you greetings from the church in Cuba. I left last Tuesday morning to go to Cuba for a couple of days where we met with a ministry that I started about twenty years ago along with a Cuban friend of mine that is a pastor there. They have somewhere in the neighborhood of a hundred house churches with around 2,000 people per week attending these churches across the island.

We did something last spring with half of the pastors and the wives of these house churches and we did the other half this last week. We invited them to what is an exaggeration to be called a resort, but that is what they would call it. It was very different than anything in America. A Motel 8 would be like a Hilton compared to this.

But anyway we invited the pastors and their wives there. We met in a real tiny cramped room and we took a day and talked about marriage, family and stress in ministry. And then the next day I gave each pastor twenty bucks and told them they had a day off which they never get. Many of these pastors had never been in a hotel in their entire lives, or slept in a room with an air conditioner. So this was like an all-expense paid trip to Hawaii for them, and it was just to encourage them, and to let them know that we are praying for them.

Some of the ladies in our church put together little gift bags for the wives to be able to take back to their rooms. The gift bags had little niceties like chocolates and lotions in them, and the wives were just delighted. They always tell me to let the church in the United States know that they need and value their prayers, and I do thank you so much for praying for them. So on behalf of these pastors and wives in Cuba I extend that wish and greeting to you.

I also want to ask you right now to please be praying for our student ministry as we have had over a hundred of our young people and workers ministering over in the Concord area. They have been there this weekend and will continue throughout today. We have had four young people trust Christ as their Savior this week, and I have just been hearing great reports. Praise the Lord for that. (*Applause.*) So please pray for Pastor Justin and his team of leaders and the young people today as they are having a fantastic time. Pastor Ben was able to preach there last night and we are so excited to hear those good reports.

So a lot of good things are going on, but now we need to get to the message. How many of you have ever been in a VIP place? Have you ever been in a kind of place where very few people get to go? Several years ago I met someone in Albania when he was just a boy and I kind of took him under my wing. I mentored him when he got to

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come to the United States and he ended up doing extremely well. He graduated number one in his class at Palm Beach Atlanta University, number one in his law school class at Chapel Hill, and he became a clerk for a couple of federal judges. And then he got invited to become Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas' clerk for a year.

And to tell me thank you for my part in his life he invited me to go backstage, so to speak, at the Supreme Court. We spent an hour with Justice Thomas and it was just one of the most incredible things I had ever experienced. I was with my wife, and I remember we felt so intimidated with the questions and the background checks, and of course we had to be properly dressed for this great honor.

I remember there was this big curtain that is behind where the Justices sit and then there were two doors out of that room. And we were able to go behind the curtain and to see the robing room, and even see the justices gathering to put their robes on. You know when you see the big pictures of the justices they look so intimidating, but really Ruth Bader Ginsburg is only about this tall. She was putting her robe on, and then we saw Justice Scalia and we noticed that he was much bigger than Justice Ginsburg. And just to see all of that was just incredible for us to be in that inner area of a quasi-sacred space.

Well today we are moving to the most sacred spot in the world at the time of the tabernacle. We have been outside looking in. We have walked into the courtyard and then through it where we saw the Altar of Sacrifice. And then we saw the Bronze Laver where the cleansing took place. Then we went through the door into the Holy Place where we saw the Golden Lampstand and the Table of Shewbread.

Then that thing which was right outside of the Holy of Holies was the Altar of Incense, where the incense rose up like prayers to Heaven reminding us of what lay beyond the curtain. And then last week we looked at the veil, that testament that reminded us that our sin separated us from a holy and righteous God. We were reminded last week to 'step this way.' And so today we are going to do that in our study of the tabernacle as we approach the throne, so to speak, and we enter into His presence. Let's talk a little bit about this final room; this Holy of Holies is what we call it. And it is the virtual throne room of the tabernacle.

If you have ever been to any palaces, ancient or present, you will know that often there is an area where they held court. There would often be a platform, and they would have a throne set on that. And in some palaces it would be divided off, so potentially everyone would kind of gather waiting to go and be in front of the king or queen. And then they would part a curtain, or open a door, and there you would see the king or queen sitting in all their regal glory waiting to meet with their subjects.

Well, if you can, try in your mind's eye to envision that the Holy of Holies was the dwelling place of the authority of God. He literally was there and present. And this

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was a very, very sacred spot. The room was interesting because it was perfectly square, and it was about as wide as this platform. It was about thirty feet by thirty feet by thirty feet which is referred to as being foursquare. In other words it was the same length as it was wide and it also was as high. In fact we also note that this seems to be something that God likes to use to remind us of His perfection, and of His authority, because Heaven as well as the New Jerusalem are called a city foursquare. And that is because they are the same height, the same width and the same depth.

So this would have been the most holy, perfect place that we would find on the planet at that time. In Heaven there is no need for a sun or a moon or stars because the Scripture tells us that God Himself will provide the light, and we look forward to that. Well, in the Holy of Holies there was also no illumination. You know if we were to go outside in the tabernacle courtyard there would be the sun and the moon. If you went into the Holy Place there would be the Golden Lampstand that would provide illumination.

But inside the Holy of Holies there was no artificial or natural light; there was only supernatural light, because the very presence of God, which is called the Shekinah Glory, was what would dwell there. And it would provide illumination on those occasions when someone would be there, and that someone would be the High Priest.

I want to talk about that a little bit but I am not going to go into a lot of details because we are going to finish this up next week. Today we are going to be kind of walking in and looking at part of the furniture. The Holy of Holies could only be entered into one time per year, and that was on the Day of Atonement. On our calendar that is during the month of September, but the Jewish calendar doesn't label their months the same way we do. But just this last September the annual Day of Atonement would have been observed.

We see it described in the book of Leviticus in Chapters 16 and 23. Many people don't study this, because when we look at the book of Leviticus it gets rather laborious to read, because it has all these details and an infinite number of rules, regulations, policies and procedures. And before long we kind of get numb looking at it. So a lot of times when we start reading our Bible through every year, we begin in Genesis and then Exodus where there are a lot of really good stories. Then we get to Leviticus and we kind of put on our brakes. And then it is Deuteronomy and Numbers where our interest level really falls apart.

Unless you know what we are studying, and I would urge you to go back in your Bibles to Leviticus Chapter 16 and 23, where you will see a lot of the details and the rituals that took place. I think it will mean more to you now that we have been studying the tabernacle with the extent that we have. So it was on the Day of Atonement that the

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High Priest would carefully enter into the Holy of Holies with the blood of a bull and the blood of a goat. There were three animals involved in the sacrifice. There was a bull and two goats, but the blood the High Priest took with him was from the bull and from one of the two goats that would be sacrificed.

And no one other than the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies, and he could only enter on the Day of Atonement. Leviticus Chapter 16 and verse 2 tells us if they did enter at any other time they would die. ***“And the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die.”***

That would really be a good incentive not to go in there, right? I mean, there wasn't a maid that went in, the maintenance crew didn't go in, some curious dude couldn't just wander in there, because if you walked in you would get pulled out. There was no way anyone could enter into the Holy of Holies except as God directed, because it was a symbol of His perfection, His holiness, His authority and His righteousness.

Now the High Priest, and initially this was Aaron, the brother of Moses. And before he would go in he would have to bathe in a very, very specific way and put on very special garments. Again we see these details in Leviticus. The thing I want to mention to you real quickly is that part of the uniform, so to speak, for the High Priest was to have a scarlet cord that to be tied around his ankle. And he would be dragging this cord, so to speak, with him as he walked from the courtyard into the Holy Place and then into the Holy of Holies. And he would be carrying the bowls of blood in his hands and this cord would be trailing behind him from his ankle.

Maybe you are wondering what that cord was for? What did that symbolize? Well, it really didn't symbolize anything; it was just a reminder that if that High Priest was unworthy, if he had not bathed correctly, if he had not prepared himself spiritually and physically, if he had not adorned himself correctly that God was not going to tolerate that disrespect. And that if he entered into the Holy of Holies unprepared and unfulfilled, that God would indeed strike him dead right there. And if someone else would go in to get him they would die also.

So the cord was long enough that it was outside of the veil. Now if they heard something thud inside, we don't have any instances of this being recorded in Scripture, but I have to tell you that just having that cord tied around your ankle would make you a little nervous, wouldn't it? The idea was that if the High Priest hadn't been properly prepared, and he was struck dead, then they could drag him out by the scarlet cord that was attached to his ankle. In other words God takes holiness pretty seriously, and so should we.

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The High Priest would be carrying the two bowls of blood. The blood of the bull was there to seek forgiveness for the sins of the High Priest and his family. The bull would have been two years old or younger, and he would be sacrificed for the sins of the High Priest. The other bowl was from one of the goats that had been brought and its blood was for the collective sins and uncleanness and rebellion of the nation as a whole.

Now remember outside in the courtyard individuals would come and they would have their sins forgiven, as the father would bring the sacrifice for his family. But this time on the Day of Atonement the High Priest would bring the blood from the goat and it represented all the rest of the sins. Sins that people hadn't confessed, sins that people didn't realize they had committed, sins of just general rebellion, just all the sins of the people once for all.

And this goat would have his head covered by the High Priest before he was sacrificed. This would be the symbolism of the High Priest, who was the only person in all of Israel who could do that, and that began with Aaron initially. He would place his hands on the head of the goat like the father did on the lamb in the outer courtyard before the sacrifice. Then he would gather the blood, and that was the blood that was offered for the people.

Now I said there were two goats, and this is important. The second goat was then taken by a man deep into the wilderness, outside of the tabernacle complex, outside of the encampment, away into the wilderness, where it would be released. And that goat was the symbol that God said would indicate that their sins were removed from Him as far as the east is from the west. That goat was allowed to escape with the symbolism that the sins of the people were forever removed from the presence of God. They called that goat the 'escape goat,' or what we would say today was the 'scapegoat.'

So when you hear about someone who is representing something else, usually bad, we sometimes say, '*Oh they were the scapegoat.*' This is where that originated. And it was a part of the symbolism that God wanted man to know that when He forgave their sins He forgave them completely and thoroughly, and He forgave them forever. They were removed from His presence, and they are as far as the east is from the west, they are escaped, gone, never to be seen again. So it is rich, rich symbolism.

Now let's walk into the Holy of Holies where there were two pieces of furniture that were placed together, so it is one unit with two distinct parts. We are only going to look at the bottom part today and next week we will conclude this portion of our study looking at the upper part.

The Ark of the Covenant was the bottom part, and on top of that was the Mercy Seat. So we will look at the Ark of the Covenant today, and we will be looking at Scripture this morning in Exodus Chapter 25. Here we see again God's Ikea plans for the

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construction of the Ark of the Covenant. We also will note that God reaffirmed the symbolism and the meaning of each of the pieces of furniture once again in the New Testament as the Hebrew Jews were being educated in the context of Jesus Christ and who He was.

So let's look first at Exodus Chapter 25 and then we will go to Hebrews Chapter 9. Exodus Chapter 25 and verses 10 through 16 says this: ***“They shall make an ark of acacia wood.”*** (Again, this is that desert wood that is a very, very hard wood.) ***“Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height.”*** (Remember a cubit is roughly 18 inches.) ***“You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it.”***

You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them. The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you.”

Now let's look in Hebrews Chapter 9, and here we see the author of the letter to the Hebrews kind of explaining a little bit more about the Ark and what it symbolized and represented. So beginning in verse 1 it says this: ***“Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.”*** (So he was explaining this first covenant, the Mosaic covenant. And now they have a new covenant and that is the covenant of Jesus Christ. This is a reference here to this Mosaic covenant that was part of God's plan for the redemption of the children of Israel.)

Now look in verse 2: ***“For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the Lampstand and the Table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.”***

So there are even more details given here about the contents of the Ark of the Covenant. Now I want you to kind of look at this one rendition of what the Ark of the Covenant looked like. You can research all kinds of stuff on the Internet and find all kinds of depictions of it, so this is just one of them. But as you see it was made of wood, and then overlaid with gold leaves. Again, the gold is a symbol of the value and of the richness and the royalty of God.



It had a lip around the top of it and then on the top would eventually come the mercy seat. We also know that no one was to actually touch the Ark of the Covenant itself. And in fact it would result in death and there are examples in Scripture of the penalty that came with being careless in how they handled the Ark of the Covenant. If they put their hand on it, then it was going to be a problem; they were going to die for it because it was such a sacred piece of furniture in all that it represented.

We also know that it was hollowed out and it had a lid on it. But within the Scriptures it is said that there were certain sacred objects that were placed in it to be a constant reminder. And we are going to look at those objects in just a moment. Then above it, and we will look at this next week, was what is called the Mercy Seat, and it had cherubims on it. Now remember last week as we were talking about the veil it also had cherubims that were woven into the veil itself. And Scripture tells us that these cherubims are located in heaven, these mystical creatures that don't reside on earth, but are symbolic of the authority, majesty, holiness and righteousness of God.

So you can see that the Ark of the Covenant was very, very ornate and it was a very, very beautiful piece of furniture. We will learn also that this was not a piece of furniture that everybody got to take a gander at. But let's examine the Ark a little bit. I want to draw three things to your attention. The first thing is this - the Ark was a symbol of an invisible God. The Ark, by the way, was not for public viewing. No one got to

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just go in and look at the Ark of the Covenant, except the High Priest, and he could only do it once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Maybe you wonder what happened when they were traveling and had to move the Ark. Well, the way the Lord orchestrated this was when they were dismantling the tabernacle, the veil would be released in such a way that it would cover the Ark of the Covenant, so that it was not seen. Now maybe you are wondering what would happen if you did happen to see it.

Well, I don't know about you but I saw Raiders of the Lost Ark and you remember what happened when that guy looked at it, right? So I am not sure what happened back then, but even Hollywood said it wasn't good. So I don't think I would want to be the first person to explore this. So the Ark was covered with the tabernacle veil.

And that wasn't even all that was done. Over the veil they would place a layer of badger skins. Now remember the badger skins also were used as part of the curtains around the courtyard fence. So the badger skins would be a second layer over the veil and over the Ark of the Covenant. And then over those two layers a third layer was placed, and that is found in Numbers Chapter 4 and verses 5 and 6. ***“When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the veil of the screen and cover the Ark of the Testimony with it. Then they shall put on it a covering of skins and spread on top of that a cloth all of blue.”***

So even as it was carried when Israel moved from place to place, the Ark of the Covenant was not to be viewed. It was this symbol of God and it was not to be viewed directly. Remember that John Chapter 1 and verse 18 says this: ***“No man has seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known.”*** It is Christ that declares God. So the closest we have come to seeing God is Jesus Christ, and it is He who declares God. He said, ***“I and the Father are one.”***

So the Ark of the Covenant was covered and protected with three layers when they moved from place to place. But for us today we understand that none of us have ever seen God, but we have seen His evidence everywhere we go. This is such a beautiful time of the year, and I had a broad meeting I had to get to as soon as I landed from Cuba. I am the chairman of the board of the Institute for Biblical Leadership and they were meeting over in Asheville and so I drove over there.

It was a nasty driving day with heavy clouds and rain, but then yesterday was absolutely gorgeous when the sun came out. The colors were just popping all over the Blue Ridge Mountains over there. And every time I see the handiwork of God in the colors of fall and in the beautiful blue of the sky, as well as the magnificent sunsets that we have had, I find it hard to believe that some would deny that such a grand design just

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happened by coincidence. That requires a level of faith that I am not capable of. It requires a suspension of logic and common sense to look at all of that and say, *'Oh well, that just happened.'*

No, it screams design, and when you have a design you have to have a designer. And who is that designer? It is the great invisible God who spoke the world into existence, who carved man out of the dust of the elements and breathed life into him, and gave us this great privilege of human existence. And it has a designer. We are reminded inasmuch as the children of Israel were when the priest went in every year to offer blood for their sins even though they could not see Him, they knew that God existed.

God had delivered them from Egypt, He had promised them a land, He had performed supernaturally in their midst, He had protected them, guided them and loved them. He had had to reprimand them and call them to repentance but He was always there for them. And even if they had denied it, it did not in any way diminish His reality. And those today who would deny the existence of God in no way does that change the reality that He indeed exists.

The fact is Atheists are willing to do what even Satan himself isn't so stupid to do, because even Satan doesn't deny that there is a God. In fact he trembles at the mere thought. And for us to try to live a life that in some convoluted way denies that there is an invisible God and that He matters is a supreme act of denial and foolishness.

The second thing we need to remember is that the Ark was a reminder of the presence and plan of God. The fact that God had them put this piece of furniture into place showed His intent. And like the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night the Ark was a tangible reminder that God was with Israel, and that Israel belonged to God. That God had chosen this nation through which He would bring the Redeemer, the Messiah, His Son, the Lamb of God, the great High Priest, the ultimate sacrifice. It was through Israel that this happened and that is why the world hates Israel.

Satan resents the fact that that God used Israel to bring about His Son, the Messiah, the propitiation for our sins, and the redeemer that we needed in order to be reconciled with God. It was through Israel that creation could be redeemed and that man could be reconciled with God. Within that tabernacle complex no single piece of furniture more fully expressed or represented the powerful presence and plan of God than did the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. And the Ark of the Covenant was the very foundation to the throne on which forgiveness would be forged, as the blood would be offered.

And so this was a very important piece of furniture. It reminds us that God was with Israel and God was with mankind. And today God is with us. He has always been faithful to dwell among us. In the Old Testament He dwelled among Israel and He was

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visible through the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, and through His presence on the Day of Atonement, and in the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant. Today we see Him in the life of the believer, because it is now that Holy Spirit, that great comforter that we were promised by Christ Himself that dwells in us. And we know we are alive, we know there is a God because of the testimony of the Holy Spirit that lives within us.

The third thing I think we need to remember about this is that the Ark was the reminder of the character of God. You know I think it is sad to some extent that all of us have a skewed view of God. I think part of discipleship, part of spiritual maturity, and part of our own journey ought to be a constant reflection on whether or not we view God accurately. And that is because the way we view God is at the very core of our faith. And sadly sometimes we view God through the paradigm of false teaching, or through the lack of studying, or through a lack of intimacy.

Have you ever known someone that you thought was a jerk? Or have you ever seen someone you would like to be friends with because they seem special? And then when you get closer to them you find out that the jerky guy really wasn't a jerk at all. He might be quirky, but not jerky, right? Or sometimes you might get close to someone who you thought was really special and then find out they are really not a good person. So we can have these impressions, and then when proximity leads to intimacy, and intimacy leads to knowledge, we get the reality.

One of the reasons why Satan doesn't want us to spend time with God is because he would like us to have a false impression of who God is. One of the reasons he doesn't want us to study His Word is because he wants us to have a misconception about what God is all about. And the best way to reverse that is to spend time with Him, in prayer, in reading, in the fellowship of believers, under the teaching of the Word, studying the Word of God daily and through intimacy with Him. And through the guidance of the Holy Spirit we can know God then more authentically. And this is important.

So there are three things that we know about the character of God based on what we find in Hebrews that was in the Ark. Number one - there was a bowl of manna. The bowl of manna represented the provision of God. Remember manna was what God gave the children of Israel in the mornings to gather. It was a bread like substance that provided them with enough nutrition that they wouldn't starve to death there in the middle of the desert. And this bowl of manna was to be a reminder of the provision of God.

Jesus, by the way, is the ultimate manna because He is the bread of life. While God provided the manna bread to Israel through Moses, the true bread from Heaven was found only in Christ. John Chapter 6 and verse 33 says this: "***For the bread of God is He who comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.***" God has always

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provided for His creation what we need. And this morning if you are sitting here and you are feeling empty, if you are feeling dry, if you are feeling alone, or if you are feeling depressed, I want you to be encouraged because God will give you exactly what you need if you will present yourselves to Him.

Here is the second thing that was in the Ark - Aaron's rod that budded. Now several weeks ago I explained this, so I won't spend a lot more time on this one, but the story of Aaron's rod that budded is found in Numbers Chapters 16 and 17. Remember Korah, along with some friends, raised up against Moses not liking the idea that Aaron was the only guy who got to go into the Holy of Holies. And they didn't like that Aaron was thought to be so special, and they wanted to know why they couldn't go in there themselves. They wanted to know who made Moses boss, so to speak, like a bunch of kids would do.

God then decided to give a couple of object lessons. Ultimately God was going to cause the earth to open up, and Korah and all his tribe were going to fall into it, and then the earth was going to close back up. But the first object lesson that God gave was He told the leaders of all the tribes to take their rods, their symbols of authority, and leave them in the tabernacle overnight. And when they came back the next morning there were twelve rods still there, but only one of them had budded producing flowers and almonds, and that was Aaron's rod. And that was the symbol then that God had a plan for the redemption, and that He had specifically anointed Aaron to be the high priest. It was only Aaron that had that role, and this was God's point of power telling them not to mess with Him. Here was Aaron's rod and there was Korah's pit. Any questions?

This is something that we need to remember. When we try to manipulate God, when we try to force Him to conform to our wants, and our desires, and our expectations, and our petty little demands, then we are in grave danger. God is God and we are not. And we have in our culture today commonized God to a dangerous extent. When we don't see God high and lifted up, when we don't see Him in His position of authority, when we don't understand that the earth and the sky and the moon and stars were all created by His very voice, when we don't see Him as the holy one, when we don't see Him as the righteous one, when we don't see Him as the loving one who will judge the nations, when we don't see Him for all He is, then we walk in darkness. We walk in danger. God wanted us to know very clearly He is in charge and He demonstrated that any time the children of Israel seemed to doubt it.

The third thing is this - the Ten Commandments were in the Ark. Not the ones that God first wrote, because remember Moses broke those. These were the ones that had to be reconstructed afterwards. So in that great Ark also was the Ten Commandments, and they were representing the plan of God. It was a constant reminder of our own inadequacies to save ourselves, because when you look at the Ten Commandments we

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see how messed up we really are. None of us can look at the Ten Commandments and be able to say, *'Okay, what next? I have all these under control.'*

The Ten Commandments were not to give us salvation; they were to show us our need for salvation. And when we look at those Ten Commandments, we realize we are not good enough to save ourselves. We are not good enough to approach the throne room. We are not good enough to go behind the veil. There had to be a price that was paid for our forgiveness. The Law constantly reminded the children of Israel, and reminds us today of our need for God, and our impending judgment from God, except that in Christ the Law was fulfilled. And the penalty was paid in full and thus we have hope for redemption.

Because when Christ spilled His blood for us like the little lamb, the goat, or the bull's blood was shed, in Christ it was paid once and for all. We have all fallen short of God's standard and His example of holiness, but Christ bridged that gulf, that sin chasm, that was created between the creation and the Creator, between man and God, and offered us grace, mercy, hope and reconciliation.

And folks, when we look at the Ark we are reminded that an all powerful God has provided for us a plan for our salvation. And He invites you to receive that as well. We are at that time in our service where we ask ourselves, *'God, what is it you want me to do? How do you want me to process this?'* And I hope in the tabernacle you were hearing the story of the gospel. The story of the gospel is the story of Scripture. And while there are many subplots and subthemes it all points to God's desire for us to be reconciled with Him through the person of Jesus Christ.

Last week after the first service there was someone who said he had taken communion, but he heard the message and he didn't understand, he had questions, and between this service and the next one last week he got his questions answered. Right over there in the prayer room he knelt and said, *'God, I know I am a sinner and I know I can't save myself, but I know that Jesus was my sacrifice, and He did what I could not do. He can give me forgiveness of my sins through His shed blood. And I now repent of my sins, trust Him as my Savior and place my faith and trust in you.'* And this guy that came to church with questions left here with clarity.

That is the invitation to you this morning. If you don't know Christ as your Savior, we invite you to walk out with clarity. Step behind the veil, enter into His presence, accept the gift of eternal life. In a moment we are going to stand and I would ask you to ask yourself this: *'Lord, show me what I needed to hear.'* Maybe you need to be grateful for your salvation in a fresh way. Or maybe you would say that you don't know, that you have questions, and you still feel a little confused.

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If so, we would urge you to step over here on this side where there is a little table and there will be someone to greet you there. They will take you to a private room and answer any questions you may have. Again, don't bring a paper, pencil or check book because you are not signing anything and it is not going to cost you a dime. The price has already been paid. We can't force you or pressure you to do something. This is something just between you and God, but we would love to guide you through the Scriptures to a reconciliation moment with God.

Maybe you just need to pray, and if so you can pray over here or down in the front. Maybe you want to take communion and it is available in the front and in the back. But whatever you do, let's give our best to the Lord at this moment as we reflect on the power of the plan for our redemption. Let's stand as we pray.

Father, thank you so much for your word, and Father, I pray that as we finish up this study on Encounter that all of us, with absolute clarity, will know that we are part of the redeemed, those who have been reconciled to you because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Father, thank you for the powerful imagery you give us to show us how much you love us. 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.