Promise and Provision — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 3:20–24 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, April 2, 2023 · *The Fall*

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So if you have your Bible, we're going to be in Genesis chapter 3. We've been going through the book of Genesis as a church, but today is a special day because it's Palm Sunday. And so I kind of want to address our passage, or approach our passage, in light of Palm Sunday. Taylor helpfully read some of the Scripture related to Palm Sunday. It was in my quiet time this week, reading in the Gospel of John, and when Jesus enters into Jerusalem, they do hail him as a king. They lay down coats, and he's riding on a colt, they're laying down coats and waving palm branches, and they're saying, "Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And they anticipated Jesus to be this Messiah figure as prophesied in the Old Testament. The Old Testament was not unclear that the Messiah would rule and reign and would liberate God's people from their oppression. What they did not understand is that the reigning king, the Old Testament Messiah, must also first become the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. And so what they saw, Jesus' final assignment being the overthrow of Rome, Jesus actually saw his final assignment as being overthrown by Rome—to be crucified by the Romans to liberate God's people from their sin by becoming that atoning sacrifice that the Old Testament clearly showed and revealed through many different avenues and that the messiah must accomplish through his life and death.

And so they did. They turn on Jesus, and Jesus is weeping there for Jerusalem because they see it, but they don't really see it. And it wasn't until after the death of Jesus and really after his resurrection that Jesus' disciples finally have this aha moment, like, "Oh, well, that's what he meant." One of my favorite passages is in the Gospel of Luke, right there at the end in chapter 24, when Jesus appears in his resurrected state to some of his disciples on the

road to Emmaus and they are down in the dumps, super glum, because Jesus, their Messiah, their rabbi, had been crucified.

And he shows up, they don't recognize him at first, and he begins to explain to them how all of the law and all of the prophets ultimately pointed to him. Namely his person, his work, his death on the cross, his resurrection from the grave. And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them, or "interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." And their response to that experience was that their hearts burned within them. We're not talking like heartburn, acid reflux. They were literally like their hearts were on fire, excited about the Lord and really seeing the entirety of the Old Testament through a totally different lens.

And that's what I want us to maybe experience this morning, this same kind of heart warming, heart-burning experience when we see in the Old Testament what these original disciples of Jesus saw in the Old Testament. One of the most important things you can do as a Christian is to learn how to read the Old Testament through New Testament goggles or through the person and work of Jesus Christ. There was an old preacher by the name of Charles Spurgeon who said that there's a scarlet thread that runs through every single book of the Bible and really you could maybe even— Every paragraph or every section of Scripture, you should be able to cut it and see how it is bleeding the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

And that's true in the book of Genesis. It's true in Exodus, Leviticus, all the way through. And so what I want us to do this morning is to see that dynamic in Genesis chapter 3, because it is so important for us on this Palm Sunday to not just see the work of Jesus at the end of the Gospels through his resurrection, or through his crucifixion and resurrection, but even in the book of Genesis to see the person and work of Christ on our behalf. If you're familiar with the book of Genesis or if you've been with us a while, you know that it opens with God's creation of everything.

In Genesis 2 it zooms in on his creation of man and woman. They are in the garden, they're married, they're naked and not ashamed, everything is good. Genesis 2 opens with Adam being given this responsibility to name all the animals, and God gives him this moral mandate to eat of any tree that he wanted to, except for one: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After he gives that moral mandate, God raises up a wife for Adam. He is really excited about it. He sings a song: "Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.

I'm going to call her *ishshah* because she's taken from *ish*. I'm going to call her woman because she's taken from man." and they are doing their thing until Genesis 3 comes along and the serpent enters the picture. And what we've been doing in the past month or so is looking at this serpent and the fall of man. You see the temptation strike in Genesis 3, the

first few verses. He begins to compromise God's word with the woman: "Did God really say you couldn't eat of any tree? Are you really going to die?"

And eventually she succumbs to the temptation. Adam, who is with her, succumbs to the temptation. They eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and immediately their eyes are opened. They recognize their nakedness and they begin to try and cover it up. The consequences of that original sin are tremendous. The fallout is huge. In the immediate term, they are separated from God. There is a curse on the serpent, a curse on the ground, and consequences for Adam and Eve. Eve has pain in childbearing—women throughout all the generations, God says, will experience pain in childbearing—enmity in the home with the husband.

And then the husband will experience pain in cultivating the earth and enmity in the home with his spouse. And so much of our struggles today are a result of that original sin. And so much of Genesis chapter three is negative, it is depressing, it is this sad state of sin and temptation and consequences and curse, but it doesn't end in that way. Genesis 3 begins with these negative things, but it ends with a picture of God's redeeming grace. It begins with temptation, sin, and the fall, and it ends with the grace of God's promise, provision, and protection in Christ.

And that's what I want us to see this morning. Just like those original disciples in Luke 24 saw in the scriptures the truth about God's grace in Jesus Christ. And so with that as our pretext, let's dive into the text, Genesis chapter 3, starting in verse 20. "The man called his wife's name Eve." That's the first time the word "Eve" shows up in Genesis 3. Before that, she was called "woman," which—I don't recommend calling your wife "woman." But he did that until he named his wife Eve. And why did he name her Eve?

"Because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—' therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."

I know on the surface those verses may not seem like much, but I think those verses contain the essential elements of God's grace in salvation. Genesis 3 opens with temptation, sin and the curse, but it closes with this beautiful picture of God's promise and provision in the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only does it show the grace of God in his promise and provision, but it also shows how we should respond to God's grace when it is offered to us. And so in all of these things, I think, we see the person of Christ.

So I want to show you each one, his promise, his provision. And then we'll close with this protection. The promise, I think, is in verse 20 when Adam names his wife Eve. It's kind of out of nowhere. I don't know, if you read it in context, if it just kind of— Where does this verse come from? In fact a lot of people who don't believe the Bible is inspired by God think this was inserted later after the fact that it's just so out of the blue because you've got God cursing the ground, cursing the serpent, judging the man, judging the woman, it's all going to be terrible.

And then Adam's like, "Well, I think I'll name my wife the mother of all living." And you're like, "Well, that's weird. Are you on drugs? You've been smoking something?" This is not a happy moment, and yet Adam's got this act of faith. And so it is what it looks like. This is Adam moving from a place of unbelief to belief, and he is basically taking God up on his promise, and that's exactly what faith is. Faith is trusting God enough to act on what he says. They were walking with God, they were communing with God.

Why? Because they were trusting in His Word, they were doing what He said, they were living their life based on God's word. That's a life of faith. Satan wanted to jeopardize that faith by compromising God's word, criticizing God's character, moving them further and further away from that life of faith, and he succeeds. And when he succeeds, they shift from a place of communion with God to separation from God. The Bible calls that hell. Hell is the absence of, or separation from, God—God's judgment for eternity. They're living hell on earth in a way because they shifted from faith to unbelief.

Now what you see in Genesis chapter 3 verse 20 is Adam moving back. He's moving from unbelief to an act of faith. How is he doing that? He's basically saying, "God, I believe your promise." And what was the promise? It's a few verses earlier in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15. When the Lord says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Adam is shifting from unbelief and sin to trust in God's promise, right here in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15.

He's saying, "God, I agree. I actually trust you. I believe you're going to make good on your word that from the seed of this woman will come a serpent-head-crushing deliverer." And that's an act of faith. That's Adam acting on God's word, believing God enough to actually act on what he said. And that's the first essential element of receiving God's grace in your life. If you want to receive salvation, the first step of receiving that gift of salvation is to move from unbelief to belief, from a lack of faith to faith, and begin trusting God enough to believe his word and act on his promise.

And I think probably Adam, every time one of his children were born—and we don't know exactly how many children he had; we'll see later in the book of Genesis many of his children — But I wonder with every child, if he wasn't thinking to himself, "Is this the one? Is this the

serpent crusher? Is this the one that's going to crush the head of the serpent?" That's what it means to live a life of faith. And what was the object of Adam's faith? In a way, the object of Adam's faith is Jesus Christ.

It's an unseen Christ, you might say. He doesn't know Jesus' name. He doesn't know all the particulars that he's going to come from Nazareth and he's going to do all these things. He doesn't know about Rome and the empire and crucifixion. He doesn't know any of that. Here's what he knows. He knows the seed. He knows from the seed of the woman is going to come a deliverer, a messiah, a savior. "And I believe God's going to make good on that promise." And that's Christ. That's Adam exercising faith in Jesus Christ.

And every Old Testament person who is a believer who is going to go to heaven when they die, every one of those Old Testament saints were saved by God's grace through faith in God's promise. They had faith in this unseen Christ. And I know sometimes when you read the Old Testament, you might be tempted to think, "Well, I guess the Old Testament people were saved by the law, because God gave them the law, and maybe if they did enough good deeds by the law, then God would kind of like, 'Okay, you're in through this system.

I've got the system of the law and you can get in through that system.'" But that's not what the Old Testament actually teaches. He gave them the law to expose their sin, but their salvation would not come through the law, their salvation would come by grace through faith in the Christ, in the Messiah. And this is Adam making good on that. The book of Hebrews, if you want a really big explanation of this, the whole book of Hebrews explains, specifically chapter 11, how every Old Testament saint was saved by God's grace through faith.

And that faith is the assurance of things hoped for. What are they hoping for? They're hoping for that skull crusher. They're hoping for that serpent killer. And it is impossible to please God without that faith because everyone who would draw near to him must believe that he exists and rewards those who seek him. In other words, you've got to believe in the promise, the promise about his provision in Christ. And every time faith is present, there's also something else that's present. You also see this in Genesis chapter 3, verse 20, and that's repentance.

Genuine faith is always preceded by real repentance. Always. You can't exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ without exercising genuine repentance over sin. Real repentance, you might say, is different from false repentance. You could say there's godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. You can be sorry for what you did wrong because of the consequences of your sin. It messed up your marriage; now your kids hate you, those kinds of things. That's a form of repentance. You're agreeing, "What I did was wrong." But genuine repentance is not just being sorry about the consequences.

Genuine repentance is actually being sorry that you grieved the God who made you, that you violated his designs. It's really twofold. You're agreeing with God about the severity of your sin. But you're also agreeing with God about the reality of his promise. The Bible talks about repentance as a changing of the mind, but it's also a turning from your sin. And so it's the changing of the mind and that you agree that God is holy, that I am sinful, that He has given me a promise in Jesus Christ. So that's the changing of the mind part.

But then there's also the changing of your life where you turn from your sin and you turn to God in faith. And that is exactly what Adam is doing by naming his wife Eve: "I believe you. She is the mother of all living, and I'm going to live my life as if that's true." And what Adam looked forward to in hope, we now are able to look back upon in confidence. Adam looked forward to God's promise. We are able to look back at Christ's historical death and resurrection. Adam's faith, the object of Adam's faith, was the person of Christ, and our faith is in the same exact object.

We are saved by grace through faith in the person of Jesus Christ. God sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus Christ came into the world to crush the head of the serpent. And when you experience God's salvation in your life, you're essentially agreeing with God: "Jesus is that person. You have made good on your promise." Even on Palm Sunday, I think it's so fascinating as I was meditating on this in my quiet time this week. Jesus himself on Palm Sunday, when he's explaining what's about to happen to the disciples, he says in John chapter 12, verse 31, "Now will the ruler of this world be cast out."

In other words, "The time is now. I'm making good on my promise. And what am I going to do? I'm going to cast out the devil, the ruler of this world, through my own death and resurrection." Satan has been defanged, death has been destroyed. It's not to say that Satan isn't powerful, but it is to say that he is nothing compared to the greatness of our God and the faithfulness of God to his promise. So that's the first evidence of grace. The second one is in verse 21,[1] and it's the grace of God's provision in Christ.

Not only does Adam believe in God's promise, but he also receives God's provision. Verse 21, it says that the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them. You remember the first thing that Adam and Eve do when they sin against God? Their eyes are opened and they begin to cover their nakedness and they're not just like using their hands like you do when you get out of the shower, but they'll go and find fig leaves and they make like some vegetarian underwear for themselves and they realize that's not sufficient to cover their nakedness, and so they run and they hide from God.

That's always the human response to an awareness of sin. When you finally become aware that your sins have separated you from God, the natural human inclination is to cover it up: "Oh, I'm not that bad. It's not my fault. Maybe if I have enough money, maybe if I do enough

good things in work, maybe if my children are just successful, and maybe if our family can flourish—" We look and we grab and we search for things to cover up our weakness and where we know we're not sufficient, but in every single case our coverings are insufficient.

Every human response to cover our own shame fails to deliver. And so what God does in Genesis is He does for them what they cannot do for themselves. Human efforts to cover up sin are never sufficient, but God creates a sufficient covering. How? Through the death of an innocent. God makes a covering for Adam and Eve through the death of an animal. And a lot of theologians—I'm right there with them—believe this is their first experience of death for Adam and Eve. This is the first animal death. You know, God creates everything, everything's living, having a wonderful life.

I see trees of green— It's like, you know, whatever that guy's name is, he sings "What a Wonderful World."[2] It's a wonderful world, everything's living, everything's breathing. Adam and Eve are living forever. And boom, sin happens then death. And notice who creates the death. God does not say to Adam, "Go kill an animal." He doesn't say to Eve, "You messed up, go find a goat who you can sacrifice." He doesn't do that. He says, "I'm going to do it. I'm going to do for you what you cannot do for yourself."

And so the Lord God made coverings through skins. And so you have the death of an innocent. That's making a covering for the sin of man. That's God's provision. You say, "Where's Christ in the book of Genesis?" He's right there in that substitutionary, sacrificial, atoning death to cover sin. Romans 6:23 says "the wages of sin is death." The only sufficient response to cover sin against an infinitely holy God is an infinitely holy life given in your place, standing in your place for your sin, experiencing the death of eternal separation for you.

We cannot provide that sacrifice ourselves. We can never do enough good things or live a good enough life to become that sacrifice. And so God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves through the death of an innocent. And what is that innocent death? It is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, who was in very nature God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself. He took on flesh. He became a servant that was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

And so when you receive the gift of God's provision, what you're doing, you're not just believing that "my sins will be forgiven because of what Jesus did on the cross." You're actually receiving into your life something that you did not deserve, namely the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is literally like a covering. In fact the word covering here is not like underwear. God did not make them underwear. God made them like a bathrobe. He gave them something to completely cover them. It's the same word that's used of the high priest in the temple.

We're talking a beautiful coat that completely covers everything. That's what God has provided for us in the person of Jesus Christ. It's "On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." "I dare not trust the sweetest frame"; I wholly trust in Jesus' name. He's my righteousness. He's the coat that I wear, and because I'm covered in his righteousness, I can now approach God's throne of grace with confidence instead of fear. I don't have to run, I don't have to hide, I don't have to worry, I don't have to wonder, "Have my good deeds outweighed my bad deeds?"

I can have confidence that Jesus has done for me what I cannot do for myself. And now when I stand in the presence of God, I am beloved by God. I am accepted by God, not because of who I am, but because of who Christ is for me. My life is hidden with Christ in God. What does that look like? Practically, how do we respond to that truth? I think what you see in Genesis is that it's not enough just to believe the gospel up here in your mind. You've got to receive that reality into your life.

It's got to shift from up here in your head. "You know, I grew up going to church. I learned the ABCs of salvation. I kind of went to VBS. I've got it up here." But has it ever translated into here, into your heart? Has it shifted from the head to the heart? If not, there's no salvation unless you receive it. Satan believes it. Satan believes in the existence of God. He believes that Jesus was the atoning sacrifice for sin, but he doesn't receive it. What about you? Has it shifted from the head into the heart?

And if it has, does your life communicate that? Does your life reflect the reality that you are hidden with Christ in God? Does the way that you live your life show to people and show to God and show to your family that you're not trusting in any other person or any other thing, but that you are wholly trusting in Jesus' name? Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Have you been washed by the blood of the Lamb, or are you striving and working and trying to prove that you're worthy of God's love through some other mechanism?

You say, "Well, how do you know?" One way you can know is the levels of anxiety in your heart about what happens after you die. The level of certainty that you have. If someone was to ask you, if you die today and you were to stand before a holy God and he said, "Why should I let you into heaven?"—your answer to that question, if it is anything other than, "Nothing in my hand I bring; only to the cross I cling. I should go to heaven because of what Jesus did for me"—if there's any other answer beside that answer, then you're not wholly trusting.

You haven't received. Maybe you've only believed. One of the best ways, one of the best evidences that you've received the covering of Christ's righteousness, is your ability to silence the voice of accusation. I don't know if anybody else struggles with this problem. I've struggled with it ever since I became a preacher. "Why would anyone listen to you? If people knew the truth about you—" You know, your mom would be the only member of your church

or something like that. I joke with people that I'm the black sheep of my family because I became the preacher.

But it literally is just a joke. I'm just as crazy as the other Terrys in Roby. There are things that I've done that I'm you know deeply ashamed of. And what Satan does is—remember—he baits with temptation and then he enslaves with accusation. He draws you into temptation. Once you've committed the sin, then he throws the bars of accusation to keep you in prison. What do you do with the voice of accusation? Has it locked you into a room and is it not letting you out, and so you walk around with guilt and shame?

"And, you know, I know they forgive me, but I can't forgive myself"—that kind of language. Your ability to silence the voice of accusation is a key determiner of whether you've received the covering of Christ's righteousness. Revelation 12:10 says, "The accuser of our brothers has been thrown down." So we believe in God's promise, we receive God's provision, and then finally, we see the grace of God's protection. Verses 22 to 24: "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—' ... He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."

It's very easy to read this and say, "Well, that's just God's judgment." He's judging Adam for their sin. And it is that—certainly a demonstration of judgment— but if you actually pay attention to what God's actually saying, it's not just a demonstration of judgment, it's a demonstration of grace and protection. Notice the conversation God has with Himself. He says, "Now lest they take and reach out to the tree of life and eat, let's drive them out." What is the tree of life? The tree of life is the tree from which, if you eat that tree, you live forever.

I don't think Adam and Eve were immortal when they were created by God. I think they were mortal just like every other human is mortal. But they lived these long lives because of the tree of life. They ate from the tree of life and it gave them healing and it gave them nourishment and enabled them to live forever and ever and ever. So why is God driving them out of the garden? Because he does not want them to eat from that tree and live forever in a state of brokenness. That's the grace of God.

That's God's protection of Adam and Eve: "I'm driving you out, not just because I'm mad, not just because there's consequences for sin, but because of my great love for you. I don't want you to live a life of eternal separation from me. I don't want you to live a life of hell on earth. And because of my great love for you, I'm driving you out, lest you eat from this tree and live forever." Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all of our sin. God's discipline of Adam and Eve in driving them from the garden was a gracious act of protection.

To do otherwise would have consigned them to a life of eternal hell. It's still so ironic. Adam and Eve were created to guard the garden, now the garden is being guarded from them. That's what sin does. It cuts us off from enjoying God's presence. Adam and Eve were cast out of this garden and the joy of God's presence, but that access would not be cut off forever. In fact, all of this language about cherubim and the tree of life and the garden of paradise, all of that language shows up later in the Old Testament.

It's so fascinating. What you might think of Adam and Eve when they're driven out of the garden, it really is representative of every human being's search for home. We're all trying to find our way home. What is home? Home is God's presence. Home is the garden. It is peace with God. It is communion with God. It is the presence of God filling our world. That's where our hearts long to be. And so when we talk about lost people, what do we mean by lost? We mean we are looking for home.

We're looking for God's presence, that every person who's ever been created is an alien and a sojourner in this world. This world is not our home. This brokenness is not our inheritance. Our inheritance is the presence of God and the glory of God and the kingdom of God that we have now been driven out of because of sin. And so we're all aliens, we're all sojourners. And what God does in his grace is he gives these little symbols and these little signs that paradise will not be lost forever. What do you see at the front of the garden?

You see the cherubim. That means a big fancy angel, and they're guarding it with these flaming swords. You see the language of the tree of life. Guess where you see cherubim show up later in the book of— So you get through Genesis, you get to Exodus. What happens in Exodus? You have Moses that liberates God's people from slavery to Pharaoh. When they're in the wilderness, they're lost, they're wandering, they're looking for the promised land. God says, "I'm going to reveal my presence to you." How does he do it? He does it through the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle.

Guess what's on the mercy seat in the Ark of the Covenant? Guess what's inscribed on that golden plate? Cherubim. And God's presence actually shows up right between the two cherubim. It's a throwback to Genesis. God is saying, "The presence that you lost—here it is." But it was only for Moses. Only a mediator could experience it. You get through the Exodus, you get to the temple, God's people inherit the promised land, they drive out all the bad actors, they build a temple. The temple has what's called the holy place and the common place.

The common place and the holy place were separated by a curtain. Guess what was inscribed on the curtain? I'll give you one guess. Cherubim.[3] These angels, they were inscribed into the fabric. And then the holy place had an even holier place called the Holy of Holies, and the only person who could go into the Holy of Holies was the high priest, the mediator, and then

only once a year on the Day of Atonement. Guess what was inscribed on the mercy seat? Cherubim. And guess what was present in the holy place?

The menorah, which is a throwback to Genesis, the tree of life. Remember the seven lamps burning forever?[4] God is saying, "My presence is not cut off forever. I will be with you; you will be with me. But there's got to be a mediator." Who's the mediator? It was Moses, then it was the high priest. But when Jesus comes onto the scene, everything changes. Because when Jesus comes on the scene, he is the presence of God. The disciples say, "In him the fullness of God dwelt bodily." "We have seen his glory, glory as of the one and only."

He talks about the gospel. He talks about the kingdom of God. He talks about repent and be saved and you'll be reconciled to God. And then when he, at the end of his life, lays down his life as that substitutionary sacrifice that we saw in Genesis 3:21–22, something unbelievable happens. He cries out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He breathes his last. He cries out, "It is finished." And when he does, the ground begins to shake. And in that temple, the curtain that separated the presence of God from the people of God was torn in two.

Not from bottom to top, but from top to bottom, indicating God has made a way for his people to come home. That home you're searching for, this contentment— "I feel like this world is broken and it's not what it's supposed to be. I'm looking, I'm searching." God through Jesus Christ is saying that paradise that you lost can be given to you again through the person of Jesus Christ. "Come home. Come home. I've made a way through Jesus for you to regain the presence of God, communion with God, oneness with God that you've lost through your sin."

The old system separating sinful people from the presence of a holy God has been torn down. We can be reconciled to God and brought back into his presence and glory. How? By grace alone, through faith alone, in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The Reformers, like Martin Luther, when they were reading the scriptures, they kind of came on this truth in a fresh way. The Roman Catholic Church had gotten into selling indulgences and a works-based salvation: "If you want to go to heaven, you've got to pay us enough money, and if you want to be okay with God, you've got to get an okay from the church."

They kind of went back to that old system of a mediator in the temple and all that stuff. And when Martin Luther read in the book of Romans that "the just shall live by faith," a light went off in his head, and he said, "This is the way. This is how we come home. It's not through popes and mediators and people. It's through the Lord Jesus Christ." And it inaugurated a movement that recaptured the gospel and that gospel changed the world. It's a big reason why we have the blessings that we have today in America—in large measure due to the Protestant Reformation.

What did they find? They recovered that simple principle that salvation is a gift of God's grace that is received by faith in the person of Jesus Christ. You've got to believe in God's promise that Jesus is the Messiah. You've got to receive the covering that he has made available through his death and his resurrection. And then as a person of faith, you live knowing that God is on the throne and he is my protector. And though the world may be crazy and everything around me be falling, I can trust God through Christ that I will endure to the end, that I can persevere.

He is my prophet. He is my priest and he is my king. And if there's never been a time in your life when you've received the gift of salvation into your heart, then the Holy Spirit this morning may be saying to you, "It's time to come home. You've been wandering, you've been lost for far too long. You've tried everything else except repentance and surrender in faith." And if that's true of you this morning, as Taylor comes up, I want to invite you to respond to the gift of salvation with an act of repentance and faith.

I know that most of you in this room are already Christians and so here's how I'd like you to consider responding. There are people in our city who are lost and they're wandering and they're trying to find their way home. And if you're sitting here this morning and you're a Christian, it means you came home. You've received the gift of God's salvation in Christ. Maybe this morning your prayer would be, "God, help me to see that. Help me to live as if that's true. Help me to silence the voice of accusation."

But I think maybe even more important than that this morning is a willingness for each of us to intercede for the brothers and sisters and family members and friends in our life who are still wandering looking for home. Their lives are marked by anxiety and brokenness and disarray. And when's the last time you cried and had a broken heart for the spiritual state of those who are wandering, lost, needing to come home? We did this congregational survey, and by far the most glaring weakness in our church is evangelism. It's praying for lost people.

It's sharing our faith in the marketplace of ideas. And so I want to challenge us this morning as we ourselves rejoice in the fact that God has given us a way home, that we would come and we would intercede for those people that we know in our life who haven't made it home yet. And maybe everyone in your family and all of your friends are saved. And if that's the case, you need to go make some lost people friends. You need to go make friends with some lost people. And that itself is an indictment that your heart has kind of drifted from the heart of God, who is a missionary God who wants all people to come to a saving knowledge of the truth.

And so we used to have these things called altar calls where people would come down to the altar. Now our altar's got pianos and chairs in front of it. But I notice that hardly anybody ever sits on the front row except me. And so if God leads you, what I'd like you to do is get up

out of your seat as a public response to the Lord of saying, "I want your heart to be my heart, and I want to be used by you to help people find their way home."

I want you to come and pray for those people on this front row. And you can spread out. You can right there where you're seated do that if you want. It's not a high pressure deal, but just a visible way for you to communicate to yourself and to the Lord, "I don't want to be a person who doesn't care about lost people. I want God's heart to be my heart." Maybe you know exactly who that person is, and you'd say, "Lord, would this be the week that you work in their life and you work in my life and you bring things together so that the gospel can come alive in their heart and they can receive it by faith?"

I don't know what the particulars are. This is Easter week. And so believe me, people are most open to the gospel on a week like this. And so of all the weeks for us to do it, this is the week to do so. So as Taylor leads us through a response, I'm going to invite you to respond. We're going to have a complete song, so we've got plenty of time. So as the Lord leads, you come. And if there's a public response you'd like to make, you can do that now.

Looks like he's calling an audible. So let's bow our heads together and let's pray as we respond to the Lord. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time in your word, and we thank you that you are a God who has made a way for us to come home. What a gracious act of grace. What a wonderful act of grace and forgiveness, mercy, Doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. And we ask for your forgiveness, Lord, for living lives that have maybe just gotten over that fact. Maybe we've been inoculated with a gospel vaccine where it gives us enough to maybe inoculate us from the true power, but it is not enough to actually change our lives.

And so where there's an apathy and an indifference about Christ and about his person and his work, we pray for your forgiveness. And where there is a hesitancy or an indifference about our brothers and sisters and family and friends who are still searching for the way home, we pray that you would burden us once again for our lost family members and friends, and that you would not just burden us so that we would pray and pay attention and care, but that you would move us out, so that in our dealings and our interactions we would begin to live on mission again.

And we would begin to join in your mission to make a name for yourself. And we wouldn't see our lives as lives lived unto ourselves, but we'd see our lives as a joint effort, joining with you and your great commission to make a people for yourself through the grace of God that's in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so as we respond to you now, as we sing this song, as we think about the great blessing of being able to come home through Christ, we pray that you would move in our hearts and use this time for your glory and our good, and we pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "the second one is in verse 22"; the provision of "garments of skins" that Wes goes on to read is Genesis 3:21 (he reads it as "verse 21" in the next sentence). Source: Genesis 3:21–22 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "he sings the 'It's a Wonderful World'"; the song is "What a Wonderful World," first recorded by Louis Armstrong in 1967 (written by Bob Thiele and George David Weiss). Source: Wikipedia, "What a Wonderful World." ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "starts with an S. Seraphim"; the figures worked into the veil of the tabernacle (and the temple) were cherubim, not seraphim (in the 11:00 a.m. livestream of this sermon Wes also says "seraphim" first, then "cherubim on the curtains, cherubim on the mercy seat"). Source: Exodus 26:31 (ESV), BibleGateway; 11:00 a.m. livestream captions. ↩
4. Transcript note: spoken as "Seraphim" (for the mercy seat), "guess what was present in the most holy place? The menorah," and "the twelve candles"; the mercy seat bore two gold cherubim (Exodus 25:18–20), and the lampstand stood in the holy place outside the veil, not in the Most Holy Place (Exodus 26:35; 40:24), with seven lamps (Exodus 25:37). Source: Exodus 25:18–20, 37; 26:35; 40:24 (ESV), BibleGateway. ↩