With God on the Staircase to Heaven — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 28 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, July 14, 2024 · *The Patriarchs*

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But if you have your Bibles, you can open them to the book of Genesis, chapter 28, Genesis 28, and as you're turning there, there's some younger adults in this service, not as many younger adults as in the other service, but it's an exercise I want you to try to do, even if you have to remember a little further back, of when it is in your life that your faith or whatever you want to call it, your convictions about God and the world and reality and all those things, when did you really come to own those for yourself?

So you weren't just believing what your mom and dad believed, but you were believing what you believed for yourself. And if you think back to that time, it's kind of interesting how that process works. Nobody's born out of the womb with a worldview intact, right? You kind of come with somewhat of a blank slate, and then the way that you're raised, the influences that you're surrounded with, the books that you read, the people to whom you're exposed, all of those things influence what it is that you think about the world and what you think about God.

But there comes a day where you decide for yourself what you're going to believe about these key issues, these key questions in life. And while there may be external factors that influence that decision, at the end of the day, the decision is yours to make. What was that day for you? What did that day look like? A day of what I'm just going to call personal conviction where it wasn't just I believe this because that's what my mom and dad taught me to believe, but I believe this because I believe this is true.

That's really what Genesis 28 is about. It's Jacob's coming of faith story. Might not be the day he actually converted, but it's the day he encountered God for himself. And it's a really instructive chapter for what that process looks like in our life when we come to encounter God in a personal way. And I hope it'll be helpful for you. Whether you're on that faith journey for yourself or whether you're walking with your children or friends or family

through that same kind of ordeal. Just to catch you up on the story, if you're new to the book of Genesis, the book of Genesis, the book of Beginnings, we looked at the life of Abraham, the OG, founding father of faith, and Abraham had a son named Isaac.

Isaac got married to a woman named Rebekah. Isaac and Rebekah had two sons named Jacob and Esau. From the get-go, they were always at war with each other, even in the womb, kicking and fighting each other. Rebekah goes to the Lord in prayer and says, why are these two kids, you know, fighting each other in my womb all the time, and God says there's not just two kids in there; there's two nations in there. And they're going to be two distinct peoples, and the younger is going to be served by the older.

And the older's going to be stronger than the younger, but there's just going to be this switcheroo that takes place. And in fact, that's exactly what happened. As they grow up, it says that Isaac favors Esau, the older son, and Rebekah favors Jacob the younger son and that Esau sells his birthright to his younger brother for a bowl of porridge, and that Esau the older ends up marrying some Canaanite women, basically rejecting the faith of his fathers. And that Jacob, in an attempt to secure his blessing, which he believed belonged to him, deceived his father, pretended to be Esau while he blessed him, and Jacob ended up getting the blessing instead of Esau.

And what happens is Esau gets so mad at Jacob for his scheming and thieving or perceived thieving from his perspective that he decides, I'm going to kill this boy, I'm going to kill my brother, and that'll make me feel better. And so when Rebekah, Jacob's mom, hears about it, she says to Jacob, You got to go. Your brother is planning to kill you, and that's where we pick up our passage. Let's actually pick it up at the end of chapter 27, verse 43, it says, Now my son, listen to me, flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, and stay with him for a few days until your brother's anger subsides, until his rage turns away from you, and he forgets what you've done to him.

And then I'm going to send for you and bring you back from there. Why should I lose you both in one day? Good question. Then she goes to her husband, Isaac, and enacts the plan. Isaac, husband, I am sick of my life because of these Hethite girls. Any man hears a woman say, I'm sick of my life, you're going to pay attention to the next thing that she says. And so she says, if Jacob marries someone from around here, like these Hethite girls, like our other son Esau did, you might as well kill me, because what good is my life?

So Isaac summoned Jacob and says, boy, better not marry one of them women. No, he didn't say that. He blessed him and he commanded him, do not marry a Canaanite girl. Go at once to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father. Marry one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. And then he blesses him. Again, maybe doubling the blessing he had already received. May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you so that you become an assembly of peoples. May God give you and your offspring the

blessing of Abraham, so that you may possess the land where you live as a foreigner, the land that God gave to Abraham.

And so Isaac sent Jacob to Paddan-aram to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. And then in a minute, there's going to be a map that shows you just how far this trip was. Suffice it to say, this is not probably what Jacob wanted to hear. Jacob is a mama's boy, he's a homebody, he's only ever kind of had comfort. His brother was the man's man, he was the hunter, he was the gatherer. And so you might say Jacob was not ready for this kind of a trip to go 550 miles north by himself to find a wife.

It's what I'm going to call a crisis of faith for Jacob. And I mentioned that because usually when it comes to God giving you your own faith convictions, he usually develops those faith convictions from a place of crisis in your life. Another way to say it is real conviction is forged through the fire of crisis. You almost never really can believe something with conviction until those beliefs get tested with hurt and pain and discomfort. And when you go through crises and the faith that you possess proves itself to be true.

That's when you really begin to own that faith for yourself, which is one of the reasons why I believe God takes us through crises because that's where conviction is forged. And that's exactly what's going to happen to Jacob. But Jacob's not the only one who has the crisis. He certainly has to go five hundred and fifty miles north, but his brother Esau also has a crisis. If you look in verse six, Esau is listening in or figuring out some way or another that not only did his father bless Jacob the first time, he's going to bless him again, send him to get a wife.

And the reason that he's blessing him is because he didn't marry a Canaanite woman. So Esau noticed that Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to get a wife there. And when he blessed him, Isaac commanded Jacob: Do not marry a Canaanite girl. Notice these two different reactions. Jacob listened to his father and mother and went to Paddan-aram, whereas Esau realized that his father disapproved of the Canaanite women, so Esau went to Ishmael and married, in addition to his other wives, Mahalath, daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son. She was the sister of Nebaioth.

And so you got two boys who make two totally different decisions and end up in two totally different destinations. Jacob gets the word from his father, and even though it would have been a dreadful thing and a fearful thing, he is obedient to his dad and goes to Paddan-aram, way, way, way up north. Do I have the map on the next verse or maybe one verse or one screen after the next screen? He's way down here in Beersheba. He's going to go all the way up here to Haran. It would have been a terrible trip.

Remember, he's by himself. The last time this happened, it was Abraham's servant who went to find a wife for Isaac, but he went with like ten camels and an entourage and who knows what else to make his trip successful. Jacob had a crisis, but he responded with obedience

and faith. Esau, on the other hand, has a similar crisis in that he listens to his father say, do not marry a Canaanite woman. I don't know if he was just dense or, you know. What do you want to call that? Gym jock, just not really a thoughtful person, although most of the gym jocks I know are pretty thoughtful.

He realizes my dad is not approving of these women, so I've got to do something. But instead of doing the right thing, which would have been to go to Paddan-aram and marry a believing woman, he says, I can kind of have my cake and eat it too. I'll take a few steps in that direction without having to fully commit. So he goes to Ishmael. Who's Ishmael? Ishmael was Abraham's other son, the son of compromise, a son that he had with Hagar, who was not originally his wife, it was Sarah's servant.

And God was not pleased with that union and Abraham ultimately has to send Ishmael away. But I think Esau's thinking, well if bloodline is what matters I'll marry into the bloodline without having to marry into the faith, and I'm going to go with Ishmael. And what ends up happening is Esau gets set on a totally different trajectory that ends up in a totally different destination, which I think is important to think about because it's not just that crisis itself forges good conviction in your life. Crisis will create the context, but it's the choices that you make within the crises that actually determines your destination.

And when you allow the pressure cooker of life to almost give you a platform where God can show that righteous decisions lead to righteous outcomes, then it can change your life for the better. Whereas if you allow the pressure cooker of life to be a platform for the enemy to say foolish decisions will lead to prosperity, you'll actually see those things proven as quite false. And so it's not just the crisis, but the choices you make within them that determine your ultimate destination. And so that raises the question of Genesis 28, which is, how do we allow the crises of life to set us up for an encounter with the living God and not allow the crisis of life to set us up for a life of disappointment and difficulty?

And there are some principles in Genesis 28 of how it is that the Lord does that, how he reveals himself to us in a personal meaningful way and there are also some key things to remember about the Lord in light of those encounters. Now some of you here today would say I've encountered the Lord in a personal way. I've repented of sin. I've put my faith in Jesus. It's not just that I believe it because I was raised believing it. I actually came to experience God in a personal way. And for those of you who would say that, you would probably look at these things that we're about to read and say, yes and amen.

That's exactly what happened to me. Others of you this morning may be on your own quest and maybe you would say, I'm here because I'm interested in the things of God. But I wouldn't say it's real to me. I'm struggling to believe. I want to believe. I see that God's made a difference in these people's lives, but it hasn't really happened yet to me. And I hope that

today you'll see a framework for how it is that God interacts with us in that personal way so that we can come to know Him in a meaningful way.

And some of you are raising children and you are praying that those very same things will happen in their life. How does it work? Well, the first principle comes out of the verses that we just read. Let's pick it back up in verse 10. It says that Jacob left Beersheba and went towards Haran. He reached a certain place and he spent the night there because the sun had set, and he took one of the stones from the place, and he put it there at his head, and he lay down in that place, and he dreamed.

And he dreams about this stairway to heaven. As a Led Zeppelin song would be. One of the first songs I learned on the guitar. This is not where Jacob wants to be. Can we agree on that? He is going way north. He's started here in Beersheba. He gets all the way up here to outside of Bethel. I don't think he was in the city. It doesn't sound like he's in a city. He's not on a mattress. He's not in an inn. Sounds like he's in the desert with nothing to lay his head on other than a rock.

Okay. That sounds like a bad day to me. He is separated from his mother. He's separated from his father. He's separated from everything that he used to hold to as a comfort or a security in life. He's looking up the starry sky, probably afraid for his life, and it's there that he meets the Lord. When you encounter the Lord in a personal way, God will often reveal himself to you at the least likely place. At the place you least expect to encounter him. The place where you don't want to be.

The place where you would say, God, bring me anywhere, take me anywhere else other than here, it is that place where God says, that's where I want you, because that's where I can teach you. Because that's where I can show you. And that's exactly what he did for Abraham. That's exactly what he's doing for Jacob. He is stripping from Jacob every comfort. He is removing him from his geographical comforts, but he's also removing him from relational comforts, like the comfort of his mother and the comfort of his father and the comfort of his kitchen and the comfort of his home.

And he's saying, I want to disconnect you from those things. Why? Because they're bad? Yeah, well, maybe, you know. I'm not saying his mom was all good. She certainly led him astray with what he did with his father, but, you know, most moms are kind of a mixed bag. Most parents are a mixed bag. I'm not saying it's all bad, but it was a hindrance. It was a barrier to Jacob coming to possess faith for himself. And so God strips away those barriers and says, I want to connect you to something better.

I want to connect you to something real. I want to connect you to me. And in order for you to connect to me, you've got to disconnect from these other creature comforts in your life. And that's why God will often take us through the deserts and the valleys of life. so that he can

show himself to be the superior source of satisfaction and security and comfort in life. So when it comes to your personal encounter with God, remember he'll often meet you in an unexpected place. And it's there when you're in a painful, unpleasant circumstance that God will prove himself to be the better thing.

What it is that Jacob needed to remember, and I think what it is that Moses is showing us kind of behind the scenes because Jacob wouldn't have known this, is that this is the very same place his grandfather encountered the Lord in a very similar set of circumstances. We don't know until later that Jacob names this place Bethel, but the name Bethel shows up earlier in the book of Genesis. after God appears to Abraham, the original founding father of faith, he says, I want you to leave your comforts, I want you to leave your father, I want you to leave your security, and I want you to go to the land that I'm going to show you.

And so Abraham goes, he takes the step of faith, and he says, Lord, take me where you're going to take me. And one of the first places that Abraham goes to, this is in Genesis chapter 12, verse 8, is a place just outside of Bethel and Ai, Genesis chapter 12, verse 8. He moved to the hill country east of Bethel. He pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east, and he built an altar to the Lord there, and he called on the name of the Lord.

So where Jacob is, is exactly where Abraham was when he first began to call on the name of the Lord. Jacob doesn't know this is where Abraham was. I wonder if the rock on which Jacob is laying his head is the same rock Abraham used to build that original altar. Or the second time that Abraham went to that same place in Genesis chapter 13, verses 3 and 4, where Abraham once again calls on the name of the Lord after he comes out of Egypt and kind of grows in his faith.

It is a reminder that even in the worst of circumstances, when you're in the valley low, it is even then that God is sovereign and that God is orchestrating events, sometimes in ways that you cannot see until way after the fact. But God is sovereign. He's on his throne. Nothing takes him by surprise. And because he's sovereign, you can trust him. You can lean on him. You can walk with him. You can receive from him those things you thought you had to receive from someone else or something else. And it's when you begin to do that that you'll begin to encounter him in a very personal, meaningful way.

So he meets us in the unexpected place. So remember, God is sovereign. He also meets us in an unusual way. If you pick it back up in verse twelve, he has this dream about a ladder, not a ladder, a stairway. Some call it a ladder. It's not really a ladder, more like, someone said in our small group, it reminds me of an escalator. So I don't know, maybe it's an escalator. Or a stairway or something broad. He dreams about, let's see, verse 12: a stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching the sky and God's angels were going up and down on it.

And it says that the Lord was standing there beside Jacob, saying, I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham, and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your offspring the land on which you are lying. Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out towards the west and the east and the north and the south. And all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. Look, I am with you. Notice this language. Look, I am with you.

I will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. These words had to have been really comforting for Jacob given the moment of his life and the situation that he was in. And I wonder for Jacob, we don't know what his faith was like before this time. I kind of lean towards Jacob being a little bit jaded. Because he had heard stories probably about his granddad, Abraham, great man of God.

He had probably even heard stories about his own father, Isaac, who started out good and the Lord did some incredible things through his life, but did not finish well. I mean his own dad was in cahoots with Esau to try to take the blessing that supposedly God had reserved for him, given the prophecy that Rebekah had during her pregnancy. So maybe he's thinking to himself, well if this God does exist, he's not what my dad said he is, and maybe he's not what my granddad said he is. I don't know what to believe.

He was surrounded by idolatry. He was struggling. And then he has this encounter with God. He has this dream where it is undeniable. Not only does God exist, but he's the creator God. He's created heavens and earth. He's got these angels going up and down on the staircase. And he's sitting beside me and he's saying to me the very same things that he said to my grandfather and to my father after him. The Abrahamic blessing that I'm going to have this land and that my descendants are going to bless the nations and he's going to be with me and watch over me.

God will often meet us in an unexpected place and then, when he reveals himself, he reveals himself in an unusual way. He'll reveal himself in a way that breaks through the barrier. It pulls back the curtain. All of a sudden you get this aha moment that not only is there a God that exists in this generic way, or maybe a principled philosophical way, but no, there's a God that exists in a real way, in a personal way, and he is not just their God or the God of the world, but he's my God.

And that's exactly what is happening to Jacob. Theologians talk about the difference between general revelation and special revelation, general revelation being what God has revealed about Himself through nature. The starry hosts in the sky, the cosmological arguments for God's existence, the philosophical arguments, moral arguments for God's existence. You can arrive at a version of God through that revelation. But that revelation doesn't save you. That revelation doesn't change your life. The revelation that saves you and changes your life is

special revelation. Revelation where God reveals himself not just as the creator, but a personal God who wants to have relationship with you.

A God who reveals himself as holy. And you as sinful. A God who reveals himself as personal, who wants to have relationship with you, but because of your sin, you're in need of his mercy and grace. And that's exactly what Jacob experiences in this special revelation. Now he received it in a dream. Today God still reveals himself in visions and dreams, especially, I hear a lot, in the Middle East, about Muslim people having dreams about Jesus and being evangelized by people and it all comes to fruition. It's really pretty wild and crazy.

But the New Testament talks about the way that we come to know God and be rightly related to God is through the revelation of his Son, Jesus Christ. Hebrews chapter 1 talks about that long ago God would reveal himself through the prophets to our ancestors, but in these latter days he's spoken to us by his son. The Son is the radiance of God's glory, the Son is the exact imprint of his nature. And as one of my old professors used to say, you never speak about the living word Jesus outside of the written word, because the written word is the only reliable source of information we have to come to know the living word.

And so special revelation comes through the Scripture, because it's the Scripture that testifies to who Jesus is. And when you begin to encounter God through special revelation like Scripture, you begin to understand the same things Jacob understood, namely God is with me. God is not up there like a lot of deistic religions teach or atheistic or even pantheistic religions that God exists, but he's kind of above and beyond and uninterested in what's going on down here. He's just kind of doing his thing and letting us do our thing. That's not the God Jacob encounters.

He encounters a God who is sovereign over creation, distinct from creation, but loving towards creation, wanting to be in personal relationship with his creation. He is with us. He's Emmanuel. He's God with us, which is exactly what Jesus proves himself to be. He even gets that name when he is born. He is our Emmanuel. He is God with us. And those words had to have been comforting for Jacob. Words that he was probably used to hearing from his mother. I'll be with you, little boy. I'm never going to leave you.

I'm never going to forsake you. Now he's receiving these things from the Lord. But he doesn't just hear that God is with him, he also hears that God is for him. You notice there's this staircase. Where is God standing on the staircase? He's standing next to Jacob. The staircase a lot of people believe is a rebuke to the tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11. In the tower of Babel you had the peoples of the earth all banding together and they said, Let us build a tower so that we can get to God.

We're so great, we're so awesome, we're going to get to God with our tower, and it's almost as if God is saying with this staircase, it's not about you coming up to me, it's about me coming

down to you. Every other religion in the world, whether it's pantheism or deism or all the other monotheistic cults and deviations from Christianity, they all say you get to God by climbing up. You strive, you earn, you do your best, your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds. Christianity comes along and says that's not how it works because heaven is a holy place for a holy God and none of us are holy.

So the only way that unholy people can be in right relationship with a holy God is if a holy God comes down in love and makes provision for us through his own perfection and his own holiness, which is exactly what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. And I think Jacob feels that because Jacob knows he's not worthy. God is for me. God is with me. I deceived my dad. I lied. I don't even know that I fully believe all of this. I'm on the run because my brother wants to murder me.

How can he bless me? I'm not worthy. And it's as if God is saying, I don't bless people because they're worthy. I bless people because I'm worthy. I don't bless them based on their efforts. I bless them based on my love and my grace. So not only am I God who is going to be with you, I'm a God who is for you, not because of what you've done for me, but because of what I'm going to do for you. And I think Jacob is just overwhelmed by it. I think it changes his life because as soon as he realizes that this God exists and he is in right relationship with Jacob, he loses his lid.

Look at verse 16. When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, Whew, that's some bad beans. No, he didn't say that. When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. And he was afraid and he said, what an awesome place this is. This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. And early in the morning Jacob took the stone that was near his head and he set it up as a marker. He poured oil on top of it, and then he named the place Bethel, though previously the city was named Luz, and then Jacob made a vow.

If God will be with me and watch over me during this journey that I'm making, and if he's going to provide me with food to eat and clothing to wear. And if I return safely to my father's family, then the Lord will be my God. And this stone that I've set up as a marker will be God's house, and I will give you a tenth of all that you give to me. God will not only meet us in an unexpected place, he will not only reveal himself in an unusual way, he'll also leave us with an undeniable hope.

That's what I'm going to call it anyway. And I call it an undeniable hope because Jacob comes away from this moment, this experience, by saying, I can't believe I just met God. It was not like I think I might have met God. It's possible. I could explain it other ways. No, he says, it's undeniable. I met with the Lord. This is God's place. This is God's house. And I am God's. I belong to God. I can no longer explain it away. I can no longer say, well, maybe if I this and maybe if he that.

No, I am fully surrendering to the Lord because God is in this place. When you truly encounter the Lord, you won't have to wonder, did I or did I not encounter the Lord? You'll know. I just met with the God of heaven. And you know that he knows that because of the language he uses. Surely God is in this place. He's here and I didn't know it. But he also does three things. Consecration is a word that just means to make something holy. He consecrates this rock. What did the guy call his volleyball when he was on the island by himself?

Wilson. Every time I read that about that rock I think about Wilson. But Wilson's not a consecrated stone. Okay, but he pours oil on the stone as a way of saying this rock is holy, because this is the rock I was laying on when God revealed himself to me. He's making a holy rock. Then he makes a holy place. He consecrates the place. It used to be called Luz, which means almond orchard. Maybe it was a source of pagan worship, who knows? But he says this is no longer a source of pagan worship.

This is a holy place. This is Bethel. Which means house of God. This is where God comes to visit his people. And then after he consecrates the rock and he consecrates the place, he consecrates himself and he says, I belong to the Lord. And he makes this vow. And some people say that he's bargaining with God. Well, God, if you'll protect me, and if you'll feed me, and if you'll clothe me, and if you'll bring me back here, then I'll worship you. But I don't know that that's exactly what Jacob is doing.

If it is what he's doing, I think all of us can admit to the fact that when you were younger in your faith, you bargained with the Lord, right? I know I did. God, if you'll give me a smoking hot wife, I'll be yours forever. Back then it wasn't wife, it was just a girlfriend. I'd settle for a girlfriend. Just make her pretty. Immature faith, right? It's an immature faith. I don't think that's what Jacob's doing here because Jacob just encountered God in a very powerful way. And in that dream, God actually says to him, I will, I will.

I will watch over you. I will be with you. I will take you where you're going, and I'll feed you and clothe you and I will bring you back. And I think what Jacob is doing here is saying, well, shoot, if that's true, if you're going to do all of these things, then you must be the true God. You must be the real God of gods, King of kings, Lord of lords, and I'm going to worship you. I'm all yours. How could I hold anything back from you? And I think that's more in line with what Jacob is doing, which is what everybody does when they truly encounter the Lord.

When you truly encounter the Lord, you say, as the hymn writer said, love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. He doesn't need anything, but he's worthy of everything. He gives him 10% of everything that he owns, not as a way of saying, God, I know you need a little extra cash. God doesn't need extra cash because God owns everything. He's giving 10% as a way of saying, God, I know you own the world. You own it all, you own me, I own nothing, I'm a manager, I'm a steward, and I'm going to live my life as a testimony that you alone are worthy.

And I think that's the result of truly encountering the Lord. You know that God is sovereign, you know that he is with you, you know that he is for you, and you live as though he's worthy. And everything that you do with your life and everything that you do with your money and everything that you do with everything that you possess is lived in light of that core truth. Have you encountered the Lord in that way? Have you come to meet him in those unexpected places? Has he revealed himself to you in that special unusual way and have you come to surrender to him as the one who is deserving of your life, your soul, your all, because he's giving you an undeniable hope.

Now, for most of us today, we're not having dreams about stairways to heaven. As I said earlier, the way that God reveals Himself today is through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the way it happened for me, it was in the preaching of God's word that I was sitting in a church service and God pricked my heart and said, you're a sinner. You're separated from me because I'm holy and you're not. And if you don't have something, if you don't have some way of dealing with your guilt, you're going to die and spend eternity separated from me in a place called hell.

And in that moment, my eyes were opened to my sinfulness and God's holiness and the love and mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for my sin through his death on the cross, and I surrendered my life to him. Seven years, eight years old. Have you had that moment? Not did you grow up in a Christian home? Not have you always believed, but has there been a time in your life where this kind of thing happened and you realized I need Jesus? And I don't need my mama's Jesus and I don't need my dad's Jesus.

I need the real Jesus. Because I got some real problems. And if you haven't, it may be that this morning the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, the special revelation of God, is saying, I want to meet you. Here I am. Will you respond to me? And I can't help but just sense that there may be somebody here today who needs to make that decision. Maybe you grew up in the church, maybe you grew up in this church. But you've never really surrendered your life to Jesus. When you look at his life, Jesus lived under the sovereign plan of God.

Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. He is God in the flesh. Jesus perfectly displayed that God is not against you, but he is for you. He did not come to condemn you, but to save you. And Jesus alone can give you an undeniable hope that will be with you in the mountain highs and the valley lows, because your hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Do you have that hope this morning? And if you don't, it may be that the Lord is calling you to receive it.

Not through your self-effort and striving and climbing. But through repentance and faith in the one who's done it all for you, the Lord Jesus Christ. So if you need to make that decision, the altar is open. I'll be happy to pray with you about it. You may want to scan the QR code

and talk to somebody after the service, but would you respond to the Lord? And for the rest of us who have had that encounter, would you pray? Maybe if your faith is stale and your love has grown cold, would you say, God, would you reveal yourself to me in this way?

Would you show yourself true in the life of my child, the life of my children? For my friend at work, would you show yourself to be the God of Jacob? But not just the God of Jacob, but their God as well. As we respond to the Lord, I'll give you opportunity to do as the Lord leads. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time in your word, and we do thank you that you're not just a God who is, but that you're a God who speaks, you're a God who loves, you're a God who forgives, a God who saves.

And so would you do that this morning as we respond to you during this time of invitation and we pray these things in Jesus' name.