



Gospel Buckets

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If you were here last week you might remember I started the sermon with a little story about the president coming out, this was almost 100 years ago, of church and a sermon about sin and what he said about it. He's against it. That picture of sin being the problem and we hear a lot of songs about it. We hear a lot of testimonies about sin. And the problem with us being perceived by people who occasionally come to church is that's what we do. We just talk about the fact that you just need to sin less, just do less sin, and then you'll be a better person. Matter of fact, that's why a lot of people go to church, That's why a lot of people go back to church when they have kids. They want their kids to sin less. They don't want their kids to go through a lot of what they went through in the sin and the scars and all the stuff that comes in the wake of sin and so they think that's what church is about, you know, having us sin less.

Now, that certainly is what happens, certainly when we hear sermons like last week or as the president did 100 years ago and said, yeah, the pastor's against it. He's trying to preach against sin. But we have to understand that the whole story, even that song we just sang about his mercy, the real issue is whether or not you are a recipient of the mercy of God to forgive your sin. And that's really the issue. And that's why we start to talk about the gospel or the good news. That's why Christians at least used to be called evangelical Christians, because we believed in the "Euangelion", which is the Greek word that translates "good news." The good message that we have is that God can be merciful toward you if you understand the message.

And this book that we carry around, the 66 books that God gave us in this library utilizing the apostles and prophets to write a book that only God could write, because it's got this set of predictive prophecy punctuating it throughout, reminding us that this is not the product of man. These are not man's best thoughts about God, but these are God's thoughts to us, transmitted through these apostles and prophets for a 1,400-year period of time from the law of Moses all the way through the book of Revelation. And we understand that that book is a message and the message is about how people get the mercy of God to have their sins forgiven. Our sins are many but the mercy is great and the mercy of God can forgive our sins.

Now you go to church, you might leave wanting to sin less and certainly that is our hope as we become Christians to sin less. But the goal of church is not to get people just to sin less and say, well, that's it. It's not a message of just reforming your life. This isn't like a, you know, a 12-step program to get you to live a more moral life. This is about you making sure that you are forgiven and the mercy of God has been directed toward you, that it's been actuated, it's real, it's happening in your life that God is not looking at you anymore as a sinner but he's seeing you as forgiven. And that's not just happening indiscriminately because, you know, God's a nice guy and he just wants to look at you and say, "Well, of course I don't, I won't hold your sins against you.

God has sent a message in this book. And at risk of oversimplification I'm going to have you think of it in three buckets, three categories. Let's start with bucket number one and that's the



Old Testament, right? And bucket number two is the coming of Christ in the New Testament. And bucket number three is what Jesus said we must do in response to his coming. So Old Testament, New Testament information about Christ and then what in the world should we do about it.

The Old Testament is very important. And the sad thing about people studying the New Testament and not studying the Old Testament is we miss all the groundwork for the New Testament. The message of God is predicated, it's founded on the Old Testament message. And the Old Testament message tells us a lot about who God is. And the first verse of the Bible, which I'm sure you know, is what? "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," as you whispered quietly as though you didn't know it. But you know the verse. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The whole book is starting with the fact that you need to realize that it's not you, as the psalmist says, it's not you that created yourself. We didn't create ourselves, but he created us and we are accountable then to him.

So God, being the one in charge is very important. We just can't rush to the New Testament and start quoting John 3:16 and saying, God loves you, right? "For God so love the world he gave his only Son." That's an important part of this message but it's just one of three buckets. We start with the bucket that is the Old Testament. We say, what does that teach us? It teaches us that there is a God and that God has made us and he is in charge. And then all of a sudden, as people like to say, well, that God in the Old Testament seems pretty strict, he seems pretty mean.

And that is a very important part of the Old Testament to remind us that God is a God who is absolutely holy and will not tolerate sin. And the two attributes that we try to highlight when we think of the Old Testament are that he is a holy God, he makes a holy and perfect standard and requires it of even the first couple. And that is I'm in charge of this Garden. I put you as managers or stewards over it. But this particular tree, I get to make the rules. You can't eat from it. Don't touch it. I'm the one in charge, right? And you can't be right with me, you cannot even survive if you eat from that tree, "For in the day that you eat of the fruit of the tree, you will surely die." So I get to make the rules and I'm telling you this is how it's supposed to go. And this just makes it clear that I'm going to be God. You get to be my creature and everything will be copacetic if you just do what I say.

But of course, you know the story. They don't do what he says and they sin. And therefore there's judgment. "The day you eat of the fruit you will surely die." He then expels them from the Garden and all of a sudden now we see all of the terrible things that happen. Even as he says in this Garden reality you are going to no longer have a garden and ground that works well for you. It's going to have thorns and thistles and you are going to have pain in childbirth. There could be problems in your relationships. You're going to have all kinds of issues now because of sin, "Cursed is the ground because of you."

So we have a God who is in charge, a God who makes the rules, and a God who says you got to keep the rules to be in favor with me and relationship with me. And now when you break the rules there are going to be consequences. And that's a lot of what the Old



Testament is about. That God is a God who does not tolerate our usurping his place, trying to do what we want, living for ourselves, right? That I'm the boss, that I'm number one. I get to do whatever I want. God illustrates that throughout the Old Testament as a bunch of sheep that don't listen to the shepherd and they wander away and they do it at their own peril, right? They have trouble, they have problems, they have issues and risk and harm and hazard because they don't listen and follow the shepherd. They should follow the shepherd.

So we learn a lot about God responding to people throughout a long history all the way back to Abraham. If you think about the story, kind of picking up in detail there in Genesis 12, all the way through the end of the book of Malachi, we get this 2,000-year period of discussion about how God is responding as a holy and just creator. Now there are all kinds of discussions about God's mercy. There are discussions about it but it's not the primary emphasis. The emphasis now is that God would say he would provide a solution. That he would show, as he puts it in the book of Isaiah, that by my own arm, I will come and solve this problem. By the strong arm of the Lord, I'm going to have to solve the problem because you as sinners, you don't do the right thing. There's a penalty to be paid. And so I have to fix the problem.

And now we can quote John 3:16 if we understand those things. "For God so love the world that he gave his one and only Son." The coming of Christ and the coming of what he came to do which are primarily two things in that second bucket now, the coming of Christ and what he came to do has two component parts to it. And that is he has to live the righteous life that we didn't live. And then he's going to die and suffer and not be suffering at the hands of the Sanhedrin or the Pharisees or the Jews, not even at the hands of the Romans or the Roman soldiers or Pilate. He's suffering, the Bible says, and predicted back in the book of Isaiah, he would suffer at the hands of God, that God would be willing to crush him and to offer him up as a guilt offering.

Now, the whole point is that when God reaches out to solve the problem, he's going to do it as a perfect person. He's going to come without sin. There was no sin in his mouth. He'd never lie. That's how Isaiah 53 puts it. There's just "no deceit found in his mouth." So he's perfect and yet he is going to suffer as a guilty one. And so God says, I'm going to solve the problem. My expression of love, which in no way negates the fact that I'm in charge, that I have a holy standard, and that I'm always going to have to judge by that holy standard because I can't be good if I don't judge sin, is that now I'm going to supply the solution. And the solution is my Son will live the righteous life that you should have lived, right? He'll live the perfect 14-year-old life when you were doing all this stuff at 14 that you shouldn't have done. And he's going to do it right. He's going to live a childhood, a teenage period of time and an adult period of time just fulfilling all the righteousness that God requires.

And because he's God in human form, he can now take all of that human righteousness and give it not to just the one person, because he's not a temporal being, he's an eternal being, he can take that eternal human righteousness and apply it to all kinds of people, people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. And he also has to absorb the sin of those people who will be saved and forgiven.



So those are two buckets so far. Old Testament truth, the foundation of all that we learned in the New Testament, who God is, what his standard is, how he responds to people who are involved in the infractions of his standard. And now he says, I'm going to solve the problem, and that is I'm going to have someone live for you, my own Son, with eternal worth, and I'm going to have him die, which is an amazing thought that the Son of God, the second person of the divine, eternal Godhead, is going to die as a human being. All God, all human.

And that act of me crushing him is the judgment, it's so profound because of who he is, the judgment that you deserve as a sinner, now, everyone's saved. No, that's not what he says. He says, now you have to respond to that. And that's the third bucket and it's the second part of the New Testament which is reflected in the Old Testament as well, because the same words are used, in different languages, Hebrew is the Old Testament, Greek is the New Testament, but the same words we would translate into our language are the same response to God all the time. Every time. It's just all over the place. As Jesus said as he came and started his ministry as he talked about this whole arrangement, he came proclaiming the Kingdom of God, Mark Chapter 1, and he said, "You've got to repent and believe in the gospel," believe in the good news.

So here is this picture of repentance and faith. That's the third bucket which here's how we're supposed to respond, two imperative verbs. "Repent" and "believe." That's how it's translated in Mark 1. It can be translated as "trust," and rightly so. And it's like one of our words. It has a breadth of meaning. It can describe demons who believe all the facts about Jesus but they don't trust Jesus. We are supposed to not only believe the facts about Jesus, as I said, not only does our intellect need to be converted, our volition has to be converted. We have to trust him. And so repentance and faith becomes this third category of information in the Bible. And it's focused on and emphasized in the New Testament.

Matter of fact, one verse, let's just take you, as long as you brought a Bible, you might as well use it here this morning, let's go to Acts since we were just in Acts. We could take you to Romans but let's go to Acts as long as I'm bouncing around here. If you've been with us in our study of Acts, it wasn't long ago we were studying this passage. Drop down in the middle of this and I'll jump in even to the middle of the sentence, because Paul is all about this message. If you want to glance at verse 20, he's giving this message everywhere. Acts Chapter 20 verse 21. Are you with me on this? Some of you who brought your Bibles today? It's in your phones. Go to ESV.org and just type in Acts 20:21 and here it'll pop up. Here's what you'll read. "Testifying, that means he saying things, he's witnessing, he's giving a verbal message, "to both Jews and Greeks." That's the great thing about the New Testament. Now, the focus shifts to giving the solution not just to the Jewish people, though we learned a lot about God, who he is, his standard, and how he responds to infractions through the Jewish people. But now the Jewish messiah is going to be available and the benefits to Jews and Greeks.

And he was saying "to both Jews and Greeks, testifying," to them, "of repentance," here's the first thing, "toward God." Here are the verbs, here are the imperative verbs. What do I have to



do? This message. Well, you have to "repent toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, there are two great words there we don't normally look at, but it'd be good for us just to look at these two words, the word "toward" and the word "in." We got the words, which you hear a lot in the baptismal tank. When anybody shares their testimony they talk about repentance and faith and those are great words, right? "Metanoia" in the Greek New Testament and "Pisteuo." These are great words. But we need to have the word next to them that makes us understand what they are. Repentance "toward" God and faith "in" our Lord Jesus. Those two words help us understand exactly what we mean. Right?

To repent is not just to change your mind. You'll hear people say that. They don't know language. They think they know language. They say that about the Greek word metanoia. But this is not just taking the sum parts of a word, the component parts of the word, and making some kind of judgment about that. You don't take the word "awful" and say "aw" and "ful." I know what "aw" means and I know what "ful" means. Awful means there's full of awe. That's not what the word metanoia means. Metanoia means that you're turning towards someone. Other words that are used in the Greek New Testament, not that you need to hear the Greek word, but "Strepho" is another one which is sometimes translated "to turn." We're turning metanoia, strepho, we're turning toward God.

Now, remember the picture of the Old Testament I talked about. If you're a sheep and you don't listen to the voice of your shepherd, then you're going astray. And the Bible says in Isaiah, all of us go astray. That's the moral problem. You've set your own agenda. And now the culture, by the way, how good are they at telling everybody just take whatever path you want. Let's just affirm it. Let's all bow down to it. Everyone can do whatever they want. Do whatever you want. And that's what our world says and that's what our hearts say. And our culture is nothing other than a reflection and a projection of our hearts. And what we're saying here is what we need to do is to repent. We have to, here's a word in Peter, "Return to the great shepherd of our souls." We need to turn to God, metanoia, We need to turn. That's the word that Alexander the Great's army in the Grecian period of history would yell out to make the armies do an about-face. That was the word they'd yell out, metanoia. Metanoia means turn around. You're going that way, you need to go this way.

And repentance is being able to say that I am forsaking my own way, and I'm now going his way. That's why we're called, one of the primary words in the New Testament to describe Christians is the word "Mathētēs." Mathētēs, we get words like mathematics from it. It's translated in our Bibles "disciple," and that means that we are a follower, a follower of this particular teacher, a follower of this particular leader. And we are supposed to be disciples of Christ. Even in the great commission that we talked about this morning, we're making disciples. Disciples of who? Of us? No, of Christ. Right? And baptizing them. So we're taking people and we're saying, you need to turn to God, you need to turn to God. And God's going to say, now, follow my Son. He's the shepherd. And if you hear his voice, which was beautifully said in one of the testimonies this morning, I hear the voice of the shepherd. I hear it now. I'm attuned to it. I'm following him. Right?



That picture of turning is what Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 15 says so clearly that "Christ died for us," that those of us who are becoming Christians, here's what we do, "We no longer live for ourselves, but for him who died for us and rose again." So I'm turning from my own way. You don't get to make your own rules. You don't get to choose your own gender. You don't get to love whoever you want. You don't get to do whatever you want, you don't get your own rules. You don't get to do that. If you do the way of doing your own thing is death. That's what the Bible says. You have to cling to the shepherd and you may not like all of his rules. I don't like all of his rules. Don't tell him I said that, but I don't like all of God's rules. But I have to keep them because he's the shepherd, he's in charge.

And I know, just like I learned in the Garden in Genesis Chapter 3 if he makes the rules, I got to keep them. There's a penalty to pay. And the reality is I'm not just afraid of the penalty. I'm afraid of the fact that God knows better than I do which way human beings ought to go. And so I got to keep the rules. I'm was seeing my life as doing whatever I want, and now I'm saying, okay, I'm turning to God. I just love that "repentance toward God." That word "toward" is so helpful in this passage and then faith "in" our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's just rich, that whole phrase. But the word "in" now changes what I'm saying about the word "Pisteuo" or the word that's translated here, "faith." Faith in. Faith. Belief. Trust. Translated all three different ways in the New Testament to describe the breadth of this word "to trust."

If I say I believe you or I trust you, that's one thing. But if I say I believe IN you, I trust IN you. That's a different kind of thing. You may spout off some talent that you have and I say, "Well, I believe you." And I might say that just to get you off my back, like, okay, okay, okay, you're a pilot or whatever. Okay, fantastic. I believe you. Now, so but to trust you is different. To trust you is to get in my car and drive up the toll road and get on the tarmac into your hangar, get in your plane, and to say, I trust that you're my pilot. See, that's a different kind of thing. So the word "toward" is helpful when it comes to repentance. This is a directional change in my life. It's not the effect of the change that saves us. It's that work that God does to bring repentance to us.

Early in Acts Chapter 3 we're told that repentance is a gift of God. God grants us that. He opens our eyes to the wrongness of our way, to the depth of our sin, so that we can turn now to our good shepherd and follow him. And "in" means I'm trusting him to be not only my leader but my savior, because you and I cannot be right before God. And you've heard that in the testimonies this morning. Let me just make it very clear, biblical Christianity is not come to church, we're against sin, sin less, and if you sin less, as we've heard even this morning, it's not as though there's some cosmic set of scales where you get up there and we'll say, "Hey, Jim, you were pretty good. You did more good stuff than bad stuff. Look at all that stuff you gave to the Salvation Army. Well, a lot of it was junk, so we're going okay, but still, look, you helped the old lady cross the street. You did some good things, you didn't cheat on your wife or your taxes. Okay, you're in." That's not how this works.

I got a chip on my windshield. Did I say that in an illustration not long ago? I did because I hate it. It's right there in my view, and just a little chip, but it bugs me. And I keep thinking, what does it cost to replace my windshield? Do I want to do it? What is it? You know, how



long am I keeping in this car. I think this every day I get in my car. Right? Send me to your counselor. But I struggle with the chip in my windshield. Now, I saw a car recently that had a completely fractured windshield. It was horrible. I mean, it had spidered everywhere. It was like, you know, oh, man, that's horrible. That's horrible. Now, whose windshield is broken? Both of ours. Right? My windshield's broken, his windshield is broken. I feel worse for him because he can't look anywhere in his windshield. I just can't look straight ahead at my windshield. But we both have broken windshields.

When that car comes off the lot, right? When it comes off the assembly line and someone's wiping the windshield for the first time before they send it to the dealer, it doesn't matter what kind of chip it has, what kind of crack it has, how big the smash is on it. If it doesn't have a good windshield, it doesn't have a good windshield. That's why James says it doesn't matter what part of the law you broke. If you broke the law, you're a lawbreaker. And guess what you get? Reject. It's not like, look, hey, you know, two-thirds of this guy's windshield, his moral life, was good. It was only the third over here that was bad. Is the windshield good? Is it going to pass inspection with the one in charge, the creator who makes the rules, which is no cracks? And then he has to unfortunately reject those, because he's holy, all of those who have a cracked moral life.

Well, that's you and that's me. And we're all sinners. We heard that in the baptism tank this morning. We're all sinners. We have to get to the place where we recognize what we need is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we can start with the last word. Christ. Think about that word, Christ. That word is just a Greek form of a Hebrew word in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word "Mašíaḥ." Mašíaḥ is the Hebrew word. The Greek equivalent is "Christós," and christós means, and it's just transliterated into our language, Christ. And we say Jesus is the Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's not his last name. That's the role that he fulfills in the Old Testament of being the mašíaḥ. Or we transliterated that into English, we call it the Messiah. The Messiah or the Christ, same thing. It's just that one is Greek and one is Hebrew.

But what does that mean? In the Old Testament what we needed was the one who would fulfill all of God's idealized and perfect template of what we needed. What we need is the perfect one who thinks right, who chooses right, who does right, who doesn't do wrong. He would be the mašíaḥ. Mašíaḥ means someone who is anointed. See, if you're going to pick a king for your nation in the Old Testament, we're not good at it today, you would pick the best you had among you, right? You'd pick the best. We're not doing so good at that as you clearly know. But in Israel, we need the best. Right? We got to have the best. And if you're going to pick a high priest, who was also called the mašíaḥ, also called the anointed one, you need to pick the best. Not the guy who's there, you know, womanizing and playing poker and getting drunk on the weekend. No, we pick a morally upstanding guy.

And if we were going to pick a teacher for us, a prophet, one to speak the truth was also called the mašíaḥ in the Old Testament, we want one who is going to speak the truth and only the truth. Not a lot of lies mixed in. So the idealized person, the king and the priest and the prophet, they were all called the mašíaḥ, the Messiah. So when we say the Lord Jesus Christ, we're saying, here is the perfect one. Here is the one who's doing all things right in God's



eyes, and he is the one who we need to solve the problem. He takes his perfect windshield and puts it on our lives. That's a transaction. I take my broken windshield and we take it up. Now, I'm not sure what they do with broken windshields. You can tell me afterwards and I'm sure someone will. I'm assuming they just go and smash them up and put them in some recycle program or whatever. Who knows? They go in the dumpster. I'm not sure what they do, but they're all just trashed.

Paul said that about his own life in Philippians Chapter 3. He said, when I came to faith in Christ, I came "not having a righteousness of my own, but the righteousness that is by faith in Jesus Christ." He is the Christ, the perfect one who thinks perfectly, is who does perfectly, morally right, who says perfect things. He never says something wrong. This perfect one, he's the one who takes his moral life and puts it on my life. We now are right before God, morally perfect. My broken windshield is thrown into the dumpster. And he uses the word "Skubalon," a lot of language here this morning. And that is language, that's vulgar. Right? And if we were in the first century some Greek mom would go, don't go use that word skubalon skubalon skubalon skubalon. See it didn't even bother you because you didn't know what it means. Do you know what it means? Poopy, poop. It's a vulgar term.

And Paul's not trying to be vulgar, but he is saying, here is my life. I counted everything that was credited to me as skubalon. I think the English Standard Version translates it "rubbish." It's nothing. It's rejectable. Something you flush. It's not something you keep. "So that I can be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own." So Jesus is the Christ. I'm supposed to put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that perfect one, let's work back in the list now, he's also Jesus. Jesus. Right? "Yeshua" this name in the Old Testament is a name that we know. When you Latinize it, we take the "i," the initial "i" or "ayin" in Hebrew or "Iota" in Greek, and we turn it into a "J", and that's just come through the language down into us.

So we say the books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua. That word Joshua is the word Yeshua. Yeshua, Joshua was given a perfect name, the son of Nun. He was supposed to be the one who was going to lead the people into the Promised Land. He was the savior. And that's what the word means. So he's Jesus the Savior who is the Christ, the perfect one by his perfection saves us, right? And then we say of course we trust him to save us. And then he's also the Christ. He's also the Lord. That's a great word, the great "Kurios." It's the word "to be the one in charge." Which gets us back to the shepherd idea. His voice, he sets the pace and he says we've got to do it this way. You got to have this sexual ethic. You've got to have this work ethic. You've got to have this perspective on how to live your life, how to think in your brain, how to treat other people, how to raise your kids, how to function in marriage. Here's how you do it. And he says, listen to me. I am the "Kurios," I'm the Lord.

So I'm saying when I put my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that's just a mouthful. It's a theological mouthful to say what I'm doing to get right with God. He's "testifying to Jews and the Greeks of repentance toward God." Leave your life of independence and doing your own thing behind because you have a flawed life anyway. Now exchange it by putting your trust in the Lord, he's the boss, the Savior Jesus, and he is the perfect one, the Christ fulfilling



everything that God needs from human beings. And he is going to be the one who saves. Therefore, that's why, as D. James Kennedy said, who wrote that great famous Evangelism Explosion book. Smile at me if you've heard of that. It used to be all the rage in my dad's church when I was growing up. It had that diagnostic question. It said if you were to die today and stand before God and he would just say why should I let you into my heaven? What would you say? And all we can say is, hey, most of my windshield isn't broken. No. All we can say is my life and my righteousness has been replaced and Christ's life is now my life. I've been placed into Christ, his perfect life.

And it's not a good illustration if you want to break... Every illustration breaks down at some point. The point is I get put into his car, right? I get everything about Christ. He's fulfilled it all. He is my Savior and he's also my Lord. I put my faith, my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's a mouthful, isn't it? And it's a great thing for us to recognize, that's the third bucket, right? We understand the greatness of God from the Old Testament. His nature, his position, his standard, his justice. And then we hear about Christ coming. His love is he's going to provide the salvation we need, the forgiveness, the mercy of God are going to be mechanized through Christ's life and his death. And it's all going to be verified through his resurrection. And now what does he tell us to do? Repent and believe or repent and put our faith in, good words, repentance toward God and faith "in" our Lord, boss, Jesus, Savior, the Christ, the perfect one. That's what the gospel is all about.

A lot of people go to church for a lot of years and just like we've heard in the baptismal tank this morning, they say a lot of things about, you know, I went to church, I got someone off my back, I prayed a prayer, you know, I told them I was good, whatever. But what needs to happen in the interior of our lives is that we need to be convinced of the fact. Sure, we do, intellectually converted. Fine. But then I've got to get to the place where I realize what I need is to see the character of God, the work of Christ, and the response of repentance and faith in my own life, repentance "toward" God and faith "in" our Lord Jesus Christ.

And if that hasn't been clear to you, it needs to be clear to you right now. Because what we need is more people who can stand up and give a testimony to their lives being changed. Which, by the way, evangelicalism has been defined by that, that we are ones who say there is a point in time when you get right. Matter of fact, those words that are used as a pejorative about us, the "born againers." Right? That's exactly what evangelicalism is all about. That at some point in time you get born again because your life now has been placed into Christ and you're different. Everything starts to change. Why? Because you now have the Lord Jesus Christ as your leader. And that happens at a point in time. You're not born into it. Right? As they used to say, God has no grandchildren, right? You're either his child or you're not his child. It doesn't matter what your parents did, you know, stop with this: "I was raised in a good Christian home." Really? That doesn't mean much of anything if you haven't appropriated this yourself through repentance and faith.

I hope for some of you that kind of puts some pieces together, because my plea to you and I should say it more profoundly and more ardently than I am, but you need to become a Christian today. Which is not you going to church. It's more than that. It's not you trying to live



a better life and being against sin like the preacher is. That's not what it's about. It's more than that. It's about you coming to grips with who God is and his provision of mercy. Christ living and dying in your place, being raised as proof that it all worked in his economy. And now what's left for you? Repentance and faith. That's what the Bible says. It's echoed the message of repentance and faith from the beginning. It's brought it into clear focus and emphasis at the end of the New Testament. And it's what we are proclaiming. Have you gotten to that place in time in your life? It's a yes or no question. And you've got to be able to say, I know that I have.

And you've heard stories. A lot of people say, "Well, I kind of thought I was all good to go because I did this or that." But you need to think, do I really know where I stand with God? And if today's the day for you, it's the beginning of a brand-new life. Because now it's all about, as you've heard, you've heard words like sanctification and growing and learning. That's what our Christian life is all about. And most of the time we gather together to learn and to grow. And then we get out there into our neighborhoods and our workplaces to share the message of the gospel to see people brought to repentance and faith. Does that help a little bit here this morning? I hope it does. Yeah. (applause) Thank you.

Let's pray together because there's no aisle to walk. There are aisles and you can walk them. But I'm not asking you to walk an aisle. You got hands and you can raise them. I'm not asking you to raise your hands. There are cards you could fill out, right? You can write and you can read. That's not what makes you saved, right? So I'm not asking for any of that. But I'm asking for you to understand this, the process is to get to the place where you count the cost and say, okay, today's the day and I'm going to stop fighting. I need to become a genuine Christian. And if you are, you can do that without any acknowledgment from me. It's just you doing business with God.

I pray, even as we heard from young people this morning, you got no guarantee that you're going to make it home. You really don't, right? You can't count, you can't bank on time. As it says in the book of James, you can say I'm going to go here this year and I'm going to do that next year. Listen, you don't know. You need to say if the Lord wills we'll live and do this or that. You don't know. So today's the day. You've heard that passage quoted in the testimony. Today's the day. Make this response to the gospel. Repentance and faith happen. If you do, we'll credit God with it because God is the one who works that in our lives. He convicts us of sin and righteousness and judgment. And we get to the place of saying, "I need to repent, I need to repent toward God, and I need to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." I hope that some of you might do that today.

Let's pray. God, for some who are hearing this convicted. I pray that there would be some who would come to the place of genuine repentance and faith. And if there's confusion or there are intellectual questions they need solved I'd pray they would talk to someone who they know who is in this church who may be rightly assumed to know more than they do about all these things. May they ask questions. May we all be excited to have people ask us, or if we're in the process of figuring this all out, may we ask others. God help the people in this church to talk to one another, help people here today to have conversations about what it



means to become a Christian. Understand your character, your holiness, your authority, your righteousness, your judgment.

And then most importantly, we cling to it in the New Testament, your grace, your mercy, your forgiveness, which isn't something we can shrug our shoulders and just say, "Well, I'm just kind of hoping for that, crossing my fingers and hoping that happens to me." Let us get that settled in our lives because of real repentance and faith. And may it be happening even in the hearts of some right now, as they say to you I'm done going my own way. I'm going to return to the shepherd of my soul. I'm going to say I need his righteousness because my righteousness just needs to be replaced with his. All of my works, no matter how good I think they are, they just don't measure up to what Christ did. So I need to exchange my righteousness and all of my unrighteousness for him and make that happen and put new names into the Book of Life today as people have put their faith in you. I love you very much. We love these people who have come to get baptized today. May you bless them, encourage them, strengthen them, guard them, give them productive, fruitful and vocal Christian lives.

In Jesus name. Amen.