

Stepping Into the Light

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes the importance of stepping into the light of God's truth and love, highlighting the consequences of living in darkness and the hope found in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 44:53

Scripture: John 3:16

Topics: "Repentance", "Redemption"

Description

This sermon from John chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of stepping into the light, acknowledging our sins, and surrendering to God's mercy and love. It highlights the need to stop fighting against God, be honest about our struggles, and receive God's forgiveness and transformation. The message calls for a return to God, embracing truth, and experiencing the covering, authority, and journey God offers to those who come to Him.

Transcript

I want to talk to you about stepping into the light this morning from John chapter 3. If you'll go there, please, with me in the New Testament, the Gospel of John chapter 3, stepping into the light. Now, Father, I thank you with all my heart, God, for your abiding presence in this sanctuary. I thank you, Lord, that you are the one who makes your words come alive.

You cause our hearts to sing. As we sang earlier this day, Lord, you break the chains of darkness. You give us light in our heart.

You give us a hope and a future, and you give us an eternal hope. Father, I thank you for the touch of heaven on my life this morning, the touch of heaven on every heart in this sanctuary, O God Almighty. Let your kingdom come.

Let your will be done in us as it is in heaven, and we thank you for these things and we praise you for it. In Jesus' name, amen. John chapter 3, beginning at verse 16, one of my favorite verses in the entire Bible.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

Or another translation says they have been wrought in God or birthed in God. In other words, a person of truth is not afraid to approach God. They're not afraid to step out of darkness.

They're not afraid to come into the presence of God. They're not afraid to come into agreement with God. Even when that agreement, like an x-ray machine, starts to expose stuff that we've embraced inside that we thought was right, but it isn't right in the sight of God.

We thought it was leading to life, but it was leading to death. We thought it was going to bring us into freedom, but in reality it was bringing us and people around us into bondage. In Psalm 2 verses 1 to 3, listen to what the psalmist asks.

It's a question. And he says, why did the heathen rage and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us. The psalmist is asking a simple question.

What is it that's in the heart of humankind that has this inner anger against God? Why does it cause society and individuals to rise up and to formulate theories, philosophies, destinies, all of these things that are against the ways of God and against the will of God and against the word of God? Why do they encourage each other, taking counsel together in this? What seems to be the common bond in fallen humanity that brings everybody together for one specific purpose, to stand against God and to stand against those who represent God, saying let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us? In other words, let's agree that wrong becomes right. And let's cast away the restrictions on our behavior. And let's create a new order.

Let's create a new way of thinking. And let's call it good, even if the word of God calls it evil. You know, there's a deeper question than the psalmist's question, and it's simply this.

What's in the hearts of people that makes them find the ways of God so offensive? Many of you understand this question because there was a time in your life when that's the way you thought. The ways of God were narrow, restrictive, offensive. You did offensive things, but you didn't find those things offensive.

You found the word of God that says don't do those things offensive. And so what is it in the heart? What's in the human heart? If we instinctively know that God loves us, why do we not seek to live to please him? You know, if I were to ask a sinner out in the street, now probably not everyone, but I would venture against the majority of people, I would say, do you think God loves you? Most people would say, yes, I do. I do feel that.

And the secondary question would be this. If you think he loves you, then why don't you live for him? If you think that everything he does comes out of a heart of love, if you do think he is a God of love, then what would cause you to live in a way that's contrary to the way he says you should live? Now the answer to this question lies in understanding the very nature of evil. In Genesis chapter 3, when sin entered the

human race, the human heart, your heart, mine, embraced the thought that we, as well as God, could be as God is.

And we could determine what is right and what is wrong all by ourselves. That was the lie. That's the sin nature in humanity.

You have to understand that. It wasn't an apple that Adam and Eve partook of, as some of the cute little storybooks try to tell us. No, it was a theology.

The devil himself, the king of pride, as the scripture calls him, came into the garden and said, God's ways are too restrictive. You don't have to live according to the ways of God. You were created for more than just being in this place and meeting with him and doing the things that he says you should do.

If you partake of what I have done, your eyes will be opened and you will be as God's or judges in yourselves. And you will know what is good and you will know what is evil. Now, the root of this thinking is pride.

And that's why the scripture tells us that the fruit of pride is contention with God and with ourselves as we continually clash in our attempts to define and redefine good and evil. And does that not define our society today? We are constantly defining and redefining what God has already said, and we're trying to make it other than what it is. And in order to create our own religion and our own righteousness, we have to soften the language, don't we? For example, fornicators we now call partners.

Now, isn't that sweet? You know, the Bible calls it sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage. It is something in the scripture that's forbidden. It warns us, it leads to heartache.

But not willing to deal with it God's way, we create this nice little soft term around it and make it look like it's something actually desirable and a good thing. We're taking something evil and we're calling it good. Adulterers, people who commit sexual immorality against their marriage partner, one of the deepest betrayals known to humankind, we now call it an extramarital affair.

We've taken this horrendous sin and we make it look like an invitation to a black tie dinner. You are invited to an extramarital affair next Friday at six o'clock. And in my generation, just in the last few years, I find as we are drifting continuously farther away from God, we are redefining sin.

We're redefining what God's word says. Liars now misspeak. Have you ever noticed that? I mean, they get caught in, I love it, I'm following some of the political campaign.

People get caught in a bold-faced lie and instead of taking responsibility, say, well, I misspoke. Now, the intent of that is to say, well, I'm really inherently a good person and you know I wouldn't lie. I'm not capable of lying, so I misspeak.

Embellishers, that means somebody who takes a good story and adds a few details that may not be true, are now called misrememberers. Don't you love it? A politician who was flying in a helicopter in the Middle East came up with the story that the helicopter came up under enemy fire and bullets were flying and hitting the helicopter until the military personnel involved said no such thing ever happened. Then the politician comes out and says, well, I misremembered.

How do you misremember somebody shooting at a helicopter, you're in? Misremembered. And guile, people full of guile, guile means you say something but you mean something else. And when you're caught in it, now you're, I miscommunicated.

Everybody knows I would speak the truth given the opportunity and that I'm not a person of guile, so now I'm a miscommunicator. See, as we've crafted our own righteousness, means our own right standing and our own sight, as we become like gods knowing what is good and what is evil in ourselves, as we have bitten into the rage of humanity against the will and the ways of God, not only have we crafted our own righteousness, but we have to craft the language to go along with our behaviors. And we have to take what God clearly defines as evil and we have to make it good.

Now the root of all this is found again in Genesis chapter 3. When confronted with the light of truth, no one would take the blame for his or her actions. Adam and Eve both sinned against God. And when God came into the garden, here's the light of truth now coming.

He's absolute truth. You can't lie in the presence of God. And when he asked what had transpired, immediately everyone's, everyone's wrong was the result of someone else's wrongdoing.

Adam when confronted with his failure said, well, she made me do it. When Eve confronted with her failure said, well, the serpent made me do it. You can imagine that's the way things are today.

Nobody wants to take responsibility for their own actions. Have you noticed that? Everybody is blaming somebody else for what they're doing. For their social unrest, for their behaviors, for everybody is blaming someone.

We're living in a society that is the ultimate victim of everybody else or somebody else. Nobody's willing to take responsibility for their own actions. That is the direct consequence of sin and rebellion against the word of God.

In John chapter 3, again in verse 19 and 20 it said, and this is the condemnation that light came into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. Hating the light is a personal choice.

In John chapter 3, again verse 18 says, he who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He who does not believe is condemned because he doesn't believe, number one, that he can't save himself. He doesn't believe that his ways, his thinking is contrary to the ways and the thinking of God.

He doesn't believe or she doesn't believe that all have sinned as the scripture says and fallen short of the glory of God. Fallen short of what God designed and intended our lives to be. And we don't believe that God loved us so much and was not willing to lose us that he sent his Son into the world.

We don't believe that somebody else had to pay a price for our wrongs so that we can go free. We tenaciously want to hold to a sense of self-righteousness. We don't want to believe that we are what we are in the sight of a holy God.

We want to hold to some sense of dignity somewhere in our lives. We want to stand in our own defense. We want to make our own rules.

We want to do our own thing. And this is the condemnation because God sent his Son because God so loved the world. He sent his Son to a cross.

He sent his Son to be beaten, spit upon, misunderstood, hated, reviled, rejected to suffer the wrath of God in our place because we couldn't redeem ourselves. There was no way we could make it to the other side. There's nothing we could do.

We could help every little old lady across the street with her groceries from now until we breathe our last breath. But there's no way we could make up that bridge to cover that place of separation between the holiness of God and what we had allowed ourselves as a human race to become. The condemnation is simply in the fact that you and I will try everything in our power to hold to some sense of righteousness or right standing in the sight of God and refuse to believe that our deeds are evil and that our entire nature has led us on a path of being something other than what God intended us to be.

That's the key. We sang it today. There's a day coming when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Your knee will bow. Your tongue will confess. Every godless person in New York City, ISIS will bend its knee.

Every one of those radicals will bend their knee. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Most tragically, of all that fallen humanity is unaware of is that the all-seeing eyes of God have been looking at him the whole time with love and longing to bring him home.

The whole time, for God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved. You know folks, let me tell you something.

There is a place called hell. The Bible describes it as a place of darkness that can be touched, of fire that burns and never goes out, a place of anguish that causes people to gnash their teeth for eternity. You see, I believe that some of those things might be literal but they also just simply might be a description in a manner that our minds can fully understand because I don't think we can fully understand what it would be like to be in a place where God is not.

God is omnipresent in the world. We teach that. We believe that.

The Bible bears witness to that. That means he's everywhere. And so even as a sinner, even as somebody living outside of the kingdom of God, you are still in a world where the presence of God is.

He is, no matter what you're doing or how you're living, he's constantly whispering. He's always sending these notes of love to you saying, come home, come home. He's always wooing.

He's always there. That's why you have a consciousness of the presence of God and even though his vial of sinners has this inner knowledge that they can still get right with God if the time should present itself for them to do so. But what will really make hell hell is to stand at the throne of God one day at this moment where every knee will bow and every tongue confess and to see and finally understand these words for God so loved the world.

For God so loved you to, to stand in the presence of this, in this burning love that this world knows nothing about, can't even scratch the surface of it. Doesn't even minimally comprehend this incredible love of God. Every sinner in the world will stand at the throne of God one day and become aware of this incredible love.

That's why every knee will bow and every tongue confess, Oh God, if I had known, Oh God, if I'd have heard, if I'd have known the depths of your love, but what makes hell hell is that it will be too late for many. The day of redemption has passed. There's, there's no longer an opportunity to believe and be saved there.

That has to be done here before we leave this world, before we stand at the throne of God and it will be that memory. It will be that memory of standing in the presence of the love of God, of being given that understanding for just a moment, of having forsaken, of having pushed away every whisper of the foolishness of having raged against God, of having pushed away his word, of having created and crafted our own sense of right standing in the world and right standing with God. It will be that memory of standing at the throne of God for just a moment of time that will make hell hell for eternity.

When finally those who have rejected his life and his love on the earth are sent to a place where he is not, and you and I can't understand what that would be like, a place where God is not, there's nothing in our mind that can lay hold of that. As much as in heaven, I believe it's an ever increasing revelation of God and ever increasing joy and ever increasing peace and everything that God has for his children, it ever is increasing in hell, it's the opposite. It's an ever deepening despair, it's an ever deepening sense of hopelessness and folks, heaven and hell are as real as this room you're sitting in this morning.

This is the condemnation, that light came into the world and man loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil, because they were not willing to call it what it is, may I put it that way. Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. They were afraid to lose their identity.

They're too proud to admit that they've been wrong. You can't afford to be wrong in this one. You can be wrong in a lot of things in the world, but you can't afford to be wrong in this one, because this one is forever.

You and I can make mistakes and we can suffer and people can suffer for a season, but we can't afford to be wrong in this one. This is the ultimate mistake, to stand in the presence of the love of God, to come to the understanding that God so loved you that he was willing to come to this earth, walk among us for 33 years, become a partaker of our struggles and take all of the wrong that we've committed against the holy God and take it to the cross and be nailed there and suffer what we should have suffered for all of eternity so that we might have life and he did it because of love. Jesus didn't die for you because he felt obligated to.

He didn't die for you because he created you and I and said, oh, I made a mess, I got to clean it up. The Bible says he so loved the world. There's a love in the heart of God for you and I that we don't have vocabulary to describe.

We can't describe it, we can't write about it, we can't, we are so limited when it comes to understanding the depth of this love. The gospel of Luke chapter 15, Jesus told a story of a young son who was given life and he said to his father one day, give me the portion, give me my inheritance, I'm out of here. I'm paraphrasing, of course, but that's what he said.

I'm out of here. More or less what we've done as a nation in the last maybe 20 to 30, 35 years in America, we just said to God, give us our inheritance. Thank you for blessing us.

Thank you for the wonderful Christmas pageants we have every year. Thank you for churches on every corner. Thank you for making us a people who came from all over the world and in just a few hundred years became something that only you could have done.

You gave us abilities, you took us places, you landed us on the moon, you gave us technologies that have changed the whole known world. You gave us a military force that was at least second to none. You gave us clear thinking.

Thank you, but we're out. We'll take it from here, God, and we'll create our own righteousness. And we'll redesign our vocabulary, we'll redesign our words, we'll decide now what is good and what is evil.

Oh, why do the heathen rage? Why do the kings of the earth consult together with one another to cast away the restrictions of God? And this young man took his inheritance and he went far, far, far away, just like we are now. We are far away from our calling as a nation, as a society. We've drifted so far from God that without his mercy, we'll never find our way back.

And so we took, this young son took all that his father gave him and he gathered it all together and he went into a place far, far away from the heart of his father, far away from the one who gave him life, far away from the one who blessed him and provided, far away from the one who would have given him purpose and provision for his life. But suddenly a famine came into that land. I want to ask you a question, an honest question.

Are we not living in a place of famine now? Our young people in our universities are so confused, they don't know which end is up anymore. See, it's almost embarrassing. Instead of dealing with reality, they want to rewrite history.

Our politicians are confused. We're bitterly divided ideologically now. There's a famine, there's something in the hearts of people that say, what have we done? Where is hope? Where is help? Where is nourishment? Where is our strength? And what have we done with our strength and where has it gone? Why have we let what used to bring stability just fall through our hands and where did we get the authority to redefine good and evil? The scripture says he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he found such selfishness there that nobody would give him anything that could satisfy.

And I tell you, it's the mercy of God that is causing this generation to find nothing that satisfies. It's mercy, folks. You've got to understand that.

God so loved the world. It's the mercy of God that doesn't let us carry on in our delusion and become happy there. It's the mercy of God that produces fear in the hearts of man where people begin to say, what has happened to us? Where have we gone? What have we become? Why are our schools not safe anymore? Why are our families breaking down? Why is there such a high divorce rate? Why has evil become good in our society? Why are our children so confused? Why does it seem that our movies are becoming so vile? And he found the more he drew to this confused society around him, the less satisfied he became.

And so one day the scripture tells us he came to himself. In other words, he just had an awakening and said, what am I doing here? I believe this is the hope now for our nation, an awakening. I believe it's

coming.

I believe that's why our young people are so dissatisfied now, an awakening. What am I doing here? What am I in this place for that leaves me so empty day after day after day? And yet in my father's house, there's bread enough. And even if I didn't like it there and I thought it was restrictive, at least people are happy there.

He's not coming home because he's overly enamored with his father's house. He's coming home because it's just better than it is where he has been. He said, I'll arise and go to my father and father and say to him, father, I have misspoken.

I've misremembered. I've miscommunicated. No, he said, father, I've sinned against heaven and before you, I've set my ways above your ways.

I thought what I was doing was right. Though you warned me it was wrong. I thought it would lead to life, but it left to death.

I thought it would satisfy. It left me starving. I thought it would meet the needs of my heart and it left me broken down, empty, wondering what am I doing here? What am I eating? What am I partaking of? And where is this all going to lead? And he came back and said, I'm not worthy to be called your son.

But when he arose, he came to his father. But the scripture says, while he was still a long way off, his father saw him for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

When he was a long way off, his father saw him because his father was looking for him. The eyes of God were scanning the earth, scanning the horizons. God's hands were raised to his brow looking, where is my son and when is he coming home? Where's my daughter? And when's she coming home? It says his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

See a lot of people in our generation don't have this view of God. They find that God is just restrictive in measure because of their experience. Maybe they've had in church in some of the years it wasn't very pleasing, but they don't have this view of God.

And this is an actual view of God because these are the words of Jesus in this story. He is describing something about God. He said, when he was yet a long way off, his father saw him, had compassion and ran to him.

When have you seen God running to you? He ran to him and that's the hope in my heart for this generation that even if we just get up and we're a long, long way off, that he will see us and have compassion. There's such compassion in the heart of God for our frailties and our struggles and our trials and our difficulties. He's not sitting at the throne of perfection with his arms folded, tapping his foot, waiting to say it's about time you showed up.

No, he left and he came running. That's what the cross was all about. God left and came running to us.

He ran to us in our mess. He ran to us in our confusion, ran to us in all of our doublespeak, in all of the falseness we've embraced and have called it good. He ran to us when we finally get to the place where

we're willing to say, God, I can't save myself.

And I thought what I was doing was right, but it's wrong. And I'm sorry for the way that I have been living. I'm sorry for trying to craft some sense of right standing with you in my own strength.

And I realize the folly of it all. And I don't care what you do with my life. I just know it's better with you than it is out here.

And so I'm coming home. How shocking it must be as he headed down the road, feeling ashamed, feeling sorrowful, feeling like a failure only to see this white haired, white bearded old man come running down the road, his robe flapping in the wind as he's coming with all the strength that he's got towards his son. He doesn't know what's going to happen when they meet, but when they finally meet, when he finally stands in the presence of his father, when he finally makes contact again with that which is light, what he finds is an embrace like none other that this world has ever offered him.

And when you get up and you get back to God, you will find an embrace in God like nothing this world has ever offered you. The scripture says he kissed him on the neck and the son feels so ashamed for the things he's done. But the father said to him, the father doesn't even respond to him.

You see, because when you know, when I know, when the nation knows that we've sinned and fallen short of what God destined us to be, when we start coming back to the house of God, we encounter this incredible embrace of God. And suddenly the father starts giving commands. He's not even talking to the son.

He just says, bring the best robe in the house and put it on him. That robe that's reserved for royalty, that robe that's reserved for guests who are special beyond special, beyond special. That robe that covers the stench of sin, it covers the failure of humanity.

That robe that represents the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross 2000 years ago, cover my son, cover my daughter with the blood of Jesus Christ. Put away his shame. Put away her shame.

And then he says to his servants, bring the ring and put the ring on his finger. The father's ring was a ring of authority. It gave that son, he was not being brought back to the house of God as a slave.

He was returning as a son. His father was putting him back in his or her rightful place. And that ring bore the signet of the father and it had the authority of the father in that ring.

And so when that ring touched something, that became law. That's what Jesus said. I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy.

I give you power over everything that has come to destroy you and deceive you and damage you and wound you and captivate you and blind you and hurt you. I give you power. I give you authority.

This world knows nothing about. I give you the power to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of almighty God in Christ Jesus. I give you authority to move mountains.

I give you power to seek me and to have promises come into your hand. I give you power to stand for truth above all truth. Then he said, bring the shoes and put them on my son's feet because we're going on a journey together.

Your testimony is not going to be about yourself. Your testimony is going to be about the mercy of God, how you had come to an end and you found that what you thought was the end was only the beginning of something much more wonderful. You thought you would never get free, but by the grace of God you found the prison doors open and everyone had to let you go.

You thought the wounds of your past were going to grind your face into the ground for the rest of your life only to find that Jesus Christ came to heal us of those wounds that would, in fact, destroy us were it not for the grace and power of almighty God. We're going on a journey together, son, and your story is not going to be about yourself. It's going to be about me.

When you realized what you are apart from the grace of God in your life, for God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life, for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, that means you, through him might be saved. The question that comes into my heart today is, are you still fighting against God? Are you still trying to save yourself? Are you still trying to modify your own behavior by giving it new names? Are you still trying to create your own sense of right and wrong? Are you still trying to save your marriage in your own strength? Are you still trying to keep your sanity in an insane world by your own effort? When God says, I will give you a new heart, a new mind, and a new spirit, if you will return to me, I will pour out my spirit to you and I will make my words known to you. I'll give you a new mind.

I'll give you a mind you never believed you could ever have. I'll give you giftings you don't possess today. I'll take you places you could never go in your own strength and I'll make you into what you could never hope to be by any amount of human effort.

But first, you have to just come to an end of trying to get through this in your own strength and trying to give things names that God doesn't call them. It's time to stop fighting against God and it's time to step into the light. He who does truth says, Jesus said, whoever does truth comes to the light, just steps up and steps into the presence of God, says, Lord, I have nothing to prove, I have nothing to defend, I have nothing to hold on to.

I have sinned and fallen short of what my life should be. You designed and created me for an eternal purpose, beginning on this earth and into eternity, but I fell short of that purpose and I tried to do it my way. And the things that I've done have not been birthed by you, but they've come out of my own spirit.

And so today I just do like the prodigal son, I come down the road, I have no excuse. And I'm asking you God to take over. Take over where I'm struggling, take over where I'm failing, take over, oh God, where I'm trying to hold on to a shred of feeling right by my own effort, God, I yield it and I ask you to take it over.

Send your Holy Spirit to me and make me into the kind of a person I could never hope to be in my own strength. It's time to step into the light. And I want to give an altar call today to everybody here who's really struggling.

And you find yourself fighting against God, even arguing with God. People whose marriages are in trouble, that's been something God put on my heart this morning. People here, listen to me, who are trying to change certain ways of behavior and you can't in your own strength.

You've tried, you've even tried renaming it. You tried to give it that black tie dinner effect. But why don't you just call it what God calls it and say, Lord, this is what I am.

This is what your word says. I'm not going to fight against you anymore. I'm not going to try to define it, redefine it.

I'm not going to try to make it appear like it's justified. It's wrong. What I'm doing is wrong.

That flirtation you're having in the workplace is wrong. Don't call it because my partner's not meeting my needs. Call it sin.

Call it what God calls it or you'll never get free from it. The sex outside of marriage is wrong. Don't give it another name and start calling it right.

It's wrong. And trust God for the courage and the conviction to either get married or abstain from sexual activity, one or the two. Ask God for the courage.

Ask him for why you can't get married or won't get married or won't commit. Have you ever thought you might just be selfish to the very core of your being? You're not willing to be given, you're willing to take from somebody, but you're not willing to give to anybody. Call it what it is, folks.

Just call it by its name. Don't change the name. Give it the right name.

Call it that. And get up and step into the light and say, this is what I am, oh God. This is what your word says.

And I'm not going to join the godless of this world and start raging against you and trying to cast off your restraints on my life. I'm going to bring my life by the grace of God down that road and I'm going to receive your embrace and trust you for the power to be the person that you've called me to be. For people stealing in the workplace and you say, well, they don't pay me enough.

It's only an eraser, pencil, pen, paper, envelopes, stamps, petty cash. So what? I cheat on my income tax. The government's got enough of my money anyway.

That was a bit of a nervous laughter there, but you get the point, right? If we're going to be what God's called us to be, we have to put away what God says we shouldn't be. We have to have the honest heart to do it. And so in a moment, we're going to stand and I'm going to invite you to join me here at the front of this auditorium.

You see, there are no perfect people. The people on this platform, I tell you, we're far from perfect. We struggle like you do.

We're all in this together. But the one requirement that God says is you have to be honest before me. We will never know the power of God without honesty.

Honesty is simply stepping into the light. I'm not hiding behind the bushes any longer. I'm not going to blame somebody else for my actions any longer.

I am what I am, and only God can change it. And I'm going to trust and I'm going to believe God for the power to do that. If God's calling you, if God's speaking to you, folks, I'm telling you, Christ is coming.

It's time to get right with God. There's not a lot of time to get this right. If God's speaking to you, when we stand, I want you to slip out in the balcony, go to either exit the main sanctuary.

There's people already coming. We haven't even stood up yet. In the annex, you go and step between the screens.

Same in North Jersey, those that are at home. Let's get right with God. Let's get right with God.

Let's prepare for what the Lord is wanting to do in this generation. Let's stand. We're going to worship for about 10 minutes.

And as we do, just come, folks, unashamedly, unreservedly, just come. Just come. Don't fight against God anymore.

Don't fight against truth. Don't fight against truth. Just come.

Whatever he's speaking, agree with him. Let's pray together and let's believe God together. Now, I want you to listen to me carefully.

Everybody that's come forward today, you're struggling. You've come because you're struggling some area of your life and you've embraced wrong and today you realize it's not right and you can't make it right. And so you're here for forgiveness and for freedom.

And just coming forward, you've done what the prodigal son did, saying, God, I'm done. I'm sorry. I let my life become what it never should have been.

And I started doing stuff I never believed I would do. And I'm formed in a way now and I don't know how to get out. And certain behaviors have a control on my life.

And this is what he's more or less saying as he's coming down the road. I've sinned and I'm not worthy. But the father's response was to cover.

In other words, I'm not going to hold against you the things that you've done. I'm going to cover it and I'm going to give you authority so it doesn't dominate your life anymore. I'm going to give you power over these things that have tried to destroy you.

And I'm going to put shoes on your feet because you and I are going on a journey together and you're going to tell people what I've done for you. You're going to tell them who I am because a lot of people don't know who I am, said the father. They don't.

They have this wrong idea about the father's house. But you found me in covering and you found me in power and you found me in mercy. And then he then he brought his son in and it's the same way he'd bring his daughter in today.

And he struck up the band and he said, now let's rejoice. And the only thing that he required his son to do is let them put the rope, just let him cover you. You have to hold your hand up, let him put the ring on your finger of authority, lift your foot and let him put on the shoes.

And when the band plays, join the party because it's all about you. The whole party is about you. The celebration is about you.

I'm not going back. That's the song I think, maybe they were singing that song. I'm not going back.

I'm not going back. Or I went to the enemy's camp and took back what he stole from me. I don't know what they were singing.

Whatever they were singing made the people start to dance. You go on in the story and it says the older son came and he heard music and dancing. I mean there was dancing going on in that house because a son created in the image of God had come home.

A daughter created in the image of God had come home.

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