

Questions Concerning Repentance

by E.W. Johnson

Repentance is essential for salvation because it allows us to see and experience God's grace, which is the only way to be righteous in God's sight.

Duration: 47:01

Scripture: Luke 13:1

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of repentance and its importance in avoiding destruction. The sermon is based on Luke 13:1-17, where Jesus warns the people that unless they repent, they will perish. The preacher highlights two events that serve as warnings to the Jews about the impending war with the Romans, emphasizing the need for repentance. He also uses the analogy of a fig tree that is not bearing fruit to illustrate the importance of cultivating one's spiritual life. The sermon emphasizes the urgency of repentance and the consequences of delaying it.

Transcript

The thirteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel, beginning at verse one. They were present at that season's sun that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things, I tell you, nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Are those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them? Thank ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem. I tell you, nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Expect also this parable.

A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon and found none. Then said he to the dresser, unto the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three ears are come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. Cut it down, for it cumbereth it the ground.

And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. And as it was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bound together, and could in no wise lift herself up.

When Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work, and then thou wilt come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.

The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath day loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? But not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. My text this morning is found in verses three and five of our scripture reading.

Those verses are a repetition. The fifth is a repetition of the third. And so our text is, I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

And when we come to the sermon part of our hours' worship this morning, I want to raise before our minds some questions concerning this matter of repentance. But before we come to those questions, let us look at the three paragraphs that are found in the scripture reading this morning. In my Bible, verses one through five is found in one paragraph, verses six through nine in another, and verses ten through seventeen in the third paragraph.

What do we have in those first five verses? We have the fact that here, at this time, there were two events that were warnings to the Jews of that which was about to happen in about thirty years or more. At this time, they were about at 33 A.D. And in the year 67, there broke out a war between the Jews and the Romans that lasted until the year 70. And so in about, we'll say, thirty-four years, this war was to break out.

And in this war, it wasn't a matter of just some Galilean that would be slain by the Roman authorities. It would be a matter of a great, great number of Jews that would die at the hands of the Romans. And also, it would not be a matter of one of the towers evidently on the walls of Jerusalem that fell and seems to have fallen over into the city and fell near the Pool of Siloam.

And in the sudden fall of this tower, just why it fell, it might have been some defect in its workmanship or something else. They were not at this time under siege and war. But for some reason, this tower fell and fell over into the city and killed eighteen people.

And so when our Lord was reminded of these things, he said that, Do not think those Galileans were guilty above other Galileans, and do not think that those inhabitants of Jerusalem were guilty above all inhabitants of Jerusalem. There is a universality of guilt upon all men, and all must repent, or they will perish. And it does not matter whether he is simply referring to that which is about to happen in thirty-four years, that they might save themselves from that calamity, or whether he is thinking about the great and final judgment.

Because all temporal judgments should be reminders of the great and final judgment. And I believe that primarily he is thinking of that judgment, because it is only in that judgment that all of us can be delivered in repentance. Now in the next series of verses, verses six through nine, in which we read about a man that had planted a fig tree in his vineyard, and he had come seeking fruit.

And he had been coming there for three years, and had found no fruit. And he told the one that was keeping the vineyard to go ahead and cut it down. And the man said, Let me dig about it, sort of cultivate it, and fertilize it, and see if it will not begin to bear fruit.

And they tell me that if a tree is not bearing fruit, that sometimes if you plow around it, or dig around it, and fertilize it, it will begin to bear fruit. And he said, After that, if it doesn't bear fruit, then you can go ahead and cut it down. Now all of this parable was directed toward the Jews.

Our Lord had been going back and forth to Jerusalem now for about three years. And he was about to cut down this unfruitful tree. Now I know that there were some among the Jews that were indeed saved.

There was a godly remnant among the Jews at the time when, not only at the time when John the Baptist was preaching, and when our Lord was preaching, but far beyond the time when John the Baptist preached and when our Lord preached. Because the father and mother of John the Baptist, Zechariah and Elizabeth, were believing godly people. And because the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and the foster father of our Lord Jesus Christ were godly people.

And also, long before John the Baptist, our Lord began to preach, when our Lord was just an infant. As he was carried into the city of Jerusalem, that his mother may go through the symbolic ritual which the law prescribed for mothers. And there in the temple, there were two very godly people that were waiting for the consolation of Israel.

And they praised God, because in the spirit of prophecy, they saw in the infant Jesus the hope of the coming salvation. One of them saying, let thy servant depart in peace. In other words, I've lived a long time, I hope to see this before I die.

Now let thy servant depart in peace, for I've seen thy salvation. And so they were godly, believing people. Believing in the grace of God that would be accomplished in the coming Messiah.

And that's been true all the way down through the Old Testament time. In the days of Isaiah. Isaiah said all in all that Israel does not know the Lord.

They said they're worse than the ox or the ass. The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib. But this nation does not know God.

And yet in those days, Isaiah said that the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a very small seed, lest we might be utterly destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah were. In the days of Elijah, in the northern kingdom, that was given over to awful paganism in the days of Ahab and Jezebel, God told Elijah that he still had seven thousand, that he had reserved himself for sovereign grace, that he had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, nor embraced him in love, that he had not kissed him. And so God has always had a holy remnant.

But those people were not really the fruit of the institutional church of the Old Testament. They were saved despite that church. And I think we could apply that today.

I believe that in all professing Christianity, not referring to the cost, but those that are within what we call the Trinitarian faith, that though the gospel is utterly obscured, still I believe that there are some of the salt of the earth found there also. And as we go along in the Bible, when we come to the book of Revelation, I believe I can point that out in chapter 17 and 18. And so the Lord Jesus Christ said, Well, I'll bear with

them for another year, then this thing's going to be cut down.

And we know that in the 67-70 war, it was literally cut down. And if that's true of the Old Testament church, I believe also it will be true of professing Christianity before the times of the latter-day glory are ushered in. Now, God used the pagan Romans to cut down that fig tree.

And God will use the forces of Antichrist in our day to cut down apostate Christianity. But in doing so, he will purify the true church. You know, some say you're very small in number, you're folks that will hear you, support you.

I believe that in most of these churches, if you preached the truth and purified them of truth rather than judgment, you would find there would be very few. I think you would find a few. But there would be very few.

And so I believe it far better that you and I be purified with the preaching of the gospel. Though that, too, is painful. We hate to see anyone go out from us.

But that, too, is painful on us and on them. But not so painful as to have the church purified in great trials. And so this happened to the church of the Old Testament.

This parable was prophetic. And it happened just this way. It was indeed cut down.

The axe was truly laid to it. Now, in the other paragraph, verses 10 down through verse 17, these people had an awful lot of religion. They were strong in their religion.

They believed something. They were zealous. But they were zealous for legalisms.

They were zealous for externalities. But in all this zeal, there's something terribly, terribly missing. It's awfully absent.

You say, what's that? Saving grace. Saving grace. These folks were very concerned to dot the I and cross the T upon certain things wherein especially they marked themselves as godly people.

You turn over to the book of Acts and over in the letters of Paul, and the Jews looked upon circumcision as the mark of those that are truly godly. Don't you try to tell us that these Gentiles that have been saved are really saved if they haven't received circumcision. And the second great thing was that Sabbath observance.

There were three great marks to them of a true Jew is that circumcision and that Sabbath observance, then their dietary laws. We don't eat pork. We don't eat this and that.

And so they found the essence of their salvation in that. Now, I know in the Old Testament time, the Lord had to have some kind of simple ABC stuff, if I can put it that way, that would separate his people because he chose the Jews and separated them from the nations. Now, all of them were not individually chosen to salvation, but the nation itself was chosen to receive the light.

And toward that end, he had to have a convenient device that would separate them from the pollutions of paganism. And when they worked six days and laid off on the seventh day, those pagans thought this is a funny bunch. And when they received that painful physical operation of circumcision, these were funny people.

You can get religion without death, the pagans would say. And then when they ate different from the way their neighbors ate and were zealous of it, that marked them. Of course, also they were marked because they had no use for images.

It wasn't always that way, but when they came back from Babylon, a Jew might have this fault or that fault, but no images after that. The Lord let them get their fill of that while they were in Babylon. And so, those three things along with no images.

Old Pompey, when he went over there about 60 years before the birth of Christ, he went back in to that holy place. He wasn't supposed to, but he and his old pagan went on back in there. Came out and said, Jews worship nothing.

He found no image in there at all. And so, those things marked the Jews. But still, that wasn't the essence of finding righteousness in grace.

Salvation is really very simple. You and I need to be righteous with God. And there's only two ways we can get it.

One is in our works. If we've never done anything we shouldn't have done, God has to, in all fairness, say we're righteous. But that's impossible.

Now, you and I may be civil. We're not uncivilized. So, we live like civilized people.

And that kind of righteousness keeps us out of trouble with our neighbors. But that won't do with God. He knows the heart.

And so, the only way that we can be righteous is in forgiveness. It's in grace. It's in mercy.

And you can't mix those two. You and I are not even going to plead our case. We're going to utterly throw ourselves on the mercy of God.

And so, time and time and time again, our Lord made these Jews reveal themselves. Here was a woman, the Greek literally says she was bent double. And evidently a godly woman.

Daughter of Abraham. And she suffered like that for 18 years. And the problem was a spiritual.

It was a Satan. Now, you see, I don't think anyone, just for Satan's operation on our psycho, our psychology, could fix it so we couldn't straighten up. But I don't know about that.

You have to be awful careful. A lot of these catches in the back are purely mental. It's like Lloyd Sparkman.

One time we were in some kind of meeting and somebody offered him a cup of coffee. And he said, that keeps me awake. And somebody else said, that's all in your mind.

And Sparky said, well, I got one. And so, I know it may be in your mind, but if you get something in your mind, it's hard to get it out. And so this poor thing had suffered that way for 18 years.

He said, I don't believe any of it. The devil himself can put that in your mind. Now, a man can hypnotize you so you couldn't pick up a piece of paper.

He can hypnotize you so you can't drink a glass of water. It tastes bitter. They can put you under hypnosis and give you a post-hypnosis suggestion and you'll be so weak you couldn't pick up a piece of paper until he brings it out of you.

You can't do it. Nobody's ever tried that on me because I don't want anyone messing around with my psycho. I can be psycho enough without somebody messing around with it.

And so, I don't have a fool with these old fortune tellers and I don't have a fool with these hypnotists unless it's somebody, some medical somebody now that's trained and all. He'd have to have a lot of licensure. I don't want to wall-foot to it then.

But the devil himself. And so here that woman was straightened up and the ruler of the synagogue and evidently the people going along with him said, you ought to have done this. Six days she could come be healed.

And our Lord said, you bunch of hypocrites. You feel sorry for your animals. Now, your ox could do without water till next day.

But you don't want that ox to suffer all during the Sabbath. But you're going to untie him and leave an ox tied all day. Now, he's tied there to crib so there's food there but no water.

And you don't want that animal to suffer like that. And you'll untie him. You don't want to suffer another day.

You do the same thing for your donkey. To hear this woman. She's a godly daughter of Abraham.

Suffered like this for 18 years. Now, why God and His marvelous sovereignty allowed her, we don't know. But we don't quarrel with God.

And here, she ought not to have suffered another day. And so what's the matter? You folks got on legalism but you're absolute strangers to grace. Now, you say, why did God allow her to do it? He does all things for His glory.

For the advancement of His kingdom. And when this woman was healed, she says she praised God. And the people themselves.

It says in verse 13 that she glorified God. Then the people themselves, after they were embarrassed out of their hypocrisy, they glorified God. And so the essence of religion is grace.

There's a lot of folks that do not even claim to be Christians that are gracious. But that kind of grace is based on buttering up ego. It's not based on glorifying God.

Now, it will not melt a man and butter up his ego by giving to Salvation Army and Red Cross and all these other things. And to butter up his ego some other way. But true grace is found only in the experience of the power of saving grace.

Let us pray. I believe the first question that we ought to take up on this Mount of Repentance, that grows logically out of what I just said, is this. Why is penance essential? Pastor, you define salvation as being righteous in the sight of God.

And you said in your comments upon the scriptures this morning that you and I cannot be righteous in the sight of God on the basis of our works. Because God demands not just external righteousness. He demands spiritual, heart righteousness.

He demands that our minds be pure. That our heart and feelings be pure. And you say that if you and I are going to be right with our God so there's nothing between, we have to be found in His forgiveness.

We have to be found in His mercy. Why do you say that repentance is essential to our coming unto that grace? Well, there's several reasons. First of all, you can't see grace unless you're in a state of repentance.

And if you can't see grace, you certainly cannot embrace it as your hope. If a man lays out some kind of proposition and you say, I'm sorry, I just can't see it, you're sure not going to rely on it. You're sure not going to act on it.

You're sure not going to take it into your heart and life as a part of your very life. You're sure not going to make it something experimental to you. And so, beloved, our salvation is the experience of grace.

Not just, we can remember ten years ago when we experienced it. Our whole Christian life is the experience of grace. Believe God loves me.

I can't find a thing in me that's lovable. Not him that knows the heart. The old Puritans would say that I feel like my faith ought to be cleansed with faith.

I feel like my repentance ought to be repented of. I feel like I ought to pray about my praying. And so our whole experience is grace.

Grace. Now, we find that grace in the only way that a holy God can have grace, and that's because God became man and died into place instead of those for whom he will have grace. So we find grace in a fact.

We find grace in a truth. We find grace in a teaching. Or if you want to call a teaching a doctrine, that's what a doctrine is, a teaching.

But that truth that God became man and died into place instead of those that he will be gracious to. There will be in his grace. We haven't just embraced that truth.

We've entered into the life and experience of that grace. If you ascend against a man, you can't say, Well, I know this man. I've been called, hypothetically called Joe.

And I know he's a good man. I don't believe he'd carry hard feelings. I believe he's capable of forgiving me.

But you can't stand to far off and just believe concerning this man's capacity for forgiving. You need to go and enter into that forgiveness. You need to come in a very personal way to receive his grace.

And say, Beloved, our righteousness is in God's mercy, God's grace. We can see it. In fact, it's about all I can see.

I used to say about all I can see when I think of death and judgment. Beloved, it's about all I can see. Well, down here, I don't think anything you and I got can be enjoyed without the grace of God, either common or

special.

I don't believe a man that's outside of Christ, if it wasn't for God's common mercy, he couldn't enjoy it. Anybody that would forgive sin when the man is not at all contrite, he not only hadn't confessed it, he's not even sorry. I'm a man who would forgive sin, and the man won't even come over and talk to anybody.

Won't come around. There's something wrong with him. You say, well, then he's supposed to be hard-hearted.

No, but he's supposed to love what's right. I don't care if the man, what he's done, you see, hasn't hurt me any and all of that. But still, we ought to believe in what's right.

You know, in the law of the land, we don't want to be vindictive, but we don't think murderers and rapists and all that ought to get away with it. We think they ought to pay for that. We believe our government ought to make them pay for it.

We believe these liberals just about ruined everything. All things come to halt before lawlessness. Folks are going to have to be made to behave themselves.

But beyond all that, we just don't believe it's right. People ought not to be liberal with basic fundamental right. It's just wrong for folks to get away with it.

And so, beloved, God could not be holy if he forgave sin apart from repentance. So anyone that's a stranger to repentance is a stranger to grace. And anyone that's a stranger to grace is a stranger to being right with God.

And if we're not right with God, God is our enemy. Now, it's a judicial enemy. It's an enemy that's going to take us to court.

But still, he is our adversary. You know, you might have an enemy that you sort of shun him because he may jump on you, double up fist. Then again, you might have an enemy that's going to take you to court.

And God Almighty is definitely going to take people to court. And the Lord Jesus Christ says you'd better get this settled with your adversary quickly. Don't put it off.

But while God's in the way, unless he takes you to court, you'll be delivered into the hands of the judge. You know, you go to court and the juror considers the evidence and they say guilty. Now you're in the hands of the judge.

He has great leeway in most cases. He could give you suspended sentence. He could give you court-stretched penitentiary.

But you're in the hands of the judge. And the judge will deliver you to the officer. And you'll be cast into the penitentiary of hell and you'll never get out.

And there's only one way that we can agree with our adversary, and that is to agree he's right and we're wrong. If we go on down the road arguing with him, trying to defend ourselves, well, we're going right on into court like that. And when we get into court like that, we'll be wiped out.

And so the only way to settle this thing is to go on and agree with him, guilty, and then throw yourself upon his mercy. And so, beloved, look at it from either standpoint that we have to believe that we cannot enter into the grace of God, the righteousness and grace, without repentance. It's not only impossible from God's standpoint, but it wouldn't be right from our standpoint.

It's not good for our souls to think we're in grace apart from repentance, even in the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, if you'd rather sin, rebuke it. And certainly ought to do it in love and patience and truth, but try to show it.

If you repent, forgive him. But it would not be good for him any more than rearing your children to let them get away from things when there's no repentance. It doesn't make for character.

And you don't have sanctified Christians that are strangers to repentance. You can set up any kind of program, all this church work and everything, but they're not really sanctified and never will be. And so it's the very foundation of our sanctification.

Now, beloved, this brings me to my second question. If this is so, then what is repentance? Repentance is simply a work of free and sovereign grace. Because repentance involves making a change.

Confessing your sins and being sorry is very good, but that only works with repentance unto salvation. If a man has sinned against another man, he goes over there and says, I won't confess my sins, and I'm so sorry. But if Joe senses that he knows the man's heart and he knows that he hasn't got that stuff out of his heart, and he can't keep on chasing around the man's wife or something else.

And so, beloved, if we're truly repentant, we'll have to have a change of heart. And man cannot change his heart. Some folks say sovereign grace is hard doctrine.

It's the ruin of the good news of the gospel. Beloved, if you'll pardon my English, there ain't no good news without it. There is no salvation unless you and I can make a change.

And I don't know anything that could make that change but sovereign grace. This church can't do it. No minister can do it, and you sure can't do it for yourself.

None of these ordinances--baptism, Lord's suffering, and the rest of it--will do it. Only sovereign grace. Now you run through the scriptures.

Let me ask this question. What in the wide world brought Saul of Tarsus to repentance? What a change! One time he was seeking to do all things contrary to the name of Jesus Christ. One time he was breeding up threatenings against those that profess the name of Jesus Christ.

One time he was arresting and hailing into prison and giving his testimony against them and consenting unto their death, when they were persecuted to death, because they professed the name of Jesus Christ. What a change! What a change! Now he's preaching him whom he once hated. Can anybody who claims to believe the word of God deny that nothing, nothing, nothing but sovereign grace could work that change? You say, but Paul was a very special blessing.

He's an unusual case. You can't use him to talk about ordinary folks. They're just saved ordinarily.

Well, how about the Dante? He's quite ordinary. Saul was saved to bear my name to the Gentiles and before kings. You read through the book of Acts.

He bore the same witness when he was before King Agrippa and Roman governor. I have no doubt that when he stood before Caesar, he bore the same witness. I am accused of the Jews for religious charge, and you let me tell what it is.

I believe he preached the name of Jesus Christ. How about the dying thief? What did God save him for? He only lived an hour or so after he was saved. Beloved, can you tell me that anything but sovereign mercy brought that big change in that man's life? Both Matthew and Mark tell us that the thieves railed on the Son of God.

Matthew makes it strong. He said the crowds were passing by, heaping scorn upon the suffering God's Son of Man. And Matthew uses the word thieves.

It's in the plural. He says the thieves cast the same in his teeth. Yet in those hours, in that awful suffering, without hearing any preaching, this man made a marvelous change.

He came into the consciousness of his sins. He said this man has done nothing amiss, but we are being crucified, and we deserve it. If you want to find innocent people, beloved, one of the best ways to find them is in the penitentiary.

There are more folks in there that are self-righteous and excuse themselves. And so this dying thief was no longer excusing himself, but confessing that he deserved the death of the cross. And this dying thief threw himself at the feet of sovereign mercy.

And anybody who claims to believe the word of God, believe that anything but sovereign mercy brought that change. And beloved, the Bible teaches that in the last days, the Jewish people are going to come to repentance. Now, their great sin, and beloved, in saying this, is not to move us to what men call anti-Semitism.

We must love the Jews. Remember that Jesus Christ, when he walked on this earth, he was a Jew, born of a Jewish woman, suckled a Jewish breast, raised in a Jewish home, educated in a Jewish synagogue, worshiped God as the Son of Man in the Second Temple of the Jews. Remember, all the apostles were Jews.

All the prophets were Jews. The fathers were of this people. The Bible was given to us, with the exception of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, by the Lord through the Jews.

And the Jews preserved the Old Testament in purity through many, many years. For them, a great death, but they have a great sin. Children are not accountable for the sin of their fathers unless they continue in those sins.

But their fathers, when Pilate says, washed his hands and said, I am innocent of the blood of this man, they said, let his blood be on us and our children. Now, if he is not the Son of God, then he was a blasphemer, and under their law he deserved to die. If he is not the Messiah, he is a great deceiver of men, and under their law at that time he deserved to die.

What is your verdict? Beloved, if you want someone's heart to convert, try Mohammed and her Jews. They're hard to convert. I don't know anyone's heart, and that's a messed-up Gentile of a form of Christianity that knows not grace.

But the Bible says, in the last days they shall look upon me, that's God, whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, showing a distinction in the persons, but the being one of the deity that was crucified at Calvary. And they shall mourn for him, as one mourned for his own son. And they'll come to the faith, because the prophet goes on to say, that they'll be opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness.

That fountain that was opened at Calvary remains closed to all except believers, and so they will come to the faith of the gospel. You read that account in the book of Zechariah. You read that account in the 31st chapter of the book of Jeremiah.

Can you attribute that to anything but sovereign mercy? That is the teaching of the Bible, that only sovereign mercy can bring a sinner unto dependence. And this brings me to my third question. And that is, unless I come to dependence, so that I not only confess my sin, I'm not only sorry for my sin, I break with it.

Now, we're not perfect, but we've made a break. We've made a break. And we're not simply an alcoholic that's just stayed away from the bottle.

We got it out of our heart. We're not a homosexual that just isn't practicing. We got it out of our heart.

We've made a break. Beloved, if that's repentance, if only sovereign God can bring men to repentance, how can all men be commanded to repent? And how can it be said that when he comes, he'll come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel? And the first command in obeying the gospel is to repent. And there is no knowledge of God in love and grace except in repentance.

How can this be? It's because men could seek this grace if they wanted to, if they wanted to. You say, why don't they want to? They're too proud. Why don't they want to? They're too attached to their sins.

They enjoy their sins. Why don't they want to? They don't want to break with this old world. Beloved, it is that you get saved, and then you need to be pled with to forsake the world.

There's no such thing as getting saved without forsaking the world. You've come to repentance, and the world will forsake you, forsake you pretty quick. Just as soon as they know it.

They have no time for repentance. People that are gracious under God, not really. Not really.

Folks know that. They don't want to give up this old world. But they could fall at the feet of sovereign mercy, seeking the salvation of your soul.

And beloved, you know your heart, if there is one here this day that says, Pastor, by the grace of God, I've come to this experience, this faith. I'd like to publicly identify myself in this faith. I invite you to come forward as we sing.

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