



Sunday Teaching Guide

Five Directions, Week 1

August 6, 2023

Bible Texts

- Genesis 3:1-9
- Hebrews 10:19-23
- Matthew 27:50-51
- James 4:8

Important Terms

- Most Holy Place - Also called Holy of Holies. According to Hebrew tradition, this area of the temple held the Ark of the Covenant, which included the Ten Commandments.

Sermon Notes

- The Bible is full of stories of God desperately seeking to connect with us. One of the first stories from Genesis includes God desiring to maintain a relationship with his creation.
- In Jerusalem, the temple was divided into sections, and you were limited to certain sections based on who you were or where you came from. In essence, your connection to God was limited and only certain people were allowed to experience the most holy place in the temple. That area was closed off from everyone else by this huge curtain that hung in front of the door.
- In the Gospel of Matthew, after Jesus' death, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Writers saw this as meaning that because of Jesus, we have access now to that most holy place. Because of Jesus, we have the ability to connect with God.
- The writer of the Book of Hebrews says that "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart." Another word for "draw near" is "connect."
- God is the one who is doing the searching, the first-moving, providing what we would refer to in theological terms as prevenient grace. One way this is described is as the Holy Spirit standing on the porch inviting us to come into the home with God where we've all longed to be. He's prepared a sidewalk for us, he's opened the door, he's invited us in, but we have to walk and enter.

Reflection Questions

- Why do you think the Ancient Israelites wanted to create a place in the temple that was considered the holiest of holy places that only certain people could enter?
- How does Jesus change our understanding about who is allowed to draw near to God?
- Have you ever experienced the call to draw near to God? What is that experience like?
- How do you feel about sharing your experience of drawing near to God with others? Do you think it is important to share this experience?
- Because we are all called to draw near to God, what implication do you think that has for how we view and treat other people?
- In what ways can you encourage others to draw near to God?

Prayer for the Week

- Thank you God for continually calling and inviting us to draw near to you. We thank you for sending us Jesus to teach us and to invite us into relationship with you. Help us to keep our relationship with you a priority in life and guide us to draw closer to you. Amen.

Additional Readings

- 1 Chronicles 22:19
- Matthew 6:25-33
- Psalm 63