**Good morning, happy Sabbath, church family!**
I hope you all had a great week. It's getting nice and warm outside, and it was lovely this weekend. We went on a hike up Viking Mountain and had a beautiful view of the surrounding mountains. It's a reminder of God's goodness—He created all of this for us to enjoy.

Today, my sermon is titled *Judgment Bound*. Before we begin, let me say a quick prayer.

*Father, I thank You for the privilege of studying Your word. I pray that You would hide me behind the cross, and that Your word would go forth with power. Open our hearts and minds to receive what we need to hear today. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**So, what church are we in today?**
We're in a Seventh-day Adventist church. The name itself is full of significance, right? We are Seventh-day because we believe in keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. We believe in following God's commandments, and we believe in the soon-coming advent of Jesus. It's a name filled with meaning and prophetic significance.

But before we ever had the name "Seventh-day Adventist," there were other events that led to the establishment of our church. Have you heard of William Miller? I'm sure you have. William Miller started the Millerite movement, studying the prophecies of Daniel and comparing Scripture with Scripture. Through this study, he came to the solemn conclusion that the sanctuary would be cleansed at the end of the 2,300 days, which meant that Jesus was coming in 1844. This message spread, and people from many denominations joined the movement, preparing to meet Jesus.

But as we know, that day came and went, and Jesus did not return. They had an improper understanding of the sanctuary being cleansed. In Daniel 7:9, it says:

*"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated. His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, His wheels a burning flame. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him. Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened."*

The cleansing of the sanctuary was not the purification of the earth by fire, as William Miller had supposed. It was actually the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, where Jesus was transitioning from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place to begin the work symbolized by the Day of Atonement in the book of Leviticus.

In ancient Israel, once a year, the high priest would begin the work of atonement. He would first sacrifice for himself, then for the people. A sacrifice without guilt—without sin—would be offered, and the blood would be sprinkled in the courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place, making atonement for the people's sins. During this time, the Israelites were to gather around the sanctuary, afflict their souls before God, and search their hearts to make sure every sin was confessed. The sins were placed upon the lamb, symbolizing that they were being transferred to the sanctuary, and the people would be freed from guilt.

In this typical symbolism, we see that this is the work that Jesus is now performing since 1844. We are living in the antitypical Day of Atonement, where Jesus is cleansing the sanctuary in heaven by His blood. This is part of the prophetic message in Revelation 14:7, which says:

*"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come."*

**But too often, we forget the practical implications of this doctrine.**
We forget the gravity and the significance it should bring to our daily lives. We are judgment-bound. To understand what this means, we need to look at the investigative judgment and what Jesus is doing in the sanctuary right now.

The investigative judgment is God's plan for cleansing sin and dealing with the records of sin. At the beginning of the great controversy, Satan's accusation was that God is not just, that God is not truly loving, and that God does not have our best interests in mind. We've been studying this in the quarterly, and when Satan shared this lie with Adam and Eve, they believed him. They chose to sin and were separated from God. But God instituted a plan to bring humanity back into fellowship with Him, and that plan was symbolized in the sanctuary.

In the sanctuary, we see the lamb, symbolizing Jesus, being sacrificed for the people. We see the water purification, entering the holy place, communing with God in prayer, feeding on His word, and receiving the Holy Spirit to bring us back into fellowship with God. The work of the investigative judgment is to go through the records—not for God's benefit, but for the benefit of the people. This process is necessary for Satan to show that everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ is worthy to be received into heaven.

In the story of Joshua's sin-stained garments, we see that when we accept Jesus, Satan comes to accuse us: *"They've sinned, they've done wrong. You can't let them into heaven. You kicked me out because of my sin. How can you let people just as bad as I am into heaven?"*

God has to work through Satan's accusations and show legally why we have a right to be restored to fellowship with heaven. The investigative judgment is part of that process.

Every thought you've ever had, every action you've ever taken, every word you've ever spoken is on record in the books of heaven. Everything, down to the very motive behind your actions, is written in these books. They are compared to God's perfect law: *Does this person's record measure up?*

The investigative judgment is especially for those who profess the name of Jesus. The wicked and apostates are judged separately. But those who profess Christ are being judged. Have you confessed your sins? Have you repented and sought purification?

This doesn't mean you need to specifically name every sin you've ever committed. God knows our hearts. But are you truly repentant? Are you seeking God? Do you believe that if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse you?

The investigative judgment is when all people who have ever chosen to accept the terms of the plan of salvation are judged. Are they living according to the conditions that grant eternal life? As Ellen White writes:

*"Great and small, high and low, rich and poor, are to be judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. Day after day, passing into eternity, bears its burden of records. The books of heaven record both the good and the evil. The mightiest conqueror on earth cannot call back the record of even a single day. Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny, for weal or woe. Though they may be forgotten by us, they will bear their testimony to justify or to condemn. They go before us to the judgment. The use made of every talent will be scrutinized. How have we improved the capital entrusted to us by the Lord? Will the Lord, at His coming, receive His own with us?"*

This is sobering, and it is a truth we must face.

***“No value is attached to the mere profession of faith in Christ.*** *Nothing is counted as genuine except the love shown by our works.”*

 Ellen White further says:

*"As the features of the countenance are reproduced with marvelous exactness in the camera of the artist, so is the character faithfully delineated in the books above. If Christians were as solicitous to stand faultless in the heavenly records as they are to be represented without blemish in their pictures, how different would their life history appear!"*

This is the weight of the judgment. And I think we need to reflect on this more seriously. Too often, we speak of the investigative judgment in a light-hearted way: "Yes, since 1844, we're in the investigative judgment, but we know the judgment will be in favor of the saints, and everything's going to be fine because I believe in Jesus."

While this is true in part, it's essential to understand that the belief in Jesus is not just intellectual. It's not simply about understanding who Jesus is and what He did for us, saying a prayer, and being good to go.

Biblical belief in Jesus is a mindset shift, a life transition, where we give our allegiance to Him, where we truly live out His teachings in our daily lives. And I think sometimes, we don't care enough about the investigative judgment. We don't understand what Jesus is doing for us in the heavenly sanctuary, and how we are to cooperate with Him.

We see the results of sin. Adam and Eve chose to separate themselves from God, and God immediately had to implement Plan B—the plan of salvation. He set curses upon the ground and upon the woman, intending to bring about the change needed to restore harmony with heaven. Everything here is intentional.

In Genesis 3:22, it says, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever..." Therefore, the Lord sent him out of the garden to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man and placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

God intentionally separated Adam and Eve from the tree of life. This was a deliberate decision on God's part to prevent them from living forever. Why? Because God could not allow sin to be immortalized. If they had sinned and were still allowed to eat from the tree of life, sin would have been perpetuated. We saw in the story of their firstborn children that sin was destructive—it was deadly, and it could not be allowed to continue forever. So, God separated them from the tree of life until the plan of salvation was worked out.

In the garden, God slayed the first lamb and covered their nakedness with its skin. This act symbolized that by the death of another—an innocent one—life could be restored. Thus, God instituted the plan of salvation. But if God did not allow Adam and Eve to return to the garden without this plan of salvation, why would He change His mind now? Why would God allow sin to be immortalized again just because Jesus died? Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sins, but it didn’t save us in our sins. God cannot allow sin to be perpetuated.

This brings us to the investigative judgment. Part of this judgment is to determine whether each individual has accepted the salvation made available to them through Christ and whether they have separated themselves from their sins. If this has not been accomplished, and a person is allowed into heaven, then sin would be present in heaven, and we would have a problem.

Now, let me clarify—I am not preaching sinless perfectionism. We cannot change our sinful natures. We cannot become sinless in nature, like God or the angels. However, the Bible clearly teaches that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can choose to be separate from sin. We can choose to overcome each sin that besets us. We can choose to abide in Jesus to the point that it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. This is the work that the investigative judgment is examining.

I want to share one more quote from Ellen White, though I don’t often quote her extensively, this is crucial. This is a vision she had on October 23, 1879, at around 2:00 a.m. She wrote:

*“The Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I beheld scenes of the coming judgment. The great day of the execution of God's judgment seemed to have come. Ten thousand times ten thousand were assembled before a large throne, upon which was seated a person of majestic appearance. Several books were before Him, and upon the covers of each was written in letters of gold, which seemed like a burning flame of fire: 'Ledger of Heaven.' One of these books, containing the names of those who claimed to believe the truth, was opened. As these persons were named one by one and their good deeds mentioned, their countenances would light up with holy joy. Another book was opened wherein were recorded the sins of those who professed the truth. Under the general heading of selfishness came every other sin. As the Holy One upon the throne slowly turned the leaves of the ledger, His eyes rested for a moment upon individuals. His glance seemed to burn into their very souls. At the same moment, every word and action of their lives passed before their minds as clearly as though they were traced before their vision in letters of fire. One class was registered as 'cumberers of the ground.' This class had made self supreme, laboring only for selfish interests. The question was then asked, 'Why have you not washed your robes of character and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? You would not become a partaker of His sufferings, and you cannot now be partaker with Him of His glory.'”*

*The book closed, and the mantle fell from the person on the throne, revealing the terrible glory of the Son of God. The scene passed away, and I found myself still upon the earth, inexpressibly grateful that the day of God had not yet come and that precious probationary time was still granted us in which to prepare for eternity."*

This is a sobering vision. Notice that in the judgment of those who profess to believe in Jesus, it is not just about whether they believe in Him—it’s about what their works show. Do their works show that they have allowed the love of Christ to change their lives? Have they washed their robes and made them white through the blood of the Lamb? Are they preparing to live eternally without sin?

There is a needful preparation as the people of God during this time of judgment. There is work to be done, and that work is making our robes white through the blood of the Lamb—not through our own works to earn heaven, but through our cooperation with God in overcoming defects and sins that easily beset us. We need to abide in Jesus so much that it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

We need a deeper walk with God. We need to dig deeper than the shallow, surface-level religion. We need to be sincere. We need to search ourselves and prove ourselves—are we in the love of God? Are we seeking to drink deeply from the cisterns of life, or are we feeding on the dross of worldliness? Are we feeding on things that will make us like Jesus, or are we feeding on things that will lead us away from Him?

The investigative judgment happening right now is examining the character of our faith. The work Christ is doing in us is scrutinized, and the standard is the law of God—love to God and love to man. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and this is the character of Jesus. Jesus is our example, and by studying His life, we can see what we are called to be, who we are called to be. But we cannot do it by ourselves. I hope I made that clear in previous sermons: it’s not our work. This is not legalism; we can’t do it on our own.

There are two extremes. One says, "Jesus has died for me—whoopee, now let me go live my life." That’s not the gospel. The other says, "Jesus died to save me, but He didn’t do enough, so let me help Him out." That’s not the gospel either. The gospel is: "Jesus died for me. I’m going to die too, and let Him live His life in me." If you’re not dying to self, you won’t let Christ live in you.

We need to dig deep and cut off every tie. The book of 1 John is very clear about this. I love 1 John. In 1 John 1:5, he writes:

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you: that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

John addresses both extremes: You can't walk in darkness and claim to be in the light. Then he goes further: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

In 1 John 2:4, he writes, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this, we know that we are in Him.”

And in 1 John 2:15, he says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. All that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

1 John 3:1 says, “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin; whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin—ongoing. His seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he has been born of God.

In this, the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

**Our Mission During the Judgment Hour**

So, what is our mission while the judgment is still ongoing? We need to allow Jesus to live in us. We need to overcome our selfishness and worldliness—not by our own strength, but by the blood of the Lamb. We overcome by drinking in His life, His character. By beholding Him, we are changed. But we must behold Him! We need to dig deeper into our relationship with Him. We cannot afford to confuse fake faith with the real thing. We cannot afford to be deceived about our eternal life.

Let no one deceive you: "He who practices righteousness is righteous; he who practices sin is of the devil." This is why the Son of God was manifested—to take away our sins. So, we must, by faith, abide in Him. Jesus wants to make you honest, but He cannot do so if you choose to lie. Jesus wants to make you holy, but He cannot make you holy without your consent, without you saying, "I’m willing to give up my worldliness." Jesus wants to make you kind and patient, but He cannot make you patient if you are not willing to let Him. Jesus wants to do so much for us, but He cannot do it unless we let Him.

Therefore, we need to repent of our selfishness, our worldliness, and our unbelief. We need to forsake sin because sin is what has caused all the pain, the suffering, and the death of the Son of God. If we think we can live in sin and still see Him face-to-face, then something is wrong that we need to work out in our hearts. We are in the judgment hour, and Jesus is coming soon. Now is the time to make our robes white—not by our might or power, but by His Holy Spirit.

We need to spend more time in the Word. We need to spend more time together. We need to press together, to help each other overcome. You are your brother’s keeper. The best way to do that is to read your Bible—not just read it and say, “Great, that’s what it says.” No, ask yourself: *What is God saying to me?* *How does that apply to my life specifically?* *What am I going to do about it?*

Jesus tells us, "He who hears these words of mine and does them is like a man who builds his house on a rock. The winds came, the floods blew, and they beat upon that house, but it would not be moved because it was built on the rock." But, "the one who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rains came, the floods blew, and that house was destroyed."

The message is clear: If we will abide in Him, He will finish the work He has begun in us. Now is the time to dig deeper, to get closer, to seek Him more earnestly. Put away the things that you know need to be put away. There’s no time to waste. You’re going to be judged not by your profession, but by the fruit of that profession. Is Jesus allowed to work out in you what He wants to? Are you cooperating with Him? Are you seeking earnestly for that Christlike character that will give you entrance into His kingdom?

That is the question for you today. I just want to encourage you to seek Him and prepare with the needful preparation, so that when that day comes, we may not be like those who said, “Lord, Lord, didn’t we do this and do that? Didn’t we do mighty works in Your name? Didn’t we build hospitals? Didn’t we go to different countries and preach to them, and they were baptized?” But He will say to them, “I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work iniquity.”

Let’s pray.

**Prayer**
Father, give us the gift of repentance. Open wide our eyes that we may see both the goodness of God and the sinfulness of sin. Show us specifically what we need to let go of, what is hindering You from doing the work in us that needs to be accomplished in these short hours before probation closes. Let nothing come between our souls and our Savior. This is our prayer, in Jesus’ name. Amen.