Luke Chapter 9 v 7 - 22

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Good morning. Welcome. Who is that? It's good to be together here this morning that we can come to praise our God and give him thanks for all his goodness to us. The psalmist says this, from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised. Well, we can't see the sun, but we know it's up. And really the call is that we are to worship God from morning to evening, 24-7. I wonder what was the first thing you did when you got up this morning, first thought in your mind, was it, Lord, thank you for a new day?

Were the first words from your lips, or mine even? Thank you, God, for all your faithfulness. Praise you and bless you. Well, our first hymn, it's on the sheet that you have. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all, O my soul, worship his holy name. Sing like never before. The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning. I hope that in our hearts and our lives, our desire is to bless God, to bless him with our praises, to adore and worship him. So let's stand and sing this hymn together.

Let's continue to bring our praises to him as we pray together. O Lord, our God, we come to you this morning and give you thanks and bless your name and praise you again that there is none like you, none who compares with you in your loving kindness and faithfulness, your goodness, your patience, your grace. We thank you, O Lord, just as we've even sang in that song this morning.

We know, O Lord, that you're slow to anger and your heart is kind. Thank you, O Lord, that you are indeed a God unlike any other, unlike any person. Though we are made in your image, though you created us and gave us life, though you continue to sustain us and support us, Lord, we know that we are just not like you. Lord, our thoughts at times are so unkind. Our patience is so quick to snap. Lord, with you and with one another. Lord, we confess again this morning that we are not the people that, Lord, we should be.

We are sinful people, failing people. We are people, O Lord, who are in need of your grace, your forgiveness, your care, your strength, your help. Lord, that's why you sent Jesus, your son, into the world. Not to simply to let us know that you're there, but Lord, to restore us to yourself, to save us from ourselves, to bring us into that living, eternal, life-giving friendship with you.

We thank you that for that to happen. You came to us, Lord Jesus. We could never come to you. We could never be good enough, as it were, to aspire to reach you. All of humanity searching after God has ended in frustration and often in evil actions. But Lord, we thank you that you came to bring us to God, Lord Jesus. Not just to show us the way or tell us the way, but you are the way, the truth, and the life. And we thank you not only were you willing, as God the Son, to come into this world, but to come into our human nature, to experience the things that we experience.

You're a God who indeed understands us so well. And as we come this morning, all our thoughts, our emotions, our fears, yes, even our sins are laid bare before you. You know us completely.

And though we may hide from others and put on a mask and appear to be well, we can't hide from you. But Lord, we're so grateful for that, that Lord, you know us and yet still you love us.

You know us and yet still, Lord, your desire is that we should know you and enjoy that free gift of eternal life. Oh, Lord, come and meet with us, we pray. Come by your Holy Spirit, perhaps for the first time, and cause us to hear your voice. Cause us to recognize that gentle, glorious, kind word, which says, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you a rest. Come to me and eat and drink of food that satisfies, that fulfills the soul and the heart. Oh, Lord, draw us to yourself and meet with us now in this time. Yes, receive our thanks. But Lord, we come to you in need of more of you. So feed us and help us and meet with us too, we pray. In Jesus' name, we ask these things. Amen. Lovely. Now Herod, the Tetrarch, heard about all that was going on. He was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead. Others, that Elijah had appeared.

Still others, that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. But Herod said, I beheaded John. Who then is this I hear such things about? He tried to see him. When the apostles returned, they'd been sent out, if you remember, by the Lord Jesus. They reported to Jesus what they had done.

Then he took them with him, and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida. But the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing. Late in the afternoon, the twelve came to him and said, send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging because we are in a remote place here. He replied, you give them something to eat.

They answered, we have only five loaves of bread and two fish. Unless we go and buy food for this crowd. About 5,000 men were there. He said to his disciples, make them sit down in groups of about 50 each.

Disciples did so, and everyone sat down, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven. He gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people.

They all ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. Once when Jesus was praying in private and the disciples were with him, he asked them, who do the crowds say I am? They replied, some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. Still others that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life. What about you? He asked, who do you say I am?

Peter answered, God's Messiah. Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. And he said, the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law. He must be killed. On the third day, be raised to life. We'll come back to that in a few moments time. If you'd like to turn up Luke and chapter nine and to the passage that we read just a little while ago, that will be a help as we look particularly, as I say, at these bookends of the feeding of the 5,000. We looked at that last week. And as you'll see, they, and hopefully as we read, they sound very similar. There's a repetition in one sense in what's being said there. I don't know whether you, we had a few sporting questions there from Barry earlier on, whether you're very keen on sports. I can't say I am, but there's a TV show called Question of Sport. And we watch it, not because we're actually interested in sport, but because it's quite funny. It's a sort of a comical quiz show. The two sort of team leaders are like that. And one of the rounds that they have every week is called the Mystery Guest Round. And the two teams, each one is shown a brief video of a sports personality or sports star engaged in some activity, perhaps not playing the sport that they're used to, doing another sport or cooking, all sorts of things like that. And they've got to guess who this person is by the filming of them. But the person is never shown in full face. They only show you like their chin or the camera angles, always strange angles from the back or the side. And sort of the teams have to piece together who they think this person is, this mystery quest is, and hopefully identify that mystery guest. People think that God is like that, or Jesus is like that. They think he's a bit of a mystery. They think that he's hard to make out. They think that perhaps he's made himself that way, a little bit awkward for us to find out. But actually, that's completely the wrong view of

God. That's completely untrue. In fact, the God of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, his identity is very easy to recognize if we are willing to accept it. It's not that he's difficult for us to see. It's just that we are unwilling to recognize him for who he is. From the very beginning of time, God has been making himself known to the people he created. At the very start, in the Garden of Eden, we're told that Adam and Eve, the very first human beings, knew God personally. In fact, they walked with him in the garden, but they hid themselves from him when they sinned against him. It wasn't God who has hidden himself from us. It's we who've hidden ourselves from God. And from that time on, from the very beginning of time, God has over and over again continued repeatedly to take steps to get the attention of men and women. But men and women have throughout history and throughout time continued to hide from God, continued to turn their backs on God, continued to reject him.

Again, God has not hidden from you, that you have turned your back on him is the message and the truth of the Bible. But the culmination, as it were, of God making himself known, of his self-revelation, was the coming of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who stepped into our human nature, who became one with us in time and space, in Jesus. And so when the Apostle John wrote his record of the life of the Lord Jesus, he declares this wonderful truth from his own experience in John chapter 1. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son who is God and is in the closest relationship with God has made him known. What's that going to do here with Luke in chapter 9? Well, actually in the past several chapters, a question has kept on raising its head, troubling all sorts of people. Turn back a page or two to Luke in 7 verse 49, when Jesus was in the house of a Pharisee named Simon. The other quests, we're told in verse 49, began saying among themselves, who is this who even forgive sins? And then the disciples who were with Jesus, when he quietened the storm on the lake in chapter 8 of Luke in verse 25. In fear and amazement, they asked one another, who is this? He commands even the winds and water, and they obey him. And then we read, didn't we, in chapter 9 and verses 7 about Herod. He was the sort of local ruler of the area of Galilee. Not the Herod that we read about in the very beginning of Luke, who was the one who opposed the birth of Jesus and sought him killed. That was his father. This is one of his sons who has a local sort of protectorate, if I can put it that way. Even he is concerned. We're told he's perplexed and asked the question, verse 9, who then is this I hear such things about? And judging by the possible answers that people were giving at the time of Jesus, it seems that most people were greatly confused, weren't they? He says there, or we're told there in verse 7, he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, still others that one of the prophets so long ago had come back to life.

And when Jesus asks the disciples a similar question, they give very similar answers. Verse 19, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others that one of the prophets so long ago has come back to life. There's a great deal of confusion about Jesus then, so it shouldn't surprise us there's still confusion amongst people today. We might think that the suggestions that the people had concerning the identity of Jesus are rather far-fetched, even absurd. But for the Jesus of Jesus' day, they were all a possibility. And in fact, again, when you listen to what people say, if we were to take a poll of people today, even perhaps even of this congregation this morning, and say who is Jesus, all sorts of ideas perhaps might rise up which are downright silly. Oh, he's just a myth. He never existed. Absolutely untrue. Historical evidence again and again.

Oh, he was just a man who lived a longer time ago, but all sorts of stories have been made up about him. Untrue because we have very tired, very, very, what's the word I'm looking for? Thank you.

Verified, always ask a maths teacher when you want to know about English. Verifiable evidence, not only from the Bible, but from other areas as well, that this Jesus was real. All sorts of silly ideas. He was a spaceman who came to earth. All sorts of madness. But for the Jesus' day, their answers, their suggestions, their possibilities had a certain amount of reality. First of all, John the Baptist, he seemed to be quite popular. Perhaps he was the number one sort of talking point.

[14:59] Certainly people knew about him. He was that very odd prophet, if you remember, who'd been about just before Jesus appeared on the scene. He didn't perform any miracles, but he dressed strangely in camel hair and ate locusts and lived in the desert. People went out to him from the towns and were baptized for repentance of their sins. He got himself into hot water with Herod, this Herod here.

He told him that he was wrong to take his brother's wife for his own, that he was immoral. And so what did Herod do? He had him arrested to shut him up. And then eventually, as he confessed there in verse nine, he had him beheaded and executed. Now the crowd believed because they knew their Old Testament that God was a God who can raise the dead. And that happened several times, of course, in the Old Testament, as well as Jesus doing it himself. We looked at that just a few weeks ago when he raised to life that young girl who had died. So they didn't think it was any problem that God might have raised again this John, this strange old character to continue this work of God.

He was, after all, everyone agreed, a prophet of God. But Herod didn't believe in the supernatural, clearly. He said, I beheaded John. Who then is this? It can't be him. I don't believe in miracles.

That was ruled out as a potential explanation. Then we also have Elijah. Elijah was probably the most famous of the Old Testament prophets. He was another odd character, but God performed amazing miracles through him. He had quite a lot of exploits. And I'd encourage you to read something of his life in 1 and 2 Kings. Quite extraordinary, amazing things. And Elijah didn't die like any other prophet.

He actually was taken up, we're told, to heaven, alive in a whirlwind in 2 Kings chapter 2. So he was potentially still alive. So perhaps this could be him coming back again from heaven.

[17:05] But also, God had made a promise. When he spoke about the coming of his special Messiah, his King, his Saviour, he said that Elijah would come first. The very last book that we have in the Old Testament, Malachi chapter 4.

God says this, See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And again, earlier in that same book, chapter 3, I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me.

People of Jesus' day were looking for this Elijah type of prophet, or Elijah himself, to come back, preparing for this special King, the Messiah, the one who would come to save them.

Jesus himself confirms that John the Baptist was such a messenger. If you look back just a chapter or so to Luke in chapter 7, the people were talking about John and Jesus spoke up for him and said, Then, verse 27, this is the one about whom it was written.

And he quotes from Malachi 3, I'll send my messenger ahead of you. And elsewhere he says to them, yes, he was the Elijah, the predecessor, the one who was to make the way ready for God's coming into the world.

[18:35] Then, of course, there's one other last suggestion, that he was another prophet. Jesus was another prophet raised from the dead. Not just John, not just Elijah, but someone else.

That could explain why he could do these miracles. Because he was raised again. They believed in the supernatural. They believed that God could do those things.

But none of those explanations were correct. It might have seemed possible, but they were not true.

So, again, we shouldn't be surprised that people today are still asking the question, Who is this? Jesus asked the disciples.

Verse 18. Who do the crowds say I am? And they give those suggestions, as we've mentioned. But then he narrows it down. And this is the vital thing. It's not so much about what everybody else is saying.

[19:38] But the real question is, what are you saying? What are you believing? Who do you, the disciples? Who do you, the closest people who walked and lived and ate with Jesus?

Who do you say I am? And it's Peter who speaks up on their behalf. He was always very quick to speak. But often he'd get it wrong. But here he got it right.

He gives the first right answer concerning who Jesus is. God's Messiah. He's got it right, but what does it mean? This Messiah.

I mentioned it already. The Greek word is Christ. Messiah is the Hebrew. It's exactly the same thing. It means simply this. The anointed one. The anointed one.

Someone who was specially chosen and set apart by God. Now, throughout the Old Testament, people were anointed with oil as a sign of them being set apart to perform a special task by God.

[20:40] They had a unique role. The first of those sort of people were priests. The high priests and other priests received that oil upon their heads as a sign that they were set apart, consecrated to God.

Right back in Exodus and chapter 30, Moses is told, anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so that they may serve me as priests.

They had a special work to do. They were to be in the temple. They were to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people to atone for their sins, to secure for them forgiveness from God.

It was a unique work that nobody else could do. In fact, occasionally people got a bit jealous of it and tried to do their job, but they ended up dead usually. It was something that God took very, very seriously.

The priests anointed to serve and to offer sacrifices. But then also it was the king as well. When a king was set apart, when he was crowned, he was also anointed with oil.

[21:50] In fact, that's what still happens to the kings and queens of England. If we do get another king or queen at some point in the future, then part of the ceremony will be that the archbishop, I imagine, of Canterbury will anoint them with oil.

But that goes all the way back to the Old Testament. Here's what 1 Kings tells us about when Solomon was to become king. There shall Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel.

Shall blow the trumpet and shout, Long live King Solomon. The king was to rule over God's people. Not to rule over them for his own benefit.

Not to rule over them according to his own desires. He was to make sure that God's laws were kept. He was, as it were, God's authority on earth.

His representative on earth. To make sure that the people knew God's word and law and kept it and followed it. But this one who was to come, this special anointed one who is spoken of in several places, this Messiah or Christ, was to be the greatest and the perfect priest and king.

[23:09] Not just a priest, not just a king, but combining those two offices so that he might fulfill God's purposes for the world and for his people.

And Jesus himself was anointed. Anointed at his baptism. You remember when we're told that the Holy Spirit came upon him as a dove.

So the oil that was used in the Old Testament was meant to be a symbol of God's spirit coming upon that person to equip them, to enable them to do the work that God had set them apart to do.

And so when young David was to become king, this is what happened to him in 1 Samuel 16. Samuel, he was the prophet, the leader of the people at that time, for there wasn't a good king.

Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him, that's David, in the presence of his brothers. And from that day on, the spirit of the Lord came upon David in power. That's why at Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit came upon him as he began his ministry as priest and king.

[24:16] As he began to be the Messiah of the Christ, the Savior and Lord of God's people. As a priest, Jesus came to offer that once for all final sacrifice for sin.

You might say, well, why does sin need a sacrifice? Why does sin need a priest? Why can't God just forgive sin? Why can't he just turn a blind eye to it?

Why can't he just brush it under the carpet? Why does there need to be this sacrifice, this payment for sin? Because sin is so serious. Because sin is against God.

Yes, it may be expressed in our attitudes to one another. It may be expressed in our actions to other people. But ultimately, our sin is to go against God. To resist him.

To say to him, I'm going to do things my way instead of yours. You do not have any part in my life. You have no right to tell me what to do. It is the ultimate act of rebellion against the God who made us.

[25:21] The God who deserves our love. The God who deserves our faith. The God who's given to us and given to us and given to us. Sin is not simply the really nasty and bad things that people do and get locked up with.

It's the attitudes of your heart and mine. The thoughts, the words. Those things that come out of us that are poisonous and vile. And we know that they're there. And we know that we cannot change no matter how much we try to put things right.

God is just. And therefore, as a just judge, he demands that all law-breaking, all sin must be atoned for.

Must be paid for. Can't just be ignored. That's not justice, is it? We cry out, we get upset, we get angry when people who are clearly guilty of terrible crimes simply get away with it because of a loophole in the law or because they escaped to another country.

We're thankful that we have a good justice system. And we agree that people must pay the price for the crime. So it is with God.

[26:33] If we expect that in our own land, then surely we must expect it with God who is perfect and good. And therefore, for you and I to be forgiven, for you and I to be pardoned of our crimes against God, a payment, a punishment must be taken.

But who's going to pay it? If we were to pay the punishment, it would be eternal and everlasting separation from God in hell. Unless somebody or something takes our place.

Unless somebody steps in and takes it on the chin for us. Jesus came to offer a sacrifice for sin that we might be forgiven.

We'll come back to that in a moment. He is the one who brought the perfect, the complete, the final, the finished sacrifice. In writing to the Christians, in Hebrews in chapter 10, we're told this.

When this priest, that's Jesus, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. So we know that the sacrifice of this priest was everything and has done everything necessary to wipe the slate clean, to make us right with God, to bring forgiveness into our lives.

[28:01] But he also came as God's sovereign. He came to be God's king over his kingdom. Remember how we've picked up over the last few weeks, and it's here again, isn't it, in verse 11.

How Jesus spoke to them about the kingdom of God. Well, a kingdom must have a king. We've got a united kingdom here, and it has to have a monarch, a ruler, a sovereign, even though she is someone who hasn't got the power, as it were, of kings and queens of old.

The people of Jesus' day were looking for a Messiah like that. They were looking for a king like Solomon, like David. And so when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that day that we commonly call Palm Sunday, the people began to shout out, Hosanna, which means save.

Hosanna, save us, save me. And also, blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. They thought that this Jesus, who they'd seen perform wonderful miracles, who'd spoken about the kingdom of God, was going to bring about in their land a transformation.

They recognized him as being the savior and the king. But there was something that was a stumbling block to them. There was something that they were unwilling to accept.

[29:25] There's something they were unwilling to recognize about this king and priest. Something about how he would fulfill those two roles of priest and king.

And that's why here in Luke in chapter 9, as soon as Peter answers God's Messiah, Jesus immediately goes on. We've got a paragraph break and a subtitle, but it's immediately after.

Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. Why? Because their understanding of him as the Messiah was wrong. And because of this, the Son of Man must suffer.

Notice that emphasis. Must suffer many things. Be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, the chiefs of the law, and he must be killed. That's the one thing that the people of Jesus' day would not accept.

It's the one thing that many people today will not accept. That Jesus, the Son of God, to make us right with God, to bring forgiveness for our sins, to bring us into the kingdom of God, and the blessings of knowing God as our king, had to first die as the sacrifice, as the substitute for our sin.

[30:40] We'll have Jesus as a great teacher. We'll have him as a religious leader. We'll have him as a loving representative of God, but we will not have him die in our place and bear our sin.

Because that means we have to acknowledge that we are sinners. We have to acknowledge that we have hidden from God. We have to acknowledge that our lives have been a constant hiding and rejecting of him.

We're not going to do that. Call me a sinner, how dare you? Say that I have to answer for my actions before God on a day of judgment? Never. But unless we are willing to accept that we are such people, that we are in need of such a savior, then we shall never see Jesus or never recognize him as the person that he is.

You see, he offered the perfect sacrifice in offering himself. All those cattle and all those lambs and all those sheep in the Old Testament that died, and there was thousands of them, they could never ever atone for and take away the punishment of our sin.

It had to be a human being who suffered in our place as our substitute. And it had to be a human being whose life was of infinite value, that he might pay for and save an infinite number of people.

[32:01] And there was no other sacrifice, costly enough, except the very life of the Son of God himself. He had to suffer. He had to suffer not only to bear our sins, but he had to suffer so that he might also rise again from the dead.

That he might rise with the authority and power of God to exercise that kingly reign and rule over our lives. In one sense, that's the other thing we won't accept about Jesus.

Yes, he can have part of my day on a Sunday when I'll sing to him. He can have some parts of my life perhaps during the week when I'm in trouble and I need to pray.

But he's not going to be the Lord over my life. I'm going to call the final shots. I'm going to say this is how it is. I'm not going to surrender the throne of my heart to anybody else.

But if we do not, then we are not under the care, the protection, the rescue, the salvation of Jesus. If we're going to continue to go our own way, then what are we doing?

[33:09] We're continuing to deny God his rightful place in our lives. We're continuing to hide from him. We're continuing to call the shots.

Dear friends, Jesus came so that he might be the Messiah, both the priest and the king, both the savior and the Lord of your life and mine.

And we can't and we mustn't and we dare not pick and choose how we will receive him or what we will believe about him. We must take him at his word.

We must take him as he is himself, savior and king, rescuer and Lord. So are you still asking that question?

Who is this? Who is this? Or rather, doesn't the question come home from Jesus to you? Doesn't he, not me, he stand before you this morning and say to you, who do you say I am?

[34:16] Who do you make me out to be? Who do you recognize me to be? Who do you not only say I am, but live as I am?

As your savior and Lord? As your friend? As your rescuer? As the one who in the greatest, most extraordinary act of love and self-sacrifice lay down his life to be crucified and to die, that you might know pardon full and free.

See, that's the wonderful thing. That's the choice in one sense between this. If we have Jesus as anything else than savior and king, then we have to take the risk.

And it's more than a risk. It's more than a gamble. It's a gamble with your very eternal soul. If we will not have him as savior and king, then we run the gamble that when we stand before God on the day of judgment, that somehow we'll be able to find a loophole in the law to get in.

We'll find a way around God to sneak in. A back door to heaven and eternal life. We'll escape hell somehow. But what's the chances of that?

[35:27] It's impossible. It's not going to happen. You're fixing and hoping in something which is impossible. There is no way past God. He is no fool. But if you will receive him as the Messiah, if you, like Peter, will say you are God's Messiah, the one that God has sent for me to rescue, to save, and to rule over my life, then you can be assured that he has paid for all your sin, all your law-breaking, all your rebellion.

It's taken away. God does not look upon you anymore as someone who deserves punishment, but as a child of his, one who is loved and precious to him. And then you come and you say, Lord Jesus, rule over my life.

Every part. Not just the Sunday bits. Not just those bits occasionally in the week. But all of my life. Why? Because he knows better than me. And you.

Think about it for a moment. You've lived your life doing exactly what you think is right and best. Be honest. How's it going?

How's that working out for you? Is everything tickety-boo? Have you never made any mistakes? Have you got no broken relationships in the past? No broken hearts left behind yours or others?

[36:49] No mistakes? No messes? No problems? No problems? Of course you haven't. When we surrender to. When we gladly, willingly say, Lord Jesus, be the king of my life.

We're still going to get it wrong from time to time. Because we're not going to always listen to him. But when we do, what a transformation it makes. What a change it brings.

What a new direction and a new life there is to be heart. Who do you say I am?

Let's respond to that very quietly in our own hearts. Let's respond to that question before God. It may be that you can say, Lord, I know you're my savior and my lord.

I long that I might love you and trust you more. It may be that you say, I would like you to be my savior and lord. But I've got questions. I've got doubts.

[37:54] There's things that I still haven't really worked out. Then ask that God would give you that clear picture. That he would show you. Just who Jesus is.

And perhaps you're at that point saying, Yes, I do see that this is right. That he is the one. And I do need forgiveness. Then ask. Ask, Lord Jesus, Come and be my savior.

Come, Lord, And take away my sin. Come and be the king of my life. Make me a child of God. Amen. Amen.

If in your prayer and if in your response to God's word, you feel it would be helpful to have a talk with me or perhaps be involved in what John's doing or somebody else perhaps you've come to church with this morning, then please don't let it go.

Please speak and ask. God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[39:31] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.