

Declaring the Truth About Jesus

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John 5:19-21

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Have you heard the saying; denial is not just a river in Egypt? You heard that one? Well interestingly, this play on words goes back to 1931 and an eighth grader named Florence Kerns, it's hard for me to imagine it, an eighth grader named Florence. But they were a 100 years ago, and she won a contest by answering this question, Do you know how to use denial in a sentence? Her answer was, Denial River runs through Egypt. Now, denial is the failure to accept an unacceptable truth. This happens when facts, logic and evidence stare people right in the face with a conclusion that they don't really want to accept. So instead of doing the humble thing, which is changing their mind, they turn facts into opinions. They transform truth into preferences, and then say something like, what? Well, that's not my truth. Don't bother me with the facts. Don't show me the evidence against my view. I feel my view is true and that's good enough for me. That's the way I see it. It's facts. In logic that's called the fallacy of invincible ignorance. In everyday language it's called pigheadedness.

I believe it's true, so it's true, and that settles it. Now what's the problem with that? Anybody ever believe something that wasn't true? I know I have. See things are true when what we think matches reality. Reality has a funny way of proving us wrong. But that's a good thing. Why? Because knowledge is when what we think is true matches reality. Well, when it comes to the Jewish leaders in our text, they're exhibiting denial. See, they saw the truth that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the Son of God. They saw the truth, but they refused to accept it. They put their fingers in their religious ears and ... their way into believing Jesus was a demon possessed blasphemer instead of the Messiah. They suffered from denial. The proof was obvious, but their deeply held beliefs kept them from embracing reality about Jesus, and the same thing is true today.

See, many also have deeply held beliefs. Beliefs like, I'm a good person. Good people go to heaven. There is no God. The Bible can't be trusted. There's no proof of Jesus that He is what the Bible says He is. My best life doesn't need Jesus in it. I can go on and on and on with deeply held beliefs that when they hear the truth about Jesus, they don't submit to that and go, you know what? Maybe I'm wrong. They go, no, I'm right. Whatever I'm hearing is wrong. Despite all the logic, all the evidence, all the proof for it, adequately presented, it doesn't matter. That's nice for you, but not for me. Just like the religious leaders of Jesus day, many in our day are in denial. Today and in the coming weeks, we're going to see Jesus' most extended response to people in denial about who He really is. In fact, a 28-verse response to the end of chapter 5, and as we examine what He said to these people week after week, we will be declaring the truth about Jesus here as we go through John 5. The truth about Jesus was on display when He totally and instantly

healed the man who'd suffered from parts, or all of his body being paralyzed for 38 years. That proclaimed the truth that this person who just did that is the Messiah and is the Son of God. Jesus tells this guy, look at chapter 5:8. "Get up, take up your bed and walk." And when He said that to this man, He was telling this man to break the rules that the rabbis had made up about the Sabbath. So when they confronted Jesus about this, the Jewish leaders... Notice Jesus says to them again, chapter 5:17, "My Father is working until now and I'm working. What's the problem guys?" In other words, "If God can work on the Sabbath, so can I. Whatever makes it okay for God to work on the Sabbath makes it okay for me to work on the Sabbath."

Now, we read that. We don't quite get it, but verse 18 tells us what was so blasphemous in their ears about what He said because the end of verse 18, "He was making Himself equal with God." Now, put yourself in that moment. All your Bible knowledge, put it aside for a second. Just be one of the people standing there in that moment. 30-year-old Jewish carpenter peasant, standing there looking like everybody else. There's no aura of divinity seeping out of His pores. What He says in your hearing as you're standing there is making Himself equal with God. Talk about confronting people's deeply held beliefs with truth. Jesus didn't make it easy for them to grasp what He's saying here. It's hard to accept and it's hard to understand because this is one of the many texts in the Bible that stretch our thinking and show us just how beyond our comprehension Jesus really is. Why? Because here we have Jesus digging into His relationship with the Father. What we look at under the heading of the Trinity, one of the most difficult biblical ideas, the biblical truth, that is hard for us to understand, an idea that that could only be true because it actually explains God the way He actually is. So, there's going to be some Bible nerd moments. They're talking to people just now where they're like, wait a minute. What you said blew my mind. I was like, "I didn't say it. Jesus said it." Your mind could be blown. I'm just warning you right now. Bible nerd moments are coming.

But we have to know exactly what He says here, though hard to grasp. You understand at the end of these four points in this text, what you're going to do hopefully is you will say, Jesus, you are unbelievable. You are unbelievably wonderful. There is nobody like you, and it is right for me to give my life to you. It is right for me to worship you because of who you are. So, let's take a look at this. Remember what He's going to say here, verse 16, to people who are persecuting Him. Verse 18, to people who want Him dead, okay? So keep that in mind, Jewish peasant carpenter saying what we're about to read. Verse 19, so Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing. And greater works than these will He show Him so that you may marvel." I want you to notice that He starts in on them with force and emphasis. He's not mealy-mouthed. He's not weak in the knees. He unequivocally declares that everything He's about to say is what? It says that He repeats Himself. It is truly true. What He's doing when He says that, He's saying, "I not you are the authority on God." When He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you." Now I want you to notice. There was a word that was repeated five times in those two verses. Did you see that word? That's the word do or doing. Why is Jesus talking about what He's doing in this text?

Well, the issue is what Jesus did that day on the Sabbath. He's letting them know why He healed that man and told him to get up and take up his bed and walk even though it would be against everything they believed about the Sabbath. He healed that man.

Notice verse 19, "Because the Son can do nothing of His own accord." Which means He didn't do that independently. He didn't do that just because He wanted to. He doesn't do anything based on His own authority. He's saying there, I cannot do that. It is impossible for me to do something based on my own authority. I'm not a rival to God. I'm not competing with the one true God. No, notice. He healed that man because He can only do "what He sees the Father doing." That's because point #1) ***Jesus is United with God in Activity. Jesus is united with God in activity.*** In other words what Jesus did while on earth is completely defined by what the Father was already doing. He wasn't acting against God like these guys thought. No, He only did what the Father did. In His earthly life, Jesus imitated the Father. So that Jesus is saying to these leaders here that by accusing Him of sin, they're actually accusing God of sin. Why? Because Jesus does exactly as the Father does. So in some way, that's hard to grasp and hard to picture and hard to fully understand, Jesus healed that man on the Sabbath, when He did, how He did, because the Father already did.

... Right? This is why He could say, and it's true. Verse 17, "The Father is working until now and I am working." Father initiates, the Son responds. The Father sends, the Son goes. The Father commands, the Son obeys. Look at verse 19 again. So much so that whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. Which means again, it's impossible for Jesus to do anything other than what the Father does. So that to see Jesus act is, what? Is to see the Father act. To see Jesus act is to see God in action. The reason Jesus knew what God was up to by the way, look at verse 20 is, "Because the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing." So, Jesus does what the Father does, because the Father is constantly showing Jesus what He's doing, and He's doing that because He loves Jesus. So again, this is a rebuke to the leaders who think that Jesus is acting against God's will. No, Jesus is saying, I only ever do God's will. I cannot do anything else and notice the Father shows Jesus all that He is doing, and then from there Jesus does all that the Father was doing. Verse 20, He says, greater works are coming. Greater works than you already saw, guys, of me healing this guy from 38 years paralyzed. Greater things are coming that you're going to see and He says, and when you see them, you're going to marvel. You're going to be blown away. Why? Because you reject me right now, and when you see me do these greater things, you're going to go, uh-oh, we're in trouble because we rejected this guy. Jesus expresses His unity with the Father in John 4:34 when He says, my food, my satisfaction, my joy is to do the will of Him who sent me.

Or John 5:30, "I can do nothing on my own." I don't have the ability to do anything on my own. "I seek not my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." Or John 6:38, "I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." So not only does Jesus only do what God wants Him to do, yes, that's true. But everything we see Him do in the Gospels, everything we see Him do, He did because again, in some way that's hard to picture and

hard to imagine, He did everything He did, said everything He said even these moments right now, all of that happened in Jesus, through Jesus, because the Father already did it. In other words, in all that Jesus did, John 1:18, He was making the Father known. This is why at the end of His ministry, Jesus could say, John 14:9, "Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father." Not because Jesus is the Father. Jesus is not the Father. Jesus is Jesus. The Father is the Father, but both are united in desire. Yes, both are united in purpose, yes. But now we are seeing here, both Father and Son are also united in activity. So why were the religious leaders wrong about Jesus? He is the Messiah. He is the Son of God because Jesus is united with God in activity. Again, He only ever did what the Father did, what the Father wanted Him to do and nothing else, ever.

Next, we declare the truth about Jesus when we affirm the point #2) ***Jesus is Identical to God in Nature. Jesus is identical to God in nature.*** Look back at verse 19, easy to read these things quickly, but we really got to meditate on this, at the end of verse 19 where Jesus says, "Whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." Let those words sink into your mind for a second. Whatever the Father does, that, that whatever. Whatever it's going to be that the Son does likewise. That word likewise means in the same way, think about that. For this to be true, the person who is saying it has to be identical to the Father in nature so that He can do whatever the Father does. In other words, for Jesus to have the ability to do whatever the Father can do, He must be what the Father is, namely God. Again, He would have to be all powerful and all-knowing and et cetera. He'd have to be God to do whatever God the Father can do. That is Jesus' point to these leaders. What Jesus is saying to these guys about Himself is that He who lived His life a 100% in submission to God is at the same time identical to God in nature. Or as He put in verse 18, He's making Himself equal with God by saying what He did here in verse 19. This is Jesus saying later John 20:30, "I and the Father are one." Not one as in we're the same person, not one as in we have the same goals even though they obviously do. No, this is one as in one in what we are. What we are is the same. We share the same nature. One as in the Father and the Son are identical in what they are, namely true deity, and as I've said many times, this is what has distinguished true Christianity from false Christianity since the very beginning and up until this very moment. Christians have given Jesus the honor that is only due God because He is God. This is what Christians have always believed.

This is what the Jewish leaders and what Jews and Muslims and everyday people cannot stand, that we give Jesus the place of honor and worship. Didn't we just pour our hearts out in worship to Christ? Proclaiming His victory over sin, His victory over death. Proclaiming His coming reign. We did all of that, and that wasn't idolatry. We weren't idol worshiping when we did that. Why? Because Jesus actually is God, and this so infuriated them that in John 10:33 the Jews wanted, it says, "Stone Him to death for blasphemy." Because "You being a man make yourself God." This isn't something that Christians came along and imported into Jesus. This was His teaching. This is what He said. Jesus never said He was God. Baloney. These guys understand what liberal scholars no idea have about, that He actually did teach that He was God. That's why we believe it, because He proved it when He rose from the dead. So if we take point number one and point number two, when we put them together, Jesus was at the same time identical to God

in nature and dependent on God for His activity. So both the Father and the Son are one in nature, united in what they are, namely God, and at the same time the Son is submissive to the Father in His activity. Again, you see the text, verse 19, "He only does what the Father does." In other words, even though Jesus can rightly be called God, John 1:1, John 1:18, John 5:18. Even though He can be called by divine titles, even though He has divine rights like ignoring the Jewish Sabbath rules, even though He can do things only God can do, like miracles. Even still, He always lived in submission to the Father. Why? It's because submission didn't make Jesus less than the Father. He always and ever will be identical to the Father in nature even though He obeyed the Father as well.

This brings us back to the topic of the Trinity. I'm already 18 minutes down from what I can already say, and I do not have the time to dig into the topic of the Trinity. However, I have preached five messages on the Trinity since I've been here at Redeemer, and I've also did one podcast on this topic. All of that is on our YouTube page. You go to our YouTube page; you just type in Trinity and those things will come up. Why do I say that? Because if this confuses you, if you're like, what is this? I have questions about this. I need further study on this. Please go listen to those messages on our YouTube page, and if you do, you will have a much deeper and richer understanding of what Jesus is saying to these men in our text today. So just so you know, this is what Jesus taught. I'm going to quote an ancient author now who said this 1700 years ago. We're not making stuff up and things changed over time. This is what true Christianity has always believed. Listen to this ancient author describe Jesus when he says, "Jesus 'is the Son because He does nothing of Himself. He is God because whatsoever things the Father does, He does the same,'" explaining verse 19. "They are one because they are equal in honor because they're both God and He is not the Father because He is sent by the Father." So that's 1700 years ago. This is Jesus 2000 years ago, and this is us today saying point #2, reiterating it again, Jesus is identical to God in nature.

Now let's take a look at verse 19, because now Jesus is going to dig into His relationship with the Father. Notice what He says, verse 19 one more time. "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord but only what He sees the Father doing." Question. For Jesus did not to know what to do, He had had to do what first, according to the text? He had to see the Father doing it. Which means that there had to be a constant considering, a continual contemplation, a beholding of the Father by the Son, is what one author called an uninterrupted communion, and notice it exists because verse 20, "The Father loves the Son", and because the Father loves the Son, "He shows the Son," notice, "all that He Himself is doing." By the way, the only way that Jesus could know and see all that the Father is doing is if what, as if He is God, and the Father never stopped showing the Son what He is up to. The word for love in this text is not agape, it's [foreign language 00:19:53], the word somebody used to make the name Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. This word for love speaks of tenderness, intimacy, closeness, a warm, familiar affection for somebody, and this word speaks of a love that never ceases, a warm affection that never ceases. The Father never stops loving the Son. His love for the Son is eternal and it's to the max, that is until Jesus became sin on the cross. On the cross, God's warm

affection, His *Phileo* for Jesus became powerful wrath, as He treated Jesus as if Jesus personally committed all the sins of the world. This by the way is what I think Jesus struggled with in the Garden of Gethsemane. It wasn't the physical pain; it wasn't the betrayal of His friend. It wasn't the weakness of His other friends. His struggle is these three times, "Not my will, yours be done. Not my will, yours be done. Not my will, yours be done," was becoming the object of the Father's hatred after only ever being the object of His warm, loving affection for all of eternity.

Now, back to the text. What motivates the Father in letting Jesus in on what He's doing? Why is it that Jesus can see what it is that the Father's doing? Answer, because the Father loves the Son. So the third truth declared about Jesus in our text is point #3) ***Jesus is Equal with God in Community. Jesus is equal with God in community.*** In other words, there's a closeness here that makes even the tiniest conflict, the slightest separation between the Father and the Son, absolutely impossible. Why? Their community, their closeness, their loving intimacy, their communion is eternally uninterrupted. This is the truth stated way back in John 1:1 where it says, "Jesus, the Word was with God, with God face to face." An intimate unity on every possible level. Again, making Jesus equal to the Father on every level. Meaning it's inconceivable that Jesus was unaware of the Father's will when He healed that man on that Sabbath day, that He wasn't doing something against what God wanted, not that day, not at all. In fact, He healed that man on the Sabbath because the Father showed Him what to do when the Father what? When the Father did it. Verse 19, when He had already done it. That's why Jesus healed the man that day. In other words, there's no secrecy. There's not even the hint of a possibility of misunderstanding, or ignorance between the Father and the Son. That's what these guys thought. You're doing something against God's will. You don't know what God wants, and Jesus like, no, I have an unbroken community, fellowship, love and warmth between me and the Father that is unbreakable and I know exactly what He's doing. Because He shows me what He's doing and He shows me because He loves me. The Father holds nothing back, perfect harmony, perfect transparency. All the Father does, the Son sees and knows and then does. Which means by the way that Jesus did what He did, not just because He loved you, but initially He did what He did because the Father loved Him. At the heart of everything Jesus did in His life and is still doing to this day comes out of the Father's love for Christ.

If the Father never stops loving the Son, He can never stop loving you because you are eternally and unbreakably united to the Son. That's the message in the New Testament. 150 times throughout the entire New Testament the teaching on this is called being in Christ, that you when you believe you are placed into Christ, completely enveloped, completely united to Him forever, and it's not only that the Father never stops loving you because you're united to the Son, but because you are united to the Son, He loves you as if you were the Son. Let that sink in for a second. I've said it before. I can understand God eternally, unbreakably, perfectly, to the max, loving His Son. Totally get that. Hard to grasp that kind of love for me. His love for me would be conditioned on my obedience, on my devotion. John 17:23. I have time. So let's look at it. There's nothing happening after this. This is the benefit of being in the last service. Remember what I said, the Father loves you as if you were the Son. John 17:23, listen to Jesus. He's

speaking to the Father. He's talking about those who will believe in Him one day after this moment, which includes us. He says, "I in them and you and me," there's that unity, "that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." That is the extent of the Father's love for you. He loves you as if you were Jesus because you are united to Jesus.

So listen, never let your circumstances take this truth away from you. It is truer than anything you and I could ever go through. Instead, make sure that you make it a habit of interpreting all of your experiences through the lens of the Father's infinite, unbreakable love for the Son, which is the same exact love that He has for you. Now starting in verse 21, Jesus begins to explain what the greater works are in verse 20 that the Father will show Him and what these leaders will marvel at. Verse 21, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will." So if you were there that day and you heard the beginning of this verse, you'd be like, "Finally, He says something I can agree with." As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, of course, and they're right. In the Old Testament as well as in the writings of the rabbis, this is something only God can do. Only God can make it rain. Only God can make someone pregnant, and third, only God can raise the dead and you'd be like, yeah, got it, got it, got it, and then the end of this verse, you'd tear your clothes and go, that is blasphemy. I want you to notice what Jesus says. Notice those words, as and so also. See that in there? As the Father, so also the Son, those two words together speak of exact resemblance, perfect correspondence between what the Father does and what the Son does. So here's Jesus saying, I'm not just God's lackey, I just don't fulfill all the stuff that He wants me to do. I'm not just His agent that He does stuff through like other prophets and other people in the world. He says, "No, I act just as the Father is acting in..." What does it say? "In raising people from the dead." Notice Jesus adds to that, "That I give this resurrection life to 'whom He will.' To whoever it pleases me to give it to." So we declare the truth about Jesus when we affirm with Him here in this text.

Point #4) *Jesus is Equivalent to God in Authority.* *Jesus is equivalent to God in Authority*, makes this clear. Matthew 28:18 saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him." The authority as well as the ability to bring people back to life, never to die again belongs equally to the Father and to the Son. That's what Jesus is saying. John 1:4 and Jesus is life. Both father and Son are sovereign over life, whether it's physical life or spiritual life, life belongs to both the Father and the Son. In fact, look at verse 26. It says, "The Father has life in Himself." They'd be like, absolutely, totally agree. The Father is the source of life. You and I, we receive life. We don't have life in ourselves. But notice verse 26, "So He's granted the Son to also have life in Himself." Jesus just demonstrates this authority at the beginning of chapter five, where this authority giving life to a man's limbs that have been dead for 38 years. So like the Father, Jesus has the power to give life to the dead. He has authority over death to raise the dead. In other words, the Father and the Son are the source of life, both give life in perfect agreement with each other. So that even when He says, "I give life to who I will." We already know from the previous verses that whatever He wants to do, He wants to do because why? He already knows the Father wants it to happen anyway. That's why He does it just as the Father.

So putting it all together when Jesus acts, healing this paralyzed man on the Sabbath day, when He tells this man, "Get up, take up your bed and walk." He acts as God when He does that because His point here is, I am God. I'm united with God in authority. I'm identical to God in nature. I'm equal to God in community and I'm equivalent to God in authority. These four points is the truth about Jesus. That when you think about Christ, when you think about Him, the right response is not denial. The right response is worshipful devotion, that this is who we are dealing with when it comes to Jesus, and so I wonder, are you in denial about Him like these religious leaders were? The tragedy of these religious leaders is they heard the truth from lips that any one of us would give anything to hear anything from. They'd give anything to hear something from His lips, to be in that moment, and yet they were there, and they stayed in denial. See their denial, their rebellion, their animosity as always happens, grows and grows and got worse and worse until they were willing to sin egregiously with a show trial and false witnesses also that they could have an innocent man killed and they could go back to their life without Christ. I wonder, would you do the same? Would you stay in denial, keep a life without Jesus? Only to find that you denied Jesus at the cost of your eternal soul at the end of your life. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Soften your heart, humble your heart and come to Christ. He will forgive you. He will wash you completely clean of all of your sins, all of them, every last one of them, even the ones that nobody knows about. Even the ones that torment you constantly. He was punished for that sin so that you would go free, give your life to Him. If that's you, please come talk to me after the service, I'll be at the back door over there. Do not leave without Christ.

As I close, I want you to think about the events of John 5. So, let's take a step back a little bit and see what's going on here. Jesus heals a man. He meets him a couple of 100 yards away in the temple where the man points to Jesus. He says, "Hey, that's the guy that healed me." Points Him out to the Jews. The Jewish leaders, they come and confront Jesus. Begins verse 16, their persecution of Jesus, their desire to have Jesus killed for what He did and what He's saying about what He did, and I want you to think about what Jesus did there. He not only healed a man on the Sabbath, but then He gives the reason for why He healed the man on the Sabbath, and then He says, it's because I'm God and I have the right to do that. He knew that wasn't going to sit well with those religious leaders. Just like He's not going to sit well with anyone you know when you say Jesus is God. I want you to think about what He did.

In that moment where He knows He's looking at people that want Him dead. He didn't back down. He doubled down. He made sure they were clear on what He was saying. Even though they hated Him for it, even though they wanted Him dead for it, He says, "Yeah, you heard me right. I am making myself equal with God because that's what I am." He declared the truth about Himself in the face of opposition, an opposition that already had murderous intent, an opposition that would lead to His eventual arrest, torture, and execution. He is knowing all of that didn't stutter, He stood strong. He did it for our salvation. He did it, 1 John 2:6, so that we would walk in the same way as He walked. Meaning we are to take our cues about how to live our lives from how He lived His life. Friends, Jesus didn't back down when truth was on the line. Even when

persecution was staring Him in the face, even when He knew the thoughts of those looking at Him was that they wanted Him dead, He didn't stay quiet. Why? It was love. Remember, He does what He does in this moment according to verse 20, because of the Father's love for Him. Because the Father shows Him, this is what you do in this moment. This is what you say. In fact, we could surmise that God is preaching the sermon to Jesus in this moment, and Jesus is telling them exactly what the Father wants them to hear. Why? Because the Father loves sinners. So He propels Christ to declare the truth to those who are in denial about Him. So as we look out at our world, let's just say our own personal lives, the people we interact with on a regular basis. Let's follow the example of our savior who didn't retreat, who did not surrender, who didn't run away and hide, but stood strong for the truth.

Listen, these days are growing darker and darker, aren't they? Partially it's because people who know better stay silent. We just go along to get along. We don't want to rock the boat. We have the disease of non-rocker boaters. Even though listen, a lot of the time, the boat needs to be rocked. It'll be the truth about Jesus. It'll be other truth as well. What is a human being? What is a man? What is a woman? What is marriage? What's right or true, or good for a government to do or not do? All kinds of truths out there. But listen, we need prophets in this day. We need people who will speak. Again, why? Because that's what our Savior did. He was about the truth, and He stood. He was not afraid, and again, we see that understanding that He did this for our salvation. He succeeds in every way that we fail. When we're silent, He spoke. His perfection comes to us by a great exchange. Our sin goes to Him. His perfect righteousness comes to us so that our resume is that we spoke these words in a moment when we needed to be clear and needed to be courageous. But that's also the case so that we would see this grace, see this moment and say, Jesus, I need some of that when I go to my job. I need some of that when I think about my kid's school, sports team, whatever. I need some of that for this dinner coming up. Give me courage. Let's do it not to get attention for ourselves. That means nothing. Not to build a following, again means nothing. But let's do it because the one who stood strong in the truth in our text, He did it, yes, because the Father loved Him. But He did it out of love for the people who were in denial about Him so that they would hear the truth, and so the truth would set them free. How does that happen today? It happens through people with the courage to speak. So, let's be those people by the grace of God. Let's pray.

Jesus, your example here is both humbling and it is motivating. So please use this text to draw all of us closer to you, for some in repentance and faith in you, and for the rest that we would be more like you, for the glory of your name. Amen.