

Worship the Lord

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Hebrews 13:10-16

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I want to invite and encourage you now to take your copy of God's Word and turn with me to the book of Hebrews. And we are going to find ourselves in Hebrews chapter 13. Hebrews chapter 13. And this evening we are continuing our series on the sheep and their shepherds. The sheep and their shepherds. And so while you're turning to Hebrews 13, I just want to start by letting you know that after tonight, believe it or not, we will be halfway through this sermon series. And although that's hard to believe, I do want to take just a few moments to remind us of where we've been the past couple of weeks. I think it's always helpful to spend just a few minutes doing that to bring us up to speed. So back in week one of this series, we started in verses seven and eight. And it was there that the author of Hebrews exhorted these believers to remember their former leaders.

In other words, to think back and recall in their minds the biblical doctrine that those leaders taught them. And the faith that those leaders demonstrated before them as they persevered and endured in faithfulness to the very end. And then he called these Hebrew believers in light of that to press on in their faith. And to imitate the faith of those leaders who had gone before them. From there, last week, we then moved ahead in this passage to look at verses eight and nine. And it was there that we spent our time focusing on the call given to the church to follow the pattern. To function, if you will, according to the blueprint provided to us by the Lord. And in doing so, we looked at four ways that we, as a church, can make sure that we're following the pattern that we've been given by Christ.

And so, as we walked our way through last week's text, we emphasized the faith that's been delivered to the saints, that we are to keep the faith. We talked about the importance of sound doctrine, spiritual discernment, and the grace of God that's found in the gospel. All of which, of course, in the context of the spiritual battle that we are engaged in as believers in Jesus Christ. And so this evening, as we continue in our series, we're going to be walking our way through verses 10 through 16. And as we do, we're going to discover the call to worship the Lord. Worship the Lord. And so with that in mind, I'll ask that you stand with me in honor of God's word, as we read together from Hebrews chapter 13:10-16. And it's there that God's word reads.

"We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips

that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." And with that, you can be seated as we pray together.

Father, once again, we come to You tonight in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. And it's by His righteousness, His perfect work on our behalf that we are able to come to You. And Lord, we can come expectantly. And so I come with that confidence Father, and I pray that You will take my feeble attempt to help those entrusted to my care to understand Your word. And Lord, I know apart from Your blessing, it will accomplish nothing. So I pray that You will empower each of us to hear Your word rightly, to understand it clearly and then to apply it diligently. Help us not just to be hearers of Your word, but doers. And particularly, especially as we think about this theme of the sheep of the flock and their shepherds. I pray that You'll help us to make the connection. And help us to understand that this is pointing us to the way in which we are to interact as one church. Help us Lord to have a unified focus. And of course that focus being that which comes from Your word. Help us Lord to set aside the distractions that so easily cause our mind's attention to be stolen away. Help us to focus in for this brief period upon what You have to say to us through Your word. And I pray that You will settle upon us, that you will help me as I speak Your word. Help me to do so with clarity, conviction, and compassion. And I pray that You help each of those here to hear Your word, help us to honor You in all things. And we pray it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, it's been said that the book of Hebrews is a kind of commentary on the book of Leviticus. And although I don't think that is the book's primary purpose, our passage for this evening certainly points us to the rich importance of having a Levitical background. And so as we begin tonight, I want us to go back in time for just a moment. Back to a period of time that took place about 1,500 years before the birth of Christ. As described in Leviticus 16, the man we find there is Aaron, the brother of Moses. Aaron is there grieving over the death of his sons Nadab and Abihu, whom God struck down for offering false fire and worship that was not pleasing in the Lord's sight. And so in the midst of that immense heartache that Aaron is experiencing, the Lord calls out to Moses to give very specific instructions to His servant Aaron.

Those instructions describe the series of steps that Aaron must take on a divinely ordained holy day, once per year, known as the Day of Atonement. The Lord begins with these words, you can just listen as I read them. It's emphasizing the seriousness and the gravity of His instructions. Again, remember this is coming on the heels of the death of his two sons, who died for the purpose of not following instructions. For not worshiping the Lord the way He commanded. The Lord says this, "Tell Aaron, your brother, not to come at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat, but in this way, Aaron shall come into the holy place with a bull from the herd for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering."

And so flowing then from that warning, the Lord proceeds to give Aaron, the first high priest of the Levitical priesthood, the instructions he is to follow in order first and foremost to atone for his own sins, and for the sins of the nation. So like proverbial flies on the tabernacle wall this

evening, I want us to follow Aaron's footsteps as he carries out the steps of his high priestly duty. And those steps begin with his own ceremonial cleansing. So Aaron sacrifices a young bull to atone for his own sins, and the sins of his household. Of course, in the old covenant we know that there was bloodshed and death again, and again, and again. Why? To give them a palpable realization that sin leads to what? Death and bloodshed.

So he sacrifices this young bull for his own sins. He then bathes in water and puts on his holy garments. We then see him select two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And what does he do with those offerings? Well first with the ram, Aaron offers a burnt sacrifice to the Lord, which is a pleasing aroma to Him. He then takes the two goats, and he casts lots, scripture says, to determine the fate of those goats. One goat is chosen as a sacrifice to the Lord, with the blood of that goat being shed for the sins of the people. Aaron takes that blood, he enters into the holy of Holies just as God described, and he sprinkles that blood upon the altar of the mercy seat. Again, bloodshed. The second goat is known as the scapegoat. And instead of killing that goat, Aaron is instructed to do something unique.

The description is found in Leviticus 16:21-22. And it says there, "Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat free in the wilderness." And so we see then Aaron placing his hands upon the head of the scapegoat. And with a symbolic gesture, he is figuratively placing the sins of God's people upon that goat, and then is sending it outside the camp. Which represents the removal, or expiation of Israel's sins. That's the idea.

And so it is with that vivid backdrop and that rich context, which all Jews would've already had, that we come now to our passage in Hebrews chapter 13. And as we walk our way through tonight's text, it's going to unfold for us in two major sections. So beginning with the first one, as we unpack verses 10 through 12, we're first going to discover the ***foundation of Christian worship***. ***The foundation of Christian worship***. And we want to remember this evening, that the author of Hebrews is writing this letter to a group of professing believers, who are dealing with both false teaching and religious persecution. We've talked about that for the past couple of weeks. And so in this concluding section of the letter, not only does he want the whole church to be anchored and grounded in the truth of God's word, but he also wants them to catch a glimpse of the glorious purpose of the church.

What is this church called to be doing? And that, of course, is vitally important for both the sheep and the shepherds of the church. After all, you cannot begin to move together as one body if you do not know what you are aiming for, or where you are going. And so beginning in verse 10, the flow of our text seems to come from the anticipated response on the part of the unbelieving Jews. In other words, on the heels of his declaration that we saw back in verse nine, where he stated that food does not provide any sort of spiritual benefit, the author of Hebrews seems to be anticipating the responding accusations that would've been brought forward by the

false teachers. Antagonistic questions like, how can you claim to be strengthened by grace when you don't even have an altar? What kind of a religion is that?

And so if you look with me at verse 10, the author of Hebrews in response is going to provide us with the first of three foundational truths concerning Christian worship. And there he's going to affirm, first and foremost, that the cross is our altar. The cross is our altar. The author says there, "We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat." And so what we find here in verse 10 is a play on words. It's a type of double meaning that the author is using, on the one hand to rebuttal this group of unbelieving Jews, but then on the other hand, to reaffirm the foundation of the gospel. And so in terms of his rebuttal, the author first speaks from the perspective of a fellow Jew. So he's saying, "We as Jews, in other words, have an altar, but when it comes to food, what good is it? On the Day of Atonement the Levitical priests themselves aren't even able to eat of the sacrificial meat." That was forbidden according to God's law.

But then as we think about the play on words, the author's also reaffirming the foundation of the gospel. And so in that way he's saying, "We as a Christian, we do have an altar, and that altar is the cross of Christ." Furthermore, those Jews who serve the tent or temple, who are still under the old covenant, they have no right to eat from the altar of true believers. Why? Because it is only those who have believed in Jesus Christ for salvation who are able to partake of the blessings He provides. It's like John chapter 6, into 7, as we've been seeing from the Gospel of John. Only those who are believing in Christ can be said to be eating His flesh and drinking His blood. We receive Christ when we believe in Christ. In fact, scripture teaches us that we, as believers are part of a holy priesthood all of our own.

1 Peter chapter 2:5, the apostle says this, "You yourselves are like living stones being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." And so it is only this holy priesthood of genuine believers who have the right, given by God according to His grace, to taste the goodness of the Lord through their faith in Jesus. But then as we keep moving through the text, we look now to verse 11 and the author of Hebrews is going to continue this line of reasoning. And in doing so he's going to provide us with the second aspect of our foundation for Christian worship. And so there we're going to see that the Christ, that is the Messiah, is our sacrifice. The Christ is our sacrifice. He says there, "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp."

And so just so we understand, what he's doing here is really paraphrasing a section from Leviticus chapter 6:30. God's word there says this, "But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the holy place. It shall be burned with fire." And so it's important for us to understand that this is not a new idea in this letter to the Hebrews. The author of Hebrews has been building and establishing the truth that Christ is the sacrificial fulfillment of the Day of Atonement throughout this letter. He's been building that case again, and again, and again. To be specific, we see it explicitly stated back in Hebrews chapter 9:11-14.

Here's what the author said to the church in that section. He said, "But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say is not part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more then will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God." So, Christ, scripture tells us, is our sacrifice. But even more specifically as our text says, "Sacrifices were disposed outside of the camp." And so let me just ask you, as you reflect upon the account found in the gospels, where did Christ die?

I love the way Charles Spurgeon articulated, he said this, "Note how remarkable Providence provided for the fulfillment of the type. Had our Lord been killed in a tumult, he would most likely have been slain in the city. Unless he had been put to death judicially, he would not have been taken to the usual mount of doom." That is Golgotha. "And it is remarkable that the Romans should have chosen a hill on the outside of the city to be the commonplace for crucifixion, and for punishments by death. We might've imagined that they would've selected some mount in the center of the city, that it might strike the multitude with greater awe. But in the providence of God it was arranged otherwise. Christ must not be slain in a tumult, and He might not die inside the city. When He was delivered into the hands of the Romans, they did not have a place of execution within the city, but one outside the camp. That by dying outside the gate He might be proved to be the sin offering for His people."

You see that? So in God's sovereignty and according to His providence, He set all of this into motion. He has divinely orchestrated it to be this place outside the camp where the Romans would crucify those whom they were convicting. My friends, this is exactly what Christ has done for us. Just as the high priest was called to pick up the entire carcass of the sacrificial animal and carry it outside the camp. Christ our Savior carried the altar of His sacrifice upon His own shoulders. And He walked outside the city to that mount called Golgotha, where He would willingly receive the wrath of God in our place. And what did His sacrificial death accomplish?

As we continue to verse 12, we're going to see that the crucifixion is our sanctification. The crucifixion is our sanctification. If you look there with me, the author of Hebrews continues saying, "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood." And so this is the author's ultimate answer to the antagonistic claims against Christianity. This is the very thing that separates Christianity, not just from the Jewish religion but from every other religion throughout the entire world. As Christians, we are not set apart, or sanctified, or considered holy by anything that we do. Our righteous actions or religious efforts are not the cause of our righteousness. They are the result of the righteousness that has been given to us by God's grace. To the source of our saving and sustaining grace, the very thing that actually and supernaturally strengthens our heart as believers, and as the church, is the death of Jesus on the cross for us.

And it is this, and this alone, that is the foundation of true, genuine Christian worship. It is through Christ, by Christ, and for Christ. And so now that we are firmly planted upon that foundation, we can now walk our way through the second half of this passage, as it unfolds for us in verses 13 through 16. And there we're going to see the application of our Christian worship. The application of our Christian worship. In other words, now that the author of Hebrews has reaffirmed the gospel foundation of the church, he wants these believers to understand how they're called to worship the Lord in and through their relationships with the world, and with one another. And obviously this is supremely applicable for us as well, because guess what? We also have to have relationships with the world, and with one another. To put it another way, the author of Hebrews wants these believers to understand the practical outworking of that powerful grace that is strengthening their hearts and working in their lives.

Again, it's not just head knowledge, but it's actually heart knowledge that causes us to apply what we know to be true. And so with that in mind, I want us to focus now on verses 13 and 14. Because the first application of Christian worship we find there is the call to embrace the suffering of Christ. Embrace the suffering of Christ. The author of Hebrews says this, "Therefore in light of what I've just said, let us go to him...", that is Christ. "Outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come." And so we want to remember, once again, that these believers are experiencing some form of persecution, likely at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. We don't know exactly what's taking place, but we can get an idea of it from chapter 10:32-36.

The author of Hebrews said to them back in chapter 10, he called them to recall the former days. "When after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. Sometimes being publicly exposed to approach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have a need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised." And so again, here in chapter 13, based upon the suffering of Christ, the author of Hebrews wants these believers to endure. He wants them to persevere. He wants them to run the race of faith in the midst of the persecution they're experiencing. And he wants them to do it in a God-honoring way.

And he does that by using the language of Christ, going outside the camp as our sacrifice. So like the scapegoat who was sent outside the camp, bearing the sins of the nation upon himself, Jesus goes outside the camp to suffer for His people. So the author of Hebrews is essentially saying, "In light of what Christ has done, instead of walking away from your faith in the midst of the hostility and persecution you're experiencing, go to Christ, who's outside the camp as it were. Join with Him in His sufferings. Suffer with Him and bear his disgrace like a badge of honor." This idea of sharing in the sufferings of Christ is one that is really found permeating the New Testament. But at the same time, it's also one that the 21st century church, I should say, needs to hear. This is not a message that we either hear, or embrace, enough as what we should.

So I just want to read to you one section from 1 Peter 4:12-14. Listen to the words of Peter. He says, "Beloved..." Or you who are loved. "Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings." Think of that. He doesn't say, "Be happy while you're suffering with Christ." Does he? He says, "But rejoice..." So have joy. "As you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." And not only does the author of Hebrews call the church to embrace the suffering they're receiving, because through it they somehow share in Christ's sufferings.

But he also reminds them that our goal as believers in Jesus Christ, is not to set up some sort of Christian kingdom in this world. That's not the goal that we've been given by the Lord. That's not the great commission. So contrary to those promoting the idea of Christian nationalism today, the author of Hebrews affirms that we do not have a permanent city in this world. Instead, we are people who are seeking the city that is to come. We are seeking the new Jerusalem, which the Lord will one day establish upon the Earth. And why is that important? Because it reminds us that this world, as it currently exists, is not where we belong. It's not our eternal home. And therefore we can and should detach ourselves from having this mentality of comfort, or convenience in this world. And instead that the reason we are here, the reason that the Lord didn't just rapture us into heaven the moment we were saved, is because we're here on mission.

We're here for a purpose. And when you're engaged in a mission that involves a spiritual battle, you're going to get your hands dirty, and you're going to experience some pain along the way. And so instead of us seeing that as Peter says, as something strange, we should see it as the norm. As to be expected, because we are faithfully carrying out the mission we've been given. And as we consider that, and we think about the pain and the reproach that comes with that, the author of Hebrews wants the church and us to understand that Christ is worth it all. He's worth the reproach that we will experience in this life. He's worth the suffering that we will experience. The apostle Paul says, "For I consider the sufferings of this life incomparable to the eternal weight of glory that we will one day receive at the return of Jesus Christ." Christ is worth it.

So that leads us then to the second application of Christian worship found in our text. And it's there that we discover the call to *offer a sacrifice of praise. Offer a sacrifice of praise.* The author of Hebrews goes on to say in verse 15, "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name." Now once again, we want to remember our context. The author of Hebrews here, has not been talking about all the material possessions that these professing believers have. He's not been writing to them about the abundance of their physical blessings. Instead, he's been encouraging them in the midst of their suffering and persecution. So contrary to the false gospel of wealth, health, and happiness, the true gospel does not promise to eliminate all of life's problems. But it does promise us that God will be with us as He leads us through them.

That's the promise of the gospel. Eternal life, and that our Lord will be faithfully leading, guiding, and directing our lives and sustaining us all the way. So as John Chrysostom, the fourth century pastor, aptly nicknamed the golden tongue once said, "Let us take care to all up Thanksgiving for all things." And let us bear all things nobly. Are we in poverty? Let us give thanks. Are we in sickness? Let us give thanks. Are we falsely accused? Let us give thanks. When we suffer affliction, let us give thanks. Why? Because it brings us near to God. When we are weak, He is what? Strong. He's shown to be strong and omnipotent as He is. One of the primary aspects of our worship is a heart of genuine gratitude. And you'll notice that the author of Hebrews tells us the duration for this thankfulness. He uses the word continually, therefore in response to Christ's sacrifice for us, the Lord calls us to worship by constantly offering a sacrifice of praise to Him.

In Romans chapter 12, Paul says, "In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God." He says, "This is your spiritual worship. Don't begin conform to the world, be transformed by the renewing of your mind." So we're constantly looking to the Lord. My friends, that is not hard to do if you are constantly reminding yourself and being reminded of what God has actually done for you through Jesus Christ. That God would send His own Son to live a perfect life, that you and I could never live. That He would then take that perfect life, and He would allow himself to be nailed to a cross for you and for me. And we consider our sinfulness and our unworthiness in light of Christ's great love, it should produce within us nothing but overflowing gratitude. Why? Because what we deserve is wrath. What we deserve is hell.

What we deserve is condemnation. Because we have committed cosmic treason again, and again, and again. We have transgressed God's law. We have rebelled against His holiness. We are worthy of eternal damnation. And yet God has given us eternal salvation. A heart of gratitude should flow from within all true believers. And of course, the explicit nature of the praised reference here in our text is that of lips that acknowledge the Lord's name. In other words, when we consider the context of hostility and persecution, how impactful would it be for these believers to verbally express their gratitude to the Lord in the midst of it. My friends, the same is true for you and me. As tempting as it may be, especially in this day and age, to just shut our mouths and to really just retreat from speaking about God's goodness in the midst of a hostile world. We must remember that verbally praising His name is a fruit of the salvation that exists within us.

We have no excuse to be silent about how great God is. We should be compelled by the gratitude that is overflowing within us to tell others about how amazing He is. And not only does it bring honor to the Lord, but sometimes according to God's grace, He even uses it to bring unbelievers to faith in His Son. Just the mention of the goodness of God can be the door by which you walk through to share the gospel with an unbeliever. So may we continue to verbally speak and lift up the name of Christ. And finally, as we look to our final verse for this evening, we come to the third and final application of Christian worship that's found in our text. And there the author of Hebrews calls us to *exercise a spirit of generosity. Exercise a spirit of generosity.* So if you look

with me at our final verse for tonight, verse 16, he says there, "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

So on the one hand, I want us to think about how countercultural this is to our modern context. We live in a world that is driven by selfish agendas, a world that strives for selfish ambition, a world that is dominated by self-seeking desire. And yet, not only is that true today, but because sin existed in the first century, it was also true in the first century as well. And yet on the other hand, I also want us to consider the sacrifice of Christ. How has Christ shown us generosity? Well, He gave us everything though we deserved nothing. He blessed us with salvation, though we deserved hell. He went outside the camp as unclean, though He deserved to be worshiped on a throne in the midst of it. He sacrificed Himself upon a cross, though we rebelled against him. And to brothers and sisters, this is where a true spirit of genuine generosity should come from. Not by some external thing that is compelling you to be generous.

No. An internal desire to be generous because Christ has been generous to you. So it originates in a heart that has been transformed by the amazing generosity of Christ. And therefore, as one body of believers, we too ought to bear one another's burdens. That's the call of the gospel. To provide us with a biblical example for this, this is what we see happening in the very beginnings of the early church. Acts 2:45. It tells us there that they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. And so as a genuine demonstration of their love for one another and for the church, and their sincere love for Christ, these believers were not satisfied by living in abundance while their brothers and sisters in Christ suffered. They were satisfied with that. Collectively as a whole, there was a spirit of sacrifice permeating throughout the church, which flows from the sacrificial death of Christ.

Therefore, when one part of the body is in need, those who have extra sell in order to provide for those who have none. And if we think about it, we know that's what families do for one another. Right? When a part of the family is in need, we do something about it. And that's what the church is called to be, the family of God. And so brothers and sisters, a life of loving sacrifice, I want us to understand, is the greatest most tangible demonstration of the gospel. And so on the one hand, when we are speaking the praises of the goodness of God, and then we are demonstrating our generosity through our actions together, it becomes this living demonstration of the gospel for all the world to see. Giving of ourselves, our time, our talents, our treasures that have been entrusted to us, in order to help one another who are in need.

This is why Jesus said this in John 13:35. "By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have..." What? "Love for one another." And so as we reflect this evening upon both the foundation and the application of true Christian worship. We've taken another step in this series in understanding the relationship between the shepherds and their sheep. Not only does it help us to make sure that we're all firmly anchored to the Christ-centered understanding of what true worship is, but it also helps us to understand how we're called to move forward together as one body. And so my hope this evening, as we prepare to close our time in God's word, is that we will strive according to the Spirit and power, grace of God to embrace the suffering that this

world brings us for the name of Christ. To be bold, to speak the name of Christ and be generous toward each other, all for the glory and honor of Christ. Pray with me.

Father, Lord God, I thank you for Your word and I thank you Father for the truth that beckons us back to the foundation of what true worship truly is. That it's not just an emotional feeling, or some sort of state of euphoria, but rather it is taking the truth of who You are and living out our lives in a way that brings You honor and glory. I pray, Father, that You will just bless those who are here and those who are not. That You'll bless our entire congregation to continue to press on, to honor You and to glorify You through the way in which we love one another. And that we embrace the suffering that comes at us from the world. May You be glorified through our lives. And I pray, oh God, that You'll be honored through each and every one of us throughout this week. And I pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.