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The Sermon

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Luke 5:17-20

"Forgiveness of Sins"

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TRANSCRIPT

All right, we're in Luke chapter 5, and today we're going to be looking at verses 17-20. The title of this is "Forgiveness of Sins."

In Luke chapter 5, beginning in verse 17, we read, "One day He" – referring to Jesus – "was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, He said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you.'"

There's more to this narrative which we will look at next Lord's Day, but we will look at this portion, the first portion of this narrative today, "Forgiveness of Sins." Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, Your word has been read. It's in our mind, I trust in our heart. We ask now that You would open our eyes to understand all that You led Luke to record, as it is now preserved for us in the gospel of Luke. I

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pray Your word which is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, Your word which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, Your word which is a plumbline, Your word which is like seed that contains life in it, Your word which is like milk that nourishes and meat that feeds, Your word which is like water that cleanses and washes, Your word which is like a mirror which allows us to see ourselves for who we truly are, Your word which is like a hammer that breaks the hardened hearts, Your word which is like fire that burns the dross of our carnality away, Lord, I pray that Your word would have a full measure of ministry in our hearts here today.

We've come with many different needs. We're at many different places in our spiritual walk with You. Some have just started this walk, others have been walking with You for decades. I pray that You will take from this one passage and apply to each one of us exactly where we are. We invite You to do business in our soul this day. We are more needy than what we even realize. So pour out grace upon us. In Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses that I have just read, we see Jesus forgive the sins of a paralytic who was brought to Him on a stretcher. And by this display of compassion, Jesus looked beyond the apparent obvious need of the paralytic to be healed, and Jesus saw right through that, down into the very depths of his soul, and addressed his real need. His greatest need, which was not for healing, it was for forgiveness of sin. Jesus could have just healed him and left him as he was, and he would have gone to hell healthy. No, Jesus, the great physician of the soul addressed his greatest need, which was forgiveness of sin.

Jesus looked beyond the physical to the spiritual. He looked beyond the temporal to the eternal. He looked beyond the lesser to the greater. He looked beyond the peripheral to the priority. That's how Jesus operates. And it's the same need that you and I have today. Your greatest need is not physical. It is not financial. It is not marital. Our greatest need is not political, it's not social, and it's not cultural. Our greatest need is spiritual. Our greatest need is having our sin problem resolved through the

forgiveness of our countless many sins. And that is the business about which Jesus is conducting Himself this day.

So as we begin to work our way through this episode that took place in the public ministry of Christ, we're just going to look at the first few verses and pick it up next week because there's so much meat on this bone, I don't want us to leave anything behind. So I want you to note, first, "the preacher." This narrative begins with Jesus – and in a sense, everything begins with Jesus.

We read in verse 17, "One day He was teaching." That should not surprise us. He was always teaching. He was always preaching. That was the cutting edge of His public ministry. Everything else was subsidiary. We have already seen this in the gospel of Luke, and it will carry out for the rest of this gospel. He did that which was of greatest importance, which is the ministry of the word of God. No one can be saved until they hear the word of God. No one can be sanctified and conformed into the image of Christ unless they hear the word of God, it is that primary.

So, "One day." He, no doubt, has been conducting His preaching tours throughout Galilee and coming back to what has become now the hub of His operation, which is Capernaum. Capernaum is located on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee to the north, and it's in this, rather, remote place, and it becomes, really, the base of operation for Jesus. He will leave Capernaum, make His preaching tours from town to village to city, and then come back to Capernaum. And that is what he is doing here, and we know this because the gospel of Mark tells us. And we know that He's in a house because the gospel of Mark tells us this, and that many are gathered into this house. You and I cannot even comprehend the full force of being in this house. It's probably Peter's house that there are so many people gathered that no one else can get in. Like, literally, you can't get another person in. And there are open windows and open doors, and so the whole house is surrounded by layers of people just trying to peer in and wanting to hear the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And He is an expositor. He is expounding the law of God given by Moses. And He is preaching the truth of the kingdom of God, and He's preaching the gospel of the kingdom. I mean, He is prolific in his preaching. And we read, "and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law." Wherever there's light, there are bugs. And wherever the truth goes forth, the devil has his people there.

This is the first time we've encountered the Pharisees in the gospel of Luke, so we need to just talk for a moment about who are these Pharisees because we've never addressed this before. They're one of four groups of people in Israel. There are the Sadducees, and there are the scribes, there are the Pharisees, they're the Essenes. So this is one of those four parties. There's about 6,000 Pharisees in the land of Israel and they are the hyper-conservatives. They are the arch-conservatives.

They believe in the authority of Scripture. They believe in the primacy of the law of God given to Moses. They believe in the supernatural. They believe in angels. They believe in demons. They believe in miracles. They believe in the sovereignty of God. They believe in predestination. They believe in heaven and hell. They believe in the coming Messiah to set up His kingdom here upon the earth. I mean, they were straight arrows.

The name Pharisee simply means separatist, the separated ones. They just wanted to disentangle themselves from everybody else so they don't have to rub shoulders with the muck and the mire of this world. So they withdrew and just became their own little holy huddle unto themselves in an attempt to gain God's approval.

So they lived in isolation, and they were legalists. They focused upon the externals of religion and totally bypassed the heart. They practiced all of the rituals. They attended all of the ceremonies. They clung to all of the traditions, and they practiced their religion to be seen by men. When they would give their alms, they would blow a trumpet so that everyone would see them reach into their pocket and put the money into the little box. And when they prayed, they prayed with a loud voice so that everyone else

would see and hear how spiritual they are, and to draw attention to themselves to stand out in a crowd. And when they fasted, they made sure not to wash their face and to walk around with a gloomy face so that everyone would know how spiritual they are. That's the Pharisees.

And they show up. They don't show up to learn, they show up to try to entrap Jesus because Jesus is now more popular than they are. And with them are some like-minded other people from another sect, teachers of the law. This is the scribes. They're lawyers. They're lawyers in the law of God. They are professional scholars, if you will, of the law of Moses. And they've given their whole life to the interpretation of the law. They're called rabbis, which means teacher. And so they're there arm in arm with the Pharisees.

And it says, "they're sitting there." Everybody else is standing. The teacher sits. The class, the students, the congregation, the people, they stand. And so they're sitting there in this house, probably have come down to the front row so they can just check everything out. And they are sitting, assuming the posture of authority, because teachers sit. And it doesn't say in the text, but we can well imagine they're sitting there with their arms folded and their usual scowl on their face, and they're there to investigate Jesus and to scrutinize Him carefully and to check Him out with a critical eye.

And it says in verse 17, "who had come" - the "who" refers to the Pharisees and the scribes - "who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem." This is almost like a convention of Pharisees. "Every" is all-inclusive here: "every village." The word for "village" here refers to a town without walls, without walls of protection. I mean, it's so small that if there was an invasion, no one could even find this little city. They don't need walls of protection.

"And from every village of Galilee" - Galilee, again, is the northern region of Israel; Judea is the southern region of Israel - "and from Jerusalem." That's the holy city. That's the hub of the religious leaders. The power base is in Jerusalem. So these religious leaders, I mean, they're

coming from north, south, no doubt, east, west, to this out-of-the-way place Capernaum, to this obscure house, Peter's house; and again, not to learn, but to be gathering information to build their case that one day will lead to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before we move on, what we learn here is that whenever the truth goes forward, you have both wheat and tares. You have both the sheep and the goats. God's people are drawn to the teaching of the word of God, as so many of you are drawn here this morning. But there are always those who are yet unconverted, and in this case, and has been - I've seen in my ministry for the last 40 years, there's always those who oppose the truth who are in positions of power either in the church or in the city or in the country, who have the most to lose by the truth being made known.

For every Elijah, there is a King Ahab and a Jezebel to oppose the truth. For every John the Baptist, there's a King Herod to oppose the truth. For every John Knox, there is a Mary, Queen of Scots to oppose the truth. And for every John Rogers and Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley and Thomas Cranmer, there is a Queen Mary I, Bloody Mary, to martyr those who bring the truth.

That is what we see taking place here. This is merely the headwaters of the beginning of the clash between Jesus and the religious establishment of the day. The establishment always opposes the truth.

This leads, second, to "the power." At the end of verse 17, we see not only are the false religious leaders here, but the power of God is here as well. And we read, "and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing." The word "power" here, *dunamis*, comes into the English language as "dynamite," explosive power like an erupting volcano, "the power of the Lord." This is the power of the Holy Spirit that anointed the Lord Jesus Christ in His baptism in the River Jordan when the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and rested upon Him, and Jesus would go into the synagogue in His hometown in Nazareth and read Isaiah 61:1,

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, for the Lord is anointed Me to preach and proclaim liberty to the captives."

The power of the Holy Spirit is upon the Lord Jesus Christ and it says, "was present." The word "present" is not found in the original writing of Luke. It's clearly implied and it's supplied to help us read the sentence. It could easily be translated, "and the power of the Lord was there for Him to perform healing." And here we learn that Jesus performed these healings not in His deity, but in His sinless humanity that was anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It was the power of the third Person of the Trinity upon the second Person of the Trinity in His sinless humanity and subordination here to the will of the Father and His incarnation that enabled Him to perform not just the healings, but even the teaching ministry that He carried out. And here we learn how important the ministry of the Holy Spirit is, the power of the Holy Spirit is. If Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God was dependent upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit during His earthly ministry – and He was – then how much more so are you and I dependent upon the Holy Spirit, in a sense, for every breath we take and every step we make to carry out God's will for our lives.

I mean, Jesus had promised His disciples in Acts 1:8, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." And if you're a Christian, the Spirit has more than just come upon you, He resides within you, and He has brought His power into your life to live the Christian life and to carry out ministry not in your own strength, but in the power that He provides. Zechariah 4:6, I love this verse, "Not by might nor by power," – referring to man's might and man's power – "but by My Spirit," says the Lord. God will never call you to do anything but that He will give you the power to do it. If God has called you to step out and to follow His will, weak as you are, He gives you the power that enables you to do it.

Well, this now leads to, third, "the paralytic" in verse 18, because something unexpected now occurs as Jesus is in this house, and it's packed out and there are just reams of people surrounding the house, and He is preaching the word of God and He is performing the miracles of healings that we read in verse 18, "And some men" – we know from Mark 2:3 there

were four men - "were carrying on a bed" - They show up for this teaching session with a bed. The word for "bed" here means a stretcher, a pallet, a couch. It would have four corners, and there's one man for each of the four corners, as they're carrying almost like a mattress - "carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed."

Why would they be doing that? It's because Jesus is in the house, and because Jesus is performing miracles, and because Jesus is healing people. And there are not the modern medicine discoveries and conveniences that we have today, and the only hope for this paralytic is to somehow get Him to Jesus. Jesus will take it from there. And the word "paralyzed," what is paralyzed literally means to loosen beside, and the idea is really that all of his mobility has left him, all of his strength has departed, and so he cannot move and he cannot walk. He was, what we would say today, a paralytic. And he can't get to Jesus on his own because he can't walk.

And so everyone, everyone especially in Capernaum, have heard about Jesus. They have seen the miracles that He's performed. This is their opportunity. So they come to the meeting carrying their friend, their paralytic on this pallet, and it says in verse 18, "They were trying to bring him in." They were trying. The word "trying" here means seeking and searching. So the idea is they come to the front door to try to get him in. There's so many people in, not one of these four men by themselves could get in.

You can imagine the obstruction with four men carrying a stretcher with a man on it trying to get in. There's no way to get in and so they're searching and they're looking. No doubt, they come to the side to try to get in; they can't. There's an open window, "If we could pass Him through, that won't work." They circle probably the whole house as they're trying to bring him in. There's no angle to try to get through. I mean, when I go to the airport and we're all there at the gate and we're trying to get on, and you've got to know how to angle yourself to be first onto the plane - and they can't do it, and so they're trying to bring him in.

And this is their goal. this is their intent. It says in verse 18, "to set him down in front of Him." Well, the Pharisees are in the way, one thing. The Sadducees are in the way. And what they want to do is "set him down in front of." It means, literally, in the presence of, or face to face, or in the sight of, like, in the immediate, right in front of Jesus while He is teaching.

Now before I go on, let me just say this. These men are doing the greatest thing that anyone can do for somebody else, and that is to bring someone else to Jesus. It's the greatest thing a parent can do for a child. It's the greatest thing a grandparent can do for a grandchild. It's the greatest thing that a friend can do for another friend is to bring somebody to Jesus. I mean, that's why we're left here on the earth. The worship's a whole lot better up there. The fellowship's a whole lot better up there. The environment's a whole lot better up there. So why are we still here? It is to bring as many people to Jesus as we possibly can because we can't do that up there. Everybody there knows Jesus.

So all of this effort, they can't get into the meeting. So this leads us to verse 19, "the perseverance." What happens next is amazing. In verse 19 we read, "But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd," - the people are, in a sense, in the way to get their friend into the house in front of Jesus - "so" - we read - "they went up on the roof." You've got to love these guys. They will not take no for an answer. You know what most of us would say? "Well, it just must not be God's will. God's sovereign. If we're supposed to get him in there, the Red Sea would have parted, so it's obviously not God's will." We would have taken the guy home and just prayed for him.

These guys are unbelievable. What is a speed bump for us is just a challenge for them. "So they went up on the roof." How'd they get there? Well, homes in this day would have an outside stairwell that would lead up to the roof. And the rooftop is where many times people would gather in the evenings when it would cool, and visit and fellowship. So that they could get up on the roof. And once they got on the roof, the gospel of Mark adds what Luke doesn't record here that "they dug a hole in the roof." They dug a

hole in the roof. Now we read, "and let Him down through the tiles." It means clay tiles.

And so they have just begun to peel back the roof and to let their friend down through the hole. And I'd love to have these guys for deacons in our church. I mean, they've never met an impossibility. And so, "they let Him down." So obviously, they put ropes around the pallet and they just begin to let this guy down.

Now, we need to understand, to dig this hole in the roof, debris begins to come down into the room, and the Pharisees are getting hit in the head with parts of tile and wood and clay that are just kind of cascading down on them. And now all of a sudden, sunlight begins to shine into the room because they don't have electrical lights like we have, they have like little lamps lit in corners with oil in it. And so this hole now, all of a sudden there's this beam of light that comes down into the room, and all of a sudden now, everybody kind of would look up what's going on in the middle of the sermon.

And now you see four little faces peering over the edge and searching down to look because they can't really – they don't have a GPS, so they don't know exactly where Jesus is because they haven't been in the meeting. And so they have to look down to see exactly where He is and kind of now begin to let their friend down and steer him in the right direction somehow. And so everybody now is watching this unfold, and it's like this man, this paralytic, is levitating in midair and he's just being let down in the middle of the service, and they plop him down at the feet of Jesus right in front of the Pharisees and the scribes. That's what's going on here.

"And let him down through the tiles with his stretcher" – it says in verse 19 – "into the middle of the crowd" – that's where Jesus would have been standing so that everybody could hear Him – "in front of Jesus," immediately in front of Jesus. I mean, it was with precision a direct shot to the feet of Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes are seated there. I mean, these men are relentless.

Now I want to ask you two questions that relate to you: "Who brought you to Jesus?" Probably somebody did. Even if you were in a hotel room by yourself, it was the Gideons who brought Jesus to you in a Bible. I mean, who brought you to Jesus? You just didn't probably wake up one day and go to Jesus. I mean, there were influences. There were witnesses. There were testimonies. There were sermons. There were lessons.

Was it a friend? Was it a parent? Was it a preacher? Was it an evangelist? Was it an author? Was it a youth leader? Who was it that brought you to Jesus? You need to thank God again for his or her faithfulness to bring the gospel to you.

And I'll tell you this: just like there were four men that brought this man to Jesus, it was probably more than just one person that brought you to Jesus. I mean, it may have been a grandmother praying, and it may have been a father testifying, and it may have been a preacher who was preaching, and it may have been a youth leader or a friend who was following up. I mean, evangelism is always a team effort. So who brought you to Christ?

And then the second question I want to ask you is, "Who do you need to bring to Christ?" Is it a work associate? Is it a classmate? Is it a family member? Is it a neighbor? Is it a friend? But there is someone who is already in your life who either lives with you or next door or works in your office. There's somebody already planted in your life that you need to bring to Jesus. And these men are an extraordinary example. We all need to be like Andrew, who after he was saved, he went and got his brother Simon and he brought Simon to Jesus, and Jesus changed his name to Peter because he was converted.

Well, this brings us finally, fifth, to "the pardon," verse 20. So how will Jesus respond? "Hey, you've interrupted My sermon." What will He say? Well, verse 20, "Seeing their faith." Those three words are huge. "Seeing," *horaō* in the Greek, it means more than just observing something physically.

It means to observe with perception, and in this case, penetrating perception, looking beyond the external to the internal and perceiving the real need and seeing what's in their heart.

Now, the next word, "their," you see it, "Seeing their faith"? Not his faith, "their faith." It's in the plural. All five of them have faith. They believe that Christ has the power and the authority to perform what they so desperately need. They trust in Him. They have confidence in Him. They are committed to Him. They are willing to climb any mountain, cross any river, whatever it takes to get to Jesus.

"Seeing their faith," not just cognitive intellectual head knowledge, though that's where it starts; and more than just emotional feelings in the affections, though it includes that. It trickles down from the head to the heart to the feet and to the hands. And faith is as shoe leather, and it moves out and it takes action.

"Jesus, seeing their faith, He said, 'Friend.'" Literally, *anthrōpos*, man. Matthew and Mark record it as "son." It's a term of endearment. It's a term that would indicate almost a smile and a warm reception. He's come for healing of his paralysis, and Jesus doesn't even address that, because like I said, if that's all Jesus does is heal him, he would go to hell healthy.

This is what struck Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the eminent physician in England, in fact, the most upcoming physician in all of England who was the assistant to Sir Thomas Horder, who was the physician to the king of England. And Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his 20s, 26 years old, he is caring for the elite of the elite of the elite in the British culture in the 1930s, 1920s. I mean, he is a skyrocketing physician. And he came to the realization that "as I am attending to the royalty, all I'm doing is making them well so they can go back into a life of sin."

Now we need doctors. My father was a doctor. My brother is a doctor. Noble, noble profession. But there are a few who realize, "There may be a

higher calling to my life than just healing the body, which is wonderful, but to be one who would attend to the soul."

That's what Jesus is doing here. He's going to attend to this man's soul. And He said, "Friend, your sins" - your transgressions, your trespasses, your iniquities, your disobedience, a lifetime - "are forgiven you." Wow, just like that.

What do you think the word "forgiveness" means? And we kind of have an idea. Literally, out of the original language, it means to send away. It means for something to be removed from you. It means for something to no longer be on you, but to now finally be off of you and to be sent away. Forgiveness means that your sin debt is canceled out and that the slate that has the record of all of your sin is wiped clean.

This is astonishing. This may be old news for us, but this is still good news for us. Let me tell you six things I see in that tiny little sentence, "Your sins are forgiven you." Number one, "It was immediate." There's no progressive forgiveness with God. He says, "Your sins are," - not will be, are - "they are forgiven you." It's immediate. The moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are forgiven forever.

Second, "It's complete." Notice, He doesn't say your sin is forgiven you. "Your sins" - plural - "are forgiven you." The entire mountain and mountain range of your sins are immediately forgiven - past, present, future.

Third, "It's divine." Only God can forgive sin. And actually the Pharisees and the scribes in verse 21, here's one thing they did say that is right. They said, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies?" Well, he's wrong on that. Here's where they're right. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Number one, every sin is ultimately against God. Even if I sin against you, it's ultimately against God; and only God can wipe the slate clean.

Fourth, "It's free." I mean, what can a paralytic do? He can't even come to church unless someone carries him. There are no good works he can go do. It's free. It's grace.

Fifth, "It's permanent." Your sins are forever forgiven you. And, sixth, "It's conditioned." Not everyone has their sins forgiven. Not everyone here today has their sins forgiven. What's the condition? Faith. "Seeing their faith, He said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you.'" You must exercise saving faith. There must be the commitment of your life to Christ.

Jesus would go on to say that this forgiveness is in His blood. In Matthew 26:28, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He said, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." There's power in the blood, wonder-working power, to cleanse, to purge the sin-guilty soul. And Peter said the same in Acts 10:43, "Everyone who believes in Him" – referring to Christ – "receives forgiveness of sins." No one believes in Jesus and does not receive forgiveness of sin. If you have believed in Jesus Christ, all of your sins are forever forgiven.

And Paul writes in Ephesians 1:7, "In Him" – referring to Christ – "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions." I mean, God has a record of all of our sins. It's referred to in Colossians 2:14 as a certificate of debt that records every sin that we have ever committed and the corresponding punishment eternally for every sin; and some sins will receive a greater eternal punishment than other sins because not all sins are the same. It's an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And so the punishment will match up with the crime. And so the certificate of debt, it's just enormous. God has recorded every sin that you have ever committed and ever will commit, and He takes the blood of Christ and He just washes the whole certificate of debt and scrubs it until there are no transgressions and no punishment eternally left.

In Colossians 1:14, Paul writes, "In whom" - referring to Christ - "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." And the author of Hebrews in Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." It's been said what is in the eyes of the world as they see the cross is a gory story; for us who are saved, it is a glory story. And in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The only way to have the forgiveness of your sins is to believe in Jesus Christ and for God the Father to take the blood of His Son and to wash your sins away.

So, I must ask you: Have you believed in Jesus Christ? Do you have faith in Christ alone? Have you committed your life to Him? That's the question on the table. Have you come to see that you cannot save yourself? Have you come to see that you have sinned your entire life? Do you see that no amount of good works or church attendance or service can remove the guilty stain of sin from your filthy soul? Have you confessed your sin to God?

If so, then Jesus has said to you, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." You will not hear it in an audible voice, it's much louder than that. He has spoken through pages of Scripture that contain the promises of God in the gospel. And if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, He has said to you, almost as if you have been lowered down through the ceiling like this paralytic, that you were dead in your trespasses and sins, that there were no good works that you could perform as a spiritual paralytic, as you just laid at the feet of Jesus. And even the religious leaders could not help you. If you have believed in Christ, He says to you, "Your sins are forgiven you."

That is the glorious news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if you have never believed in Him, today could be the day that you were lowered through the ceiling and placed at the feet of Jesus and to hear this pronouncement of forgiveness upon your soul. May God help you to do that if you've never come to Christ. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, how we praise Your most holy name, that You have sent Your Son Jesus Christ into this world to rescue and to redeem us

by the shedding of His blood, that we might be forgiven. Lord, may everyone in this house of worship today have the forgiveness of their sins; and it comes through faith in Christ alone. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.