

# Sermon #87 — *John's Gospel*

Title: **RESPONSIBILITY, REPROBATION, RUIN**

Text: John 12:35-43

Subject: *Unbelief — The Cause of Judgment*

Date: Sunday Morning — June 13, 2010

Tape: John #87

Reading: *Isaiah 6:1-13*

## **ISAIAH 6**

1. In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.
3. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.
4. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him

that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5. ¶Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

6. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and

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- thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
8. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.
9. ¶And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.
10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.
11. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,
12. And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land.
13. But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and *it shall return*, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them, when they cast *their leaves*: so the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Let me begin my message with three statements. God

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help you to hear me.

1. **Soon, we must meet God in judgment!** — You know it; and I know it. Soon, very soon, we will stand before the holy Lord God in judgment. We are going to spend eternity somewhere, either in the everlasting torments of the wicked in hell or in the everlasting bliss of the saints in heaven, either with the damned under the infinite wrath of God or with the saved in the indescribable blessedness of God's goodness; but we will spend eternity somewhere. You know it; and I know it.

(2 Corinthians 5:10-11) “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. <sup>11</sup> Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

When Christ ascends His judgment throne,  
And bids all worlds draw near;  
Men's hearts shall melt, with sighs and groans;  
And trembling souls shall fear. —  
Then as the solemn, opened books  
Disclose the dreadful day;  
Jehovah's frowns and angry looks  
Will wicked souls dismay.

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Omniscience will, with truth, expose  
Their secret thoughts to view;  
Their crimes God's justice will expose,  
And conscience own them true.  
God's wrath shall seize the guilty souls  
Of unconverted men,  
While all God's books, the judgment scrolls,  
Accuse, convince, condemn!

But, there in Jesus' gracious hand,  
The Book of Life is placed.  
The names of His elect there stand,  
Nor can they be erased!  
As He unfolds the sacred seals,  
With God's decrees all done,  
With one decisive word, He will  
Welcome His ransomed home!

2. **If you are saved, if you go to heaven, if the Lord God receives you into his Kingdom, if you enter into the everlasting bliss of heaven's glory with Christ, it will be by the work and grace of the Triune God alone.** — “*Salvation is of the Lord!*”  
Salvation comes to sinners by the will, decree, and purpose of God the Father, the righteousness, redemption, and intercession of God the Son, and the

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regeneration, calling, and preservation of God the Holy Spirit.

(Ephesians 2:8-10) “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

3. **If you perish in your sins, if you die without Christ, without God's salvation, without hope, if you go to hell and suffer the horrid wrath of God in the pit of the damned forever, it will be your own fault.** You will have no one to blame, but yourself; and you will blame yourself forever! It is written, — “*The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 6:23). Everlasting death in hell is something you earn. Eternal life is the free gift of God to poor sinners in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, turn with me, if you will, to the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of John’s Gospel. Our text will be verses 35-43. The title of my message is — **RESPONSIBILITY, REPROBATION, RUIN**.

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**PROPOSITION:** I want to show you, from the Scriptures, and particularly from this passage of Scripture, that it is your responsibility to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and show you that if you refuse to trust the Son of God, your willful, obstinate unbelief will be the just cause of your everlasting damnation.

(John 12:35-43) “Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. <sup>36</sup> While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. <sup>37</sup> ¶ But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: <sup>38</sup> That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? <sup>39</sup> Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, <sup>40</sup> He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. <sup>41</sup> These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. <sup>42</sup> ¶ Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be

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put out of the synagogue: <sup>43</sup> For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

### **RESPONSIBILITY**

*First*, in verses 35-36, our Savior shows us that it is our responsibility to believe on his name, to trust him as our only God, our only Lord, and our only Savior.

(John 12:35-36) “Then Jesus said unto them, — Yet a little while is the light with you. — Walk while ye have the light, — lest darkness come upon you: — for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. <sup>36</sup> — While ye have light, believe in the light, — that ye may be the children of light. — These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.”

I take a back seat to no one in declaring the gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ. Divine Sovereignty, Absolute Predestination, Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints are in this house of worship like salt and pepper on the table. We never have a meal without them. These are not things discussed only in the secrecy of the pastor's study. They are openly declared from the pulpit without apology or abatement. Arminianism

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is a heretical form of evil that cannot be denounced in terms too severe. Will worship, under any name or in any form, is damning to the souls of men, and must be denounced with absolute dogmatism! However, we must not distort the truth of God and the plain teachings of Holy Scripture, even in denouncing the heresies of Arminian, free-will, works religion.

**Many, attempting to guard the doctrine of God's sovereignty, completely deny the responsibility of men.**

They reason, as one wrote a while back, — “If we preach that a sinner is responsible to repent, we must declare that he is able to repent. If we teach that sinners are responsible to believe on Christ, we must also teach that they are able to believe.” They deduce, in what appears to be a very reasonable and logical manner, that responsibility implies ability. The problem with this reasoning is that it attempts to mold the Word of God to a theological system; and that we dare not do!

**We must never try to make the Word of God fit into any humanly devised system of doctrine or theology.**

**We must build our doctrine upon the plain statements of Holy Scripture alone.** If the plain statements of Scripture contradict, or even destroy our theological system, so be it. If we have to throw away every doctrinal creed, every confession of faith, and

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every catechism that has ever been written by men in order to be faithful and true to the Word of God, then we will throw them away.

This is one reason why, in this congregation, we do not require members to sign or agree to a confession of faith.

**Our creed, our confession of faith is the holy, inspired Word of God.** If that seems to others to be too simple, too non-intellectual, or too pietistic, we can live with their disapproval. **We bow to and build our doctrine upon the Word of God alone, even when it seems to contradict human reason and philosophy.** — “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*” (Isaiah 8:20).

**Here are two facts which simply cannot be denied or refuted:**

1. **God almighty is absolutely sovereign in salvation.** He has mercy on whom he will have mercy. He is gracious to whom he will be gracious. He saves whom he will he will save. — “*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*” (Romans 9:16).
2. **All men are responsible under God to walk in the light he gives them.** The Lord God has fixed it so that

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those who perish in their sins, those who die in rebellion and unbelief are altogether without excuse. No one goes to hell by accident! Unbelief is not a passive thing. **If you go to hell, you will have to scratch and claw your way there, fighting to your last breath against the light God has given you.** Men and women do not go to hell because they are ignorant. People go to hell because they are rebels (Romans 1:18-20). — “*The wages of sin is death.*” You earn that. — “*But the gift of God is eternal life.*” That is his work.

**“*Yet a little while is the light with you.*”** — Christ is the Light. — The gospel he preached is the light. — The revelation of his Divine person and work is the light. But that light, he declared, would be taken away. **Certainly, this primarily refers to his own death, resurrection, and ascension.** He was about to go back to the Father. When that happened, judicial blindness was sent upon the nation of Israel by the judgment of God upon them.

**But that is not all that our Lord’s words mean. They have meaning for us as well.** Our Lord Jesus is telling us that **the light he gives us in this world is light that is given only for a specific space of time.** He has given us the light of his grace and glory revealed in the gospel; but the light will not always shine before us. The Lord Jesus says, — “*Yet a little while is the light with you.*”

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**“Walk while ye have the light.”** — When our Lord says, “Walk while ye have the light,” his meaning is “Believe in the light, while ye have the light,” as he states in verse 36. — “While ye have light, believe in the light.” Soon we must die; and there is no light of grace in the grave.

**This is to you the day of grace and salvation.** There may not be another. God may never speak to you again by his gospel, by his Spirit, or by the voice of his servant. The darkness of old age, senility, gospel-hardness, false religion, and false refuges leave a people only to stumble about in confusion and darkness, with no light. — “**Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!**”<sup>1</sup> When the light is taken away, darkness comes; and when the darkness of God’s judgment comes upon you, you cannot walk in the light. When God sends darkness, he sends darkness; and you cannot see! — Oh, how great is that darkness!

“So it is with a man in a state of unregeneracy, and more especially under judicial blindness. He is not aware of the pits and snares that lie in his way, or of the dark mountains on which he stumbles; and though

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<sup>1</sup> Oh, what a privilege it is to have the light of the gospel, to have a place to hear the gospel, to have a messenger from God to preach the gospel! — God can take the light away in a moment!

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destruction and misery are in his ways, he knows not that he is going thereunto.” — *John Gill*

**Read verse 36.** — “*While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*” Our Lord then departed from them and hid himself, leaving them to their thoughts and ways. — “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” When the Light leaves, nothing remains but darkness! This will be the torment of the damned forever: — They loved darkness rather than the Light! Therefore they inherit the darkness of hell! **God give me grace to believe the Light, to walk in the Light of Christ.**

- Of His Purpose.
- Of His Presence.
- Of His Providence.
- Of His Gospel.

The galling, tormenting remembrance of lost and misspent opportunities will be the very essence of hell!

## **REPROBATION**

Next, I want to talk to you about reprobation. The Scriptures clearly teach both election and reprobation. Reprobation is the act of abandoning, or state of being

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abandoned, to eternal destruction. It is a term applied both to the eternal decree of God to punish all who die in unbelief and to the judicial act of God in abandoning, or casting off those who refuse to walk in the light God gives them, who refuse to believe the gospel, who refuse to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Scriptures speak of God giving men over to a reprobate mind** (Romans 1:28). That God's act of judgment, casting men off, shutting them up in unbelief, because they harden their hearts against him (Proverbs 1:23-33; 29:1; Romans 10:20). **When God shuts the door, it is shut forever!**

(Proverbs 1:24-27) “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; <sup>25</sup> But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: <sup>26</sup> I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; <sup>27</sup> When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.”

(Proverbs 29:1) “He, that being often reproved hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

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The Scriptures also speak of reprobation as an eternal act of God in predestination (Romans 9:11-24; 1 Peter 2:7-8; Jude 1:4). Just as there are vessels of mercy “*afore prepared unto glory,*” there are vessels of wrath “*fitted to destruction.*”

(Romans 9:11-24) “(For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) <sup>12</sup> It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. <sup>13</sup> As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. <sup>14</sup> ¶ What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. <sup>15</sup> For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. <sup>16</sup> So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. <sup>17</sup> For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. <sup>18</sup> Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth. <sup>19</sup> Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? <sup>20</sup> Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why

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hast thou made me thus? <sup>21</sup> Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? <sup>22</sup> What if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering **the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:** <sup>23</sup> And that he might make known the riches of his glory on **the vessels of mercy,** which he had afore prepared unto glory, <sup>24</sup> Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

(1 Peter 2:7-8) “Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, <sup>8</sup> And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: **whereunto also they were appointed.**”

(Jude 1:4) “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our Lord Jesus speaks of both eternal reprobation by the decree of God and judicial reprobation by the justice of

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God in our text, in verses 37-41. **Reprobation is both the decree of God in eternity and the judicial act of God in time.** God hardened Pharaoh's heart and Pharaoh hardened his own heart; but Pharaoh's hardening of his own heart was the cause of God judgment upon him (Exodus 8:32-9:3). So it is with all who are lost.

(John 12:37-41) “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: <sup>38</sup> That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? <sup>39</sup> Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, <sup>40</sup> He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. <sup>41</sup> These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.”

**Be sure you do not miss the order in which God the Holy Spirit dictated these statements of Inspiration.**

The order here given is very significant.

- 1<sup>st</sup> We are told that those before whom our Lord had performed so many miracles **would not believe** (v. 37).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> The Spirit of God refers us to Isaiah 53:1, and tells us that **the unbelief of these people was a fulfilment of**

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Divine prophecy (v. 38). — Their unbelief did not take God by surprise or nullify his purpose. Rather, their unbelief was the fulfilment of God's purpose (Romans 3:3-4).

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Because they would not believe, we are told that the Lord God fixed it so that they could not believe. — “*Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them*” (vv. 39-40). — God blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts in retribution, a just retribution and judgment, for their unbelief. And this was all according to God's eternal purpose.
- 4<sup>th</sup> In verse 41 John tells us that Isaiah had this revealed to him when he saw the Lord's glory (Redemption Accomplished — Christ Exalted — Free Forgiveness by the Accepted Sacrifice — Sovereign Mercy — Justice Executed — Isaiah 6:1-13).

**How hardened in rebellion the heart of man is by nature, how deceitful, how desperately wicked!**

Though numerous, undeniable miracles were performed before their eyes, they would not believe. They would not believe because they could not believe; and they could not believe because they would not believe!

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- Miracles performed before the eyes of men, undeniable miracles, will never produce faith. — Faith comes by hearing, not by signs and wonders!
- The most orthodox, perfect, pure preaching of the gospel will not produce faith without the accompanying power and grace of God the Holy Spirit. — “*It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing!*”
- The dead must be given life before they can believe. Even then, the faith we exercise as living men is, as Paul puts it, “*the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20). Our faith is the work of God in us, not our work for God.
- Faith in Christ is the gift of and operation of God’s free and sovereign grace (Ephesians 1:19-20; 2:8; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 2:14).

All things that come to pass in time, even the rebellion, unbelief, and everlasting ruin of reprobate sinners is according to the unalterable, everlasting purpose of God in predestination (Romans 9:11-24; 1 Peter 2:7-8; Jude 1:4; Romans 3:3-4).

(Romans 3:3-4) “For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? <sup>4</sup> God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be

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justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”

**Yet, Divine judgment is always just.** It is always the just retribution of God upon ungodly rebels. It comes upon men because of deliberate, willful rebellion and unbelief. — “*The wages of sin is death!*” — If you go to hell, it will be your own fault; and you will forever be tormented by your own conscience screaming “Amen” to your everlasting damnation!

- **No one goes to hell because of Adam's transgression.** — “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*” (Ezekiel 18:20).
- **No one goes to hell who does not personally deserve eternal damnation.** God will not condemn the just (Proverbs 17:15).
- **If you go to hell, you will go to hell kicking, fighting, opposing, and warring with your own conscience all the way, transgressing everything you know by nature, providence, and the Word of God.** You will go to hell kicking God, as it were, out of your way, with your fingers in your ears, deliberately hardening your heart against everything holy, pure, and spiritual!
- **Still, you will not escape, alter, or in any way hinder God's eternal purpose and decree in predestination. You will only fulfil it!** — When

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Isaiah saw the Lord's glory (Isaiah 6), he saw his glory both in the salvation of chosen, ransomed sinners by his free grace and in the everlasting ruin of reprobate sons and daughters of Adam who harden their hearts and will not believe on the Son of God!

Alright, (1<sup>st</sup>) you are responsible to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (2<sup>nd</sup>) If you refuse to trust the Son of God, your everlasting reprobation and damnation will be both according to the sovereign will and purpose of God and the absolute, strict justice of God.

### **RUIN**

*Third*, in verses 42 and 43, we see that religion without Christ is the ruin of multitudes.

(John 12:42-43) “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: <sup>43</sup> For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

These men were fully convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. They believed; but they did not believe. They had a faith about Christ, but no faith in Christ. Their heads were forced to acknowledge truth; but their

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hearts could not receive the love of the truth.

Reason, and intellect, and mind, and conscience, forced them secretly to admit that no man could do the miracles Jesus of Nazareth did, unless God was with him, and that the preacher of Nazareth really was the Christ of God. But they would not confess him. **They would not identify themselves with Christ, his gospel, and his people.** They dared not face the ridicule and persecution, which confessing Christ might entail. Like the cowards they were, they held their peace, and kept their convictions to themselves.

What was the reason for this cowardice? — “*They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God!*” What multitudes there are like these! No doubt some of you are precisely described by these last two verses.

- You are **fully convinced** of the truth of the gospel. You know all about Christ; but you don’t know Christ.
- You **refuse to openly identify yourself** with Christ, this church, and the gospel of God that we preach. You refuse to confess Christ in believer’s baptism. — And I know why. This is your ruin:—
- You **love the praise of men more than the praise of God.**

What will it take to overcome your love of the praise of

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men? What will it take to melt your hard heart? What will it take to bring you to your knees before God? What will it take to make you “*believe in the Light, that ye may be children of the Light?*”

- I know this: — If God leaves you to yourself, you will never walk in the Light, you will never trust the Lord Jesus, you will never obey the command of the gospel, which you are responsible to obey.
- I know this, too: — The only way you will ever believe on the Son of God, the only way you will ever walk in the Light, is if, like Isaiah of old, God Almighty gives you the saving revelation of his glory in Christ!

O Lord God, force yourself upon poor, needy sinners. Show us your glory, and sweetly force us to walk in the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

Amen.