

# Timing is Everything

*Matthew*

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 8:14-22  
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Before we get to actually our Bible study tonight, you may or may not be familiar, but in the book of Colossians chapter 3 verse 16, it says that one of the things that its believers were to do is that we are to teach one another and to admonish one another through song, and it talks about that we're to do so through the Psalms, which is 150 Psalms we find in the Bible, and through hymns and through spiritual songs. Now, I'm not a mathematician or a statistician, but last time I checked, two out of three is the majority. You say, well, why is that important? Because in the Bible, it basically says that two-thirds of the songs that you're going to sing are not directly out of scripture, but should be based on scripture. And I think oftentimes, and we all can be guilty of this at some level, is there's "a new song" that comes out and we like the old stuff, don't we? I mean, some of us do. And some of y'all are like, "I don't like the old stuff." But nonetheless, at times, we get "set in our ways." Not to mention the book of Revelation chapter 5 verse 9 says one day when you get to heaven you're going to sing a new song, but that's a whole other story. But let me share with you a brief story based on this morning's worship services. The time did not allow me for to do so but our invitation song that we sang at 8:30 and 11 o'clock service is a very well known song, sure many of you know it, it's called "Softly and Tenderly, Jesus is calling. Come home, sinner, come home." Perfect conclusion to the story of the prodigal son, was it not? What you may not know is how did that song get so popular? I mean, how did it get so well known? How did we start singing that at the end of the service, all right?

Well, it was actually written in 1880, all right? Well, you say, well, okay, that's great, that's fine, why is that important? Because within about 10 to 12 years, one of the most famous evangelists the world would ever know by the name of Billy Sunday came to faith in Jesus Christ. Billy Sunday was a professional baseball player in his younger years for what Major League Baseball was in those days. He was known as a rebel rouser, if you know what that term means. He was one that was always in trouble, always causing issue. He comes to faith in Christ, he begins to start preaching, and he preached what they called the sawdust trail. You ever heard that terminology? There were these outdoor pavilions and tents that they would put up and the reason they called it the sawdust trail is they put sawdust in the aisles so that it would absorb the water when it rained so that they could actually walk around and not be in the mud all the time. And so one of the things they would say is they would come and they would say walk the sawdust trail. That

basically meant to render a decision for Christ and walk down the sawdust floor that they had created. Billy Sunday was a marvelous character for a lot of different reasons, but one of the things that he did is he started using that song called "Softly and Tenderly" as his invitation. Let me tell you why, because he was an old baseball player and there's that line that says "Come home, you sinners, come home," and he would tell his testimony about being a baseball player who was the prodigal that came home to Jesus, and one of the things that he would do, I love this, we don't have any pictures of it because of the dating of it, but he would lay on the platform with his arms extended, and he would plea, "Come home to Jesus," as they would play "Softly and Tenderly, Jesus is calling. Calling, O sinner, come home."

Now I know that tonight is not a "history night/music class," but the Bible says to teach one another and admonish one another in song, and these songs, we don't just sing them because they sound good or they're in the right key, it's because they are to teach us something and they are to admonish us as well. If you have your Bibles tonight, I would encourage you to turn to Matthew chapter 8. We're gonna begin in verse 14. Before we do so, I'll pray for the Lord to guide us.

*Lord Jesus tonight, we have one very simple but powerful objective and that is to see you as you truly are and not how we or others have manufactured you, and to hear directly from your word. Lord, we know tonight that as we turn to Matthew chapter 8, we're gonna read about your ministry and we're gonna read what you spoke while in flesh. Lord, tonight may we not be guilty of manufacturing or making it what we desire it to be or wish it was. Lord, allow it to just simply speak to our lives and mold us and shape us into the vessel that your word says would be honorable to you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

Tonight we're going to begin in verse 14, but for those that may be new either in person or online, allow me to kind of set the stage for just a moment. We are very slowly walking through the Gospel of Matthew on Sunday evenings, and the reason that I did such inflection is the Gospel of Matthew isn't just one of the respective four Gospels. I don't want to elevate one scripture above any other because all scripture is inspired by God, however, as far as an understanding of the Bible, the Gospel of Matthew does us such a great service because what it does is it ends the silence of 430 years. You remember the prophets of the Old Testament, the Lord said silence will come for 430 years, and what we know as the New Testament is the first written Word of God that we had in almost five centuries. And so it is in Matthew that begins this New Testament. It begins with the genealogy, the Messiah Jesus Christ that was prophesied for thousands of years back in the Old Testament days. It serves as a bridge. It takes us from the temple of the Old Testament to the church of the New. It takes us from the old covenant to the new covenant. And what it allows us to see is not just who Jesus is, was, and always will be, but it allows us to give a total picture of scripture for as we will discover in the book of Matthew, particularly when we get to the latter end, that there's a high concentration of material regarding what you and I would call the second coming because when you go into the Old Testament, there are 48 specific prophetic statements about the birth, the life, the ministry, and the resurrection, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, 48. Do you

know there's over 300 regarding his second coming? And so therefore, there's this racial first coming to second coming. So Matthew not only bridges that gap of he is truly the Messiah, but it's gonna begin to work its way into an understanding of those eschatological or end time events as well.

In what we know chapter 5 through 7, we have the famous Sermon on the Mount. In a simplistic explanation, Jesus basically exposes humanity for all the sins, all the faults, and all the shortcomings that we could ever imagine having. And there in chapter 5, he exposed every way that we sin against each other. Chapter 6, he exposed every way we sin against God directly. Then in chapter 7, he draws the proverbial line in the sand. He goes, "All right, here's the deal. You can either build your life on the shifting sand of whatever philosophy, theology, or construct you want, or you can build your life on the solid rock which we know is Jesus Christ." After the famous Sermon on the Mount, they make their way down to the valley. They're in a little city by the name of Capernaum. We're going to find out tonight that's the home base for a man who we know well as Simon Peter on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Immediately there's a leper that comes to him that is healed dramatically. There's a centurion whose servant way back home is healed simply at the word of Jesus. In verse 14, we're actually going to enter Peter's house. He's going to make his way from the mount of a great sermon to the streets of lepers and centurions. He's going to go into somebody's home and here he's going to be in Peter's house, and then he's going to begin to make his way to the Sea of Galilee. And next week when we gather together, we're going to look at that famous calming of the sea and the demoniac that was healed. And tonight, I've entitled it, "Timing is Everything." By the way, next week is going to be "Timing is Everything Part 2," just to let you know. And timing truly is everything. I can speak to myself. I don't want to speak on your behalf but I'm sure that if you're as red blooded as I am you've walked down the same path, almost every error, mistake or shortcoming in my life has been either I got ahead of God or behind. Timing is everything.

It says in verse 14,

14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. 16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. 18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. 19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Now, if you're not aware, that statement there is one of the most controversial statements that Jesus Christ ever made. We're going to unpack that in a few moments when we get there but I want to begin in verse 14, where Jesus gives us a whole lot of clarity. He distinguishes us something that we struggle with. There is a very distinct difference between a spiritual infirmity and a physical sickness. I know we addressed this at some level last Sunday evening, but I think at times we need to "have a redo," a mulligan, a re-understanding of things. We live in the West here and most of us, if we be honest with ourselves, anytime there's an issue, anytime there's a struggle, anytime there's a problem, the first thing that comes to our mind is where do we get the pill and where do we find the program? How do we fix this? We are very, we are wired to as such, in this culture, to naturally default that every single problem is of a physical, material nature. If we were in the Eastern world, it'd be very different. The Eastern world doesn't default to the physical illnesses as much as it does that everything has some type of spiritual malformity to it. You know what the best thing is? You know what the answer to this problem is? Yes. In other words, what Jesus does for us is he distinguishes for us that there are some issues in this world that are spiritual abnormalities that have to be "prayed out," and there are sicknesses that have to be antibiotic'd out, if I can say that word. In other words, it's not so much an either-or as it is a both-and.

So who is it that Jesus encounters? Now, we're going to take a little rabbit trail here for a moment, but it's Sunday evening, and that's kind of what we do best. Do you notice who is sick in this passage? Well, it's Peter's mother-in-law. You say, well, what's the big deal? Well, I'm going to go there because church history makes me and forces me to do so. You do realize there are a significant number of people on planet Earth who claim that whom we know as Peter was the first vicar of Christ, the first pope. He was the one which this church was built on. And one of the things that those that would advocate that position is that those who fall in line up or that succeed him, that they don't have a spouse and they don't have children. Do you find it interesting that they would hold a position that you're not married and have kids when supposedly their first one in this position was married? He had a mother-in-law. That's what it says.

And so here, the mother-in-law is there. She is "sick of the fever." This is important because when we look at this passage among many others, it says there were many that were possessed, there were many that were sick. Jesus, and I know you know this, but let me reiterate it, Jesus did not distinguish between those of great position and those of no position. He didn't distinguish between the leper and the centurion. Peter, this is the individual who even though he does not biblically have the title that many would give him, he is of a key significance to the gospel. He is one during Pentecost, he's the one that preached that famous sermon, and the thing I think you need to understand is this, that Jesus did not give his mother-in-law any more or any less attention than he did the leper or the centurion. That's important.

So he goes into the home and notice what it says or how he addressed it. It says his wife's mother was sick of the fever. I want you to look at verse 15. How did Dr. Jesus take care of this? He touched her hand. Now, I don't know about you and I'm not in the medical field. I respect those that are. My dad was a pharmacist his entire life. But if I went to the

doctor, and I said I had a fever, "I'm running a fever doc," and he said, "Let me just have your hand, let me fix that," I'd get a little nervous, wouldn't you? Maybe I'd like a second opinion, right? But remember, this is the same Jesus that in Mark chapter 5, there's a woman who's had an issue of blood for 12 years. She touches the hem of his garment and she's healed. In other words, Jesus touches her, I think sometimes we get into this, I guess, this way of thinking where we think, well if we've got a fever we've gotta touch the head. Jesus touched the hand and the head was cured.

She had a fever. He touched her. But what's interesting about this passage, if you keep reading, look in verse 16, he cast out the spirits with his word and they were all healed. Do you see a pattern here? It's not an either/or, it's yes. In other words, Jesus healed by touching, Jesus healed by speaking. The fact is it was the power that he possessed and who he was, not his necessary proximity to the person that was having issues.

John chapter 16. We have one of the famous accounts of Jesus speaking about whom we know as the Holy Spirit. I think sometimes we forget the context of John 16 because once you get in the whole Passion Week of Jesus and he comes into Jerusalem, there's so many different events but chapter 16 comes after chapter 15, and chapter 15 comes after chapter 14, and chapter 14 comes after 13. You say, where are you going with this? Chapter 13 is the famous scene where Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. In other words, we're within 12 hours of the crucifixion and what does Jesus do? He begins to teach them the importance of the Holy Spirit. He actually says, "It is beneficial that I depart from you for if I depart from you, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter will come and dwell within you." Now the reason that's important is because when we get physically sick in our world today, what do we say? "I've got to get to a doctor. They've got to observe me. I need a second opinion. I need an observation. I need this. I need that." Here's the important thing we hear is when Jesus addresses our situation, number one, you don't have to make an appointment, hope you can get in within six weeks. You don't have to call your primary physician. You don't have to worry about co-pays. And you do not have to even be within close physical proximity. In fact, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law by touching her hand to fix her head, and then he just speaks the word, and those that had another illness were cured.

What is it he addressed? We've already touched on this, their infirmities and their sicknesses. Some of the issues were spiritual, and some were physical and some were spiritual. Now again, I've said this a hundred times and I'm gonna say it for a hundred and first. I'm not against the medical profession. I'm grateful for those of you who practice it because you help me keep going a whole lot. But here's one thing that I think I just need to throw out there, one of the things that we might want to entertain is that when we are not doing well, it's not necessarily always physical. Would we be willing to at least go before the Lord and say in a non-physical manner, because here's the deal, if it's a spiritual infirmity, appealing will fix it. See sometimes you need an antibiotic and sometimes you need a prayer meeting and Jesus demonstrated that for us.

He heals Peter's mother-in-law and then in verse 18 he says he gave commandment to depart to the other side. Now we're gonna focus next week a whole lot of what happened

on their journey to the other side They're going from the peace of Capernaum with Peter's mother-in-law who is sick of a fever, they're gonna make their way to the Gadarenes across the way where a man's gonna meet Jesus who has a legion of demons within him. They're gonna go from the serene to the chaotic literally overnight. But I want to address some things about this command because you and I know this ain't gonna be a smooth journey. You and I know that they're getting in the boat expecting just to make their way across the sea. Everything's gonna be good. We're gonna keep hanging out with Jesus. This is gonna be good. But what we know is this, there's about to be a storm. There's about to be an issue such that the disciples will make this statement, "Master, do you not care that we perish?" These were professional fishermen. These were men who had spent countless nights on these waters and they got scared. In other words, let me put in our terminology today. I don't understand why people would do it, but God wires everybody different. Have you seen these storm chasers, these tornado hunters? Okay, you know it's bad when they start running, right? In other words, when they take cover, it's really bad. That's the scene.

But they thought everything's gonna be smooth. Here's what I want you to hear when we talk about the "who": Jesus knew when he commanded them to get in that boat, he told them, "Get in the boat, we're going," he knew the storm was coming. That's important for you and I to hear because a lot of times we walk through storms, right, they catch us off guard. We have issues that come up. We have scenarios that we never expected, never dreamed of. And though it may not give us comfort in the moment, every single storm that arises in our life, the Lord knew it was coming. Jesus put them in a boat knowing the storm would come and most likely how they would respond.

What about the "how"? Jesus didn't give them the specifics. One of the most difficult things about a storm in life is that rarely if ever we're given the reason why while we're going through it. I don't know about you, but typically when I walk through a difficulty, whatever it may be, when my own life or somebody else's life, usually it's weeks, months, even years down the road, you look back and go, "Oh, now I understand why that was happening. Now I get why the Lord utilized whatever it may be." 1 Peter chapter 1, there's a passage of scripture that has come very near and dear to my heart. Beginning in verse 5, it talks about that there are times in our life where we have seasons of struggle that they manifest in our life. Here's the key, it calls them seasons. Now, I know I'm a sports guy and not everybody's in the sports world, but you at least understand that in any sport that one plays, there are seasons. In other words, there are times of active participation and there are times of non-active participation. This gives me great comfort because basically what the Bible says is this, if you're in a storm of life, it is not always going to be. There will be at some point that the wind and the waves will calm down.

Here's another thing it says there in 1 Peter 1. It says that we walk through these seasons of difficulty if need be. Now I say this a lot of times, I don't think you actually believe me. There are passages in the Bible that I don't like. I don't like that it says I need difficulty in my life. I don't like it. Just like an athlete doesn't like when a coach makes them run or makes them lift weights or makes them do whatever, they don't like it, but that's the only way they get stronger, that's the only way they get tougher and that's the

only way they can run faster. Why do we need the "storms" in our life? Because these disciples, they had never met a man like that demoniac. Oh, they had seen Jesus heal a leper. They had seen a centurion's servant healed from a distance. But they're about to meet chaos embodied. It was seasonal, and it was necessary. If Jesus can calm the storm, then surely he can take care of this demoniac that they had not even been in his presence yet.

But at the end of that passage in 1 Peter, what does it say? It makes the statement that by walking through these times, it makes us appear more like Jesus. In other words, it grows us. We trust the Lord to walk through these things so that we conform more to his image in our life. Again, what does it, the storms of life do? It tests our faith. Now I use that word test in quotation. Some of you have a background in education. I tease with people all the time. I've had four beautiful years that I have not lived with a teacher. Four beautiful years, that's it. Those four years that I was in college, my roommates were not education majors, but up until that point and after that point, I've always had a teacher in my home. And one thing I've learned about, well several things, number one, y'all got the look. Y'all know what I'm talking about, right? That little girl tonight gave me a... That's a teacher in the making. I was like, I've seen that before. But think about what a teacher does, an educator. They give tests, right? Now, you may not believe this, but it's actually true, a teacher doesn't give a test so they figure out what they know. It's to show you what you either do or you don't know. When the difficulties of life, when the storms of life come up, you need to understand something. It's not because Jesus is punishing you. It's not because he's necessarily angry at you. But you know what it is? That there is a greater challenge on the other side and you've got to rise to this occasion to be able to handle that occasion.

And so he was testing them when they went out to the storm. He knew that it was going to be rough. And then this passage in verse 19, it ends with a section that's somewhat ambiguous. It's difficult and I want to kind of clarify it because we don't have a problem with Peter and his mother-in-law, even though it goes against a lot of "church tradition" with the relationship there. We don't have a whole lot of trouble with Jesus putting them in a boat that he knew a storm was coming up because we knew Jesus was going to take care of them. But in verse 19, there's an individual who shows up. He says, "All right, Jesus, I'm gonna go wherever you tell me to go." Notice what Jesus says in verse 20, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Another of the disciples said to him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, follow me, let the dead bury the dead." Who is having this conversation with Jesus? It's ambiguous. We don't know.

Now if we start looking at the "disciples of Jesus," I'm gonna start in the innermost circle and I'm gonna work our way out. I like to call them the big three. The Apostle Paul called them the pillars, Peter, James, and John. Peter, James, and John were those three. They were at the Mount of Transfiguration. They're at the Garden of Gethsemane. They're at that inmost sphere of Jesus' influence. Then we have what we call the Twelve, the famous apostles. We know who those individuals are. You go outside of that, there is a group that's just simply called the 70. That's all we know them as. They are sent out to do

ministry and missions and such. We're not given their names. We're not given any identifiers. We're just told there's a group of 70. Then I would say we could even go beyond that and say there's a group of 120 because in the book of Acts chapter 1, it says that waiting for that Pentecost event, there were 120 plus the women in the upper room. I think we can even go beyond that because in 1 Corinthians 15 it says Jesus appeared unto roughly 500 individuals after his resurrection. And if you read the accounts of Jesus' resurrection, hear me clearly, he didn't just walk down Main Street and say, "Hey, hey, I'm back." He specifically went to the two men on the road to Emmaus. He specifically appeared to the twelve in the upper room. He specifically went to certain individuals and according to the Bible, there were over 500 of them. And then of course we could go broader than that and just say the masses that followed and listened.

It says that one of the disciples came unto him. We know it's not one of the 12. Could it have been one of the 70? Could have. Could it have been one of the 120? We don't know who, but what we know is this, there is somebody who's been listening to Jesus, there is somebody who was possibly at the Sermon on the Mount, there is somebody that was possibly there when he overturned the tables, maybe they were at the wedding when he turned water to wine. We don't know the specifics. What we know is this, this person, whoever they were, said, "Jesus, I'm going to go wherever you go. No questions asked." Notice Jesus' response, "The foxes have holes. The birds have nests. But man, don't expect to have anything but a rock for your pillow." You notice at the end of verse 20 how this man responds? He doesn't. It goes on to another disciple. And that's important to our study because basically, can you imagine if Jesus said, "Well, jump in the boat, in about six hours, you're gonna be puking your guts out and wishing you'd never come." What does he say? He said, "Here's the deal. If you expect this to be an easy ride, don't even get on board." And we don't hear anything from him. Again, part of the 70, 120, we don't know. We just know he said, "Oh whoa, hey now, I kind of like a soft pillow under my head."

But it's the second guy that shows up that has caused many great, shall we say, discontentment. It says another came and said, "Well, first let me go bury my father." And Jesus said, "Follow me. Let the dead bury the dead." Now let me tell you how you hear that and then I'm going to explain what was actually said. What you hear is, "Hey, last night my dad died. We've got a funeral here in a couple of days. Let me go take care of the funeral and then I'm going to join you." And then Jesus says, "Let the dead bury the dead." In other words, forget attending the funeral, get on the boat. That's not what Jesus said. Can I tell you what Jesus said? It's basically a bridge from this morning in Luke chapter 15. When this man said, "Let me bury my father," here's what he's saying, "My dad is still alive. When he dies, I'm gonna receive enough money that I don't have to worry about working. I don't have to worry about the trials of life. I can be fancy free. I can get on whatever boat you want me to get on. I'll go wherever you want me to go." And Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead."

What is Jesus communicating to you and I? How many times, and we are so guilty of this, how many times have we said, "Jesus, I'm on board. I'll get on the boat, but not until this happens." Now, not that we're putting Jesus to the test. I'll put it in real language. I've



said this about a lot of things that have nothing to do with Jesus. I've said, "You know what? I'll get around to that when the kids are out of the house." Okay? Hey, in our home, I'll be honest with you, we've had boys, we purposefully have furniture in our house that matches dirt. Do you understand that? And what if we said, we're gonna get nice furniture when the kids are out where we can actually sit on and not be nervous that there's an outline of a body when it gets off, right? There's a lot of things in life we do that. When, I got one, how many times have you heard somebody say, "I'm gonna do that when I retire"? Or when this occurs or when that occurs? And we understand that because it makes sense. So let me spin it. How many times have you said, "You know what, Jesus, I'm really interested in doing whatever you tell me to, but I gotta raise my kids first. I gotta get my retirement to a certain level first. I gotta take care of this or I gotta do that." And basically, Jesus said, "Here's the deal, there's a boat right here. I need you to get on it because I'm going somewhere." This guy says, "No, I'll tell you what," basically what he said was, "if you'll come back in about eight to 10 years, I'll be good." And Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead."

I'm gonna close tonight. I don't know where I got this statement but I love it. I don't mean to plagiarize it, but I guess I am. Delayed obedience is disobedience. Jesus gave a very simple command get on the boat. He knew that storm was coming. He knew that it would prepare them for greater things. Two individuals say, "Man, I'm willing to go, but not if it's uncomfortable." The other person said, "I'm not willing to go if it's not on my time frame." How many times have you and I missed the blessings and the provision of God because we want it on our time? "I'm just not there yet. It's just not fitting yet." I'll tell you one of the things I've learned in my life is rarely, if ever, does God ever call us to do something on our time. It's on his. And so maybe today, there's something in your life and you're saying, "You know what? I'm gonna get on board with that, but not until this occurs. Or I'm interested in being a part of that, but not until that takes place." Maybe tonight, as simplistic as it sounds, maybe Jesus is saying, "You know what? In this area, you need to get on the boat. In this area, you need to be on the water. It may not be smooth, it may be rough, but I've got something incredible planned for you. You can't wait eight years. You can't wait eight months. You can't wait eight days. You need to get on the boat."

Let's pray with our heads bowed or eyes closed. Tonight as we talk about the timing of God, I don't know what you're walking through respectively in your individual lives and your family's life but I do know this, that if you're walking through a storm, God knew it was coming and God has a plan to get you through it but you can't get through that storm unless you get on the boat. And so maybe getting on that boat's making a specific decision, maybe getting on that boat is going a certain direction. I don't know what the specifics are, but I know this, that delayed obedience is disobedience. Maybe tonight you're one of those folks saying, "Man, I don't even know where the boat is." Maybe you're that person who said, "You know what? I've never come to that place in my point in my life where I've confessed my sin and asked Jesus to save me." Maybe tonight, your decision isn't about trusting God through the storm, maybe your decision tonight is just trusting in Jesus, period. Whatever the decision, it may be one that you need to come forward and we celebrate and we rejoice and pray together publicly. It may be one that's

just between you and God that you just silently trust him as you walk out the back door in a few moments.

*Lord Jesus, as we come to this time response, God, thank you that in spite of our fickleness, Lord, in spite of our faithlessness, Lord, in spite of just who we are, that you would even call us to get in the boat with you, you'd even call us to ride out the storm with you, so God, today may we trust you as we have been commanded in this passage. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*