

God At Work, Part 3

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[0:00] The kids are with us. It is Labor Day weekend. And happy Labor Day weekend, everybody. Arousing. But it doesn't fail to impress upon me that this Labor Day weekend, we're talking about our labor.

We're talking about work. And so let me give you a brief kind of catch-up on what we've been talking about the last couple weeks. Two weeks ago, we were in Genesis chapter 1.

And we saw God's creation of work. God is the ultimate worker. And what He did in the creation of this world was good after good after good.

This is good. And He gave us the creation mandate to represent Him to do good to others in the world He has created.

And so we are His representatives to do good to others through our work. Genesis chapter 1. And then, last Sunday, we saw how sin corrupts our work.

[1:08] We went from Genesis 2, the garden pristine, perfect, to Genesis 3, the garden as a crime scene. You could kind of wrap around that yellow crime scene tape for Genesis chapter 3.

And in that passage, we were soberly made aware of the corrupting effect of sin in every area of our life, including our work.

And ever since Adam and Eve sinned, we've been born into it. As a result, we have done something deeply, deeply grievous in God's sight.

We have rejected being His representatives in order to represent ourselves in the world. We've rejected a God-centered view of all things for a self-centered view of all things.

So as our own representatives now, we're not looking to do good to others, but we're looking to get goods from others. Instead of giving, we're taking. It's the effect of sin.

[2:19] All of us experience on a day-to-day basis. We feel it, experience it in our very workplaces. But there's something in Genesis 3 that I tried to draw out last week, and it was a promise in verse 15.

In the midst of curse, God promises that there's going to be an offspring of Eve that will come and crush the head of the serpent. He's going to bring about a great reversal, which leads us into what we're talking about this Sunday.

Christ's redemption of our work. God created our work. Sin corrupts our work. Christ redeems our work.

He is the promised offspring of Eve. He crushed the head of the serpent on the cross, and He was raised from the dead. And as a result, under His growing gracious reign, He's reversing sin's effect in us.

And so, we are all separated from God. And so, because of the work Jesus did on the cross, now we are brought back into relationship with God, into His presence.

[3:31] We are all experiencing strain in our relationship with others. But because of what Jesus has done, we can now experience peace with others.

We all experience shame within ourselves. But because of what Jesus has done, having paid for all of our sin, we have been set free from our shame.

And now, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And if that weren't enough, Jesus has begun a work in which we can experience His blessing and His peace with creation through our vocations.

He's doing a work. The offspring of Eve has come. And He's at work in our midst.

He's at work in our work. Speaking of work, some of you, sitting here this morning, you are wilting in your workplaces.

[4:38] You are withering where God has planted you. And so much so that you feel stuck.

That you feel hopeless. It's really difficult to get up and go into work. Because you're just feeling like you're going to get exposed to the summer heat.

In our home, we have a planter on the front steps of our porch. And it's filled with a variety of plants. And those plants are supposed to flower. They're supposed to bring beauty, color, fragrance, and spread.

Now, what you need to know about the front porch of our house is it's southerly exposed. And so, it gets full sun all day long. And this, the poor plants in our planter, they get neglected.

We don't water them. And so, do you know what happens? They wither in the summer heat. They shrivel under the summer sun.

[5:43] Is your workplace like my front porch? Do you feel constant exposure to the heat of work that makes you want to shrivel?

Do you feel like you're wilting where you've been planted? And maybe you've been feeling that way for the last two days. Maybe you've been feeling that way for the last two weeks.

Two months. Two years. Two decades. If you're feeling that way, I'm glad God has planted you in this place today.

You're in the right place because it's time for you to bloom where you've been planted. We'll know more, brother and sister. It's time to bloom because Jesus, the Redeemer, the one who brings peace, He is able to make you bloom where you've been planted.

He's the one. He's the one that makes you thrive in your workplace regardless of the heat. He not only rescues us from sin and shame, He makes us His representatives in our workplaces to do good to others and to make us thrive.

[7:21] Most of us spend about 30, 50 hours a week in a work environment that is essentially, has essentially removed God from its daily operations. And so, at best, our work environments are agnostic.

And at worst, they threaten when you open your mouth for Jesus. So, why I bring this up is you need to realize that your work environment is most likely not neutral.

And neither are you. The sin that has corrupted Adam and Eve has also corrupted your heart. And so, you go into a challenging work environment with challenge in your heart.

Many of us go to work with what Paul Tripp calls God amnesia. It's like Jesus pulls us up to the front door of our workplace and He looks at us like He wants to come in and we're like, no, Jesus, pick me up at 5, see you later.

We walk in and we forget about Him for the rest of the day. And it's not just God amnesia. We go to work with deep shame in our hearts.

[8:39] We go to work with unaddressed drives for success, unchecked desires for accomplishment, unmet cravings to be accepted and when you see people striving for these things, the world seems to cheer on loudly.

You go for that. But your God says, you don't need to live that way. You don't need to be ruled by these things. So each of us, we can go to work saying that we're a follower of Jesus but walk into the front doors and all of a sudden we functionally deny God at our work.

That changes today because I've got good news for you. Jesus is able to cause you to bloom in your work.

To bloom where you've been planted. Anybody in the room want to know how to bloom where God has planted you? Anyone? Me too.

Even pastors can go to work and realize three hours in they haven't thought about God. We're going to turn in our Bibles to Colossians 3 verses 22 through 4 1.

[10:10] And in these verses God shows us how to live for Jesus in our workplaces. How to live out the roles that we've been given. that we've been planted into.

And so for those of you who are in the room who are wilting at work or maybe withering a little bit these words are life to you.

Hear the word of God. Bond servants slaves obey in everything those who are your earthly masters not by way of eye service as people pleasers but with sincerity of heart fearing the Lord.

Whatever you do work heartily as for the Lord and not for men knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ for the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done and there is no partiality.

Masters treat your bond servants justly and fairly knowing that you also have a master in heaven and I'm guessing what you're thinking right now is Mike you had me all charged up to bloom where I'm planted and all of a sudden you read me a passage about slaves and masters.

[11:28] Well God has goodness for us in here. He instructs people who are in subordinate roles how to live for Jesus and then he instructs people who are in positions of authority how to live for Jesus in their workplace.

This is extremely valuable for us to know how to bloom where God has placed us. Here's the point. If you are blood bought you work for Jesus now.

The day that Jesus saved you not only did he say you're mine now you belong to me now he said you work for me now.

You don't work for yourself you don't work for others ultimately you work for Jesus now. And I want to show you that from this text.

There's two sections from this text it's the first four verses Paul God through Paul addresses those in a subordinate role and then in chapter 4 verse 1 he addresses those in a position of authority.

[12:46] He's going to show us how to bloom where we've been planted. But first let me address this issue of slavery.

I just need to say up front slavery slavery did not originate in the garden pristine. Slavery owning another human being is a consequence of sin.

Slavery in a variety of forms has been around for a long time and when you think of slavery and you are an American you probably go immediately to the particularly awful kind of slavery that was institutionalized in our nation in the south in the 17th 18th and 19th centuries.

Image bearers of another race deemed inferior because of their race were given no choice but were forcefully taken from their homes and then impressed into the service of men who bought them.

do you know why slavery is wrong? It fails the love your neighbor test. Would you want that done to you?

[14:06] No. Slavery in the United States is a grievous example of institutionalized sin and let's just be honest the racism that fueled it it's not gone.

Now slavery in the first century Greco-Roman world was a different kind of slavery than the slavery in the United States. Maybe a more mild kind of slavery but it was slavery nonetheless because whenever you limit the rights of another human being there can be gross sinful exploitation.

So don't hear me saying that I think slavery was okay. Paul never says that. But let me explain why Paul here in Colossians and Ephesians and Philemon and Peter in 1 Peter Titus why they don't come out and say we gotta stop slavery.

Remember the book of Colossians was written maybe 30 35 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus and so the church is young. It does not exert huge political influence it does not exert huge economic influence and so the tact that the apostle Paul takes in addressing slavery is not to go political it's to go local household by household person by person bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to bear on individual slaves and individual slave owners.

That's why Philemon was written. So over time what took place is that slavery in the Greco-Roman world was turned inside out by people who've been changed by Christ from the inside out.

[16:20] So now back in Colossians 3 when it comes to slaves and masters he's addressing roles in the context of work. Slaves were in a subordinate work role.

Masters were in a position of authority concerning work. So this morning we're going to take the principles related to work from what Paul writes to slaves in a subordinate role and apply it to all of us who are in a subordinate role.

And what Paul addresses to masters in a position of authority we're going to take it and apply it to those of us who are in a position of authority in our work. If you've been bought by the blood of

Jesus you work for Jesus now.

That's shot through this text. So whatever your role is at work whether it's a subordinate role you're reporting to someone or a position of authority where people are reporting to you whatever you do you must be serving the Lord Christ in it.

You do it for him now. So starting in 22 we read slaves those in a subordinate role obey in everything those who are your earthly masters.

[17:38] There are three commands to slaves obey out of fear of the Lord work heartily as unto the Lord and then serve the Lord Christ all aimed at Jesus.

Obey means to do what you've been told to do and these people are being told to obey their earthly masters in everything. For us that means everything defined in our job descriptions and everything in so far as it doesn't cause us to disobey Jesus.

And you notice who we're to obey those who are your earthly masters. In other words anyone in a position of authority that you report to at work you're to obey them in everything.

That's God's will right there. Do you have somebody at work that you can think of that God is calling you to obey them in everything?

What Paul then does is shows us how to obey them. First how not to obey them. Not by way of eye service as people pleasers.

[19:04] He knows that when our supervisors tells us to do something we'll be tempted to do it just for them for their eyes only.

Furthermore eye service eyes have you ever happened to you? It's never happened to me. Your boss walks in and catches you in the middle of watching the baby shark song challenge on your computer and immediately you click it like he or she didn't see that?

Eye service. That's what that is. You're doing it because you're being watched by your boss. And what Paul says here that's people pleasing.

What we're going to see is when you obey your supervisor or your company just for them you are cutting God out of the equation.

we're not just to obey our earthly supervisors for our earthly supervisor sake. We're to obey them out of the fear of the Lord.

[20:27] What we're not to do and now what we are to do we're to obey with sincerity of heart fearing the Lord.

What does Paul mean by that? Well that word sincerity of sincerity of heart it's a Greek word that carries the sense of singularity focus.

It's more than just sincerely obeying your boss when he or she tells you to do something. It's purposed obedience. And notice the word heart.

The heart biblically speaking is the control center of your life. The mainspring of your being and your doing. So whatever controls your heart controls your life. So if you are obeying just for the eyes of your supervisor you are a people pleaser suffering from God amnesia.

We are to obey those earthly bosses out of an internal drive of fearing of fearing the Lord. Do you see that?

[21:44] Not by way of eye service as people pleasers but with sincerity of heart. Fearing the Lord. The Lord is Jesus.

All throughout Colossians the Lord is a reference to Jesus. Colossians chapter 1 starting in verse 15. It's Jesus who is the Lord of creation. The creator and it's Jesus who is the Lord of redemption. The one who has purchased our salvation. We are to obey out of fear of him. And what it means to be fearful of him is that we take him seriously.

He is our all in all. He controls what we do. Another way to think about it is like this. Let's say you are going to work and you are going to drive by a gas station to fill up.

Not only do you have to fill up your tank and your car. You have to fill up your heart and how you are going to obey your boss that day. You can pull out one of those things that you put in the tank and fill up with people pleasing or you can fill up with fearing Jesus having a glorious view of him.

[22:57] We are not to people please. We are to fear the Lord. Lord. If you are in a subordinate role at work, God is calling you to obey your earthly supervisors not for their own sake but out of an internal commitment of taking Jesus seriously.

That he is your all in all. It changes the way that you work because you are working for Jesus now. in this little passage there is a contrast between earthly masters and the Lord Jesus.

Earthly masters, they are earthly in that they are temporary, limited, and imperfect but Jesus is your forever master, unlimited, and perfect. He is the one that you work for.

There is also a contrast between how you obey whether it is externally motivated from the eyes of your earthly boss or internally motivated out of fear of your Jesus.

And what Paul is saying, serve, work, obey out of the fear of Jesus. Now can I just tell you not to do something tomorrow when you go to work?

[24:10] Don't walk into your boss's office tomorrow and declare something like this. Sir, I'm going to obey you today, not to please you but out of fear of the Lord, have a great day.

That's not what Paul is saying. We obey our masters, earthly masters, out of fear of the Lord. It's a means to an end.

Let your actual obedience to your boss shine like a light in a dark place, a refreshing kingdom presence in a toxic place.

So when it comes to obeying your earthly master, tomorrow when your boss tells you something to do, imagine Jesus behind him.

Imagine Jesus behind her. and when your boss tells you something to do, you're like, you got it, but in your heart you're saying, yes, Jesus, I'm doing it for you.

[25:28] When you take Jesus seriously, in obeying your boss, you're going to find yourself energized by this, by spiritual strength.

You're going to begin to blossom where you've been planted because you're living for Jesus. and you're representing him in doing good to your boss.

Obey, work. Verse 23, bond servants, whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men.

Whatever your boss tells you to do, verse 22, that, verse 23, you're to work with everything you got. Work in the original language of Greek means work.

It means labor, output, effort, applying yourself to what your boss has told you to do, even if you don't like it. Whatever you do.

[26:41] It's kind of a side. Has anybody seen the show Dirty Jobs with Mike Rowe? Oh, it's one of my favorites. If you are feeling overwhelmed by your work and like this work stinks, just watch a couple episodes of that and you'll realize you got it pretty good.

but that's not going to help you blossom where you've planted. What God is calling us to is to give ourselves to the work our bosses tell us to do.

And it's going to be marked by pain and strain. There might be some hurts, it's going to be hard, there's going to be thorns and thistles that need to be dealt with, your obedient work to your boss will cost you pain and strain, it's not going to come easy because we're living under the curse still.

And you might be grumbling in your heart thinking, you get a task tomorrow and you're like, they don't pay me enough to do this. And you may be right, but ultimately you're not in it for the money, you're in it for Jesus, to represent him.

That doesn't mean you stay unnecessarily, but that means you do give yourself for him. In verse 24, he gives a reason, work heartily knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

[28:18] God goes on to tell us why we're to work from the heart for the Lord and not men. We got a bonus coming. When you work for the Lord now, you're not in it for an earthly bonus, you do your work in light of an eternal bonus, your inheritance.

And what we're talking about now, this reward, this bonus, it's not something that Jesus has promised to give you a month out, a month bonus, or an end of the year bonus.

We're not talking about the 25 year wrist watch or little plaque for faithful service. Jesus is the one who gives this reward. Do you see that?

Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. Think about it this way.

Do you think that the risen Christ, when he returns in glory, to establish his reign on earth and it's come time to hand out rewards, do you think that he's going to hand out trinkets that you can lose in

drawers?

No! He's going to give great reward. We work now to the Lord and we have the assurance that we will receive on that day a reward from the Lord.

[29:45] He's aiming us at the end of time. That's when we're rewarded. And you know what he's doing? It rescues us from being ruled by money.

Do you know what will help you endure the hardship of your work in light of this verse? Read up on your eternal inheritance. Maybe the best thing you can do.

If you're wilting at work, maybe the best thing that you can do is open your Bible up to Revelation 21 and 22 and remember what God has planned for you.

In those two chapters, we're given a glimpse of the most glorious city that will ever exist on the face of the planet, whether the planet is in its old state now under the curse or when it's made anew when Jesus comes back.

And the most glorious aspect of this city, the new Jerusalem, is of course that Jesus himself is there. You're going to see him face to face.

[30:52] You're going to stand in his very presence. You're going to hear his audible voice. You're going to feel his embrace. We're not working for mere men, for earthly bonuses.

We are working now as to the Lord, knowing he will give us a reward for our faithfulness to him on that day, and there's no bonus that compares to that. And when you own that, and you're living that way day by day, guess what happens?

You begin to blossom in your workplace. You're not undone by bonuses or non-bonuses. And despite what people say, to be heavenly minded is to be earthly good, imagine two men six feet in the ground digging a hole to lay a coffin.

They work for a cemetery, and their backhoe is broken. So their boss, Jerry, rudely tells them that they need to get this hole dug before 10 a.m. or else threat.

It's going to be back breaking work, and they're digging in the hole together. one of the men digging is bitter and angry and only puts us back into it when boss Jerry comes around, and when boss Jerry isn't there, he complains, they can't pay me enough to be doing this.

[32:25] We can see who he's living for. But the other man in the hole, who was soundly converted to Christ in prison four years earlier, he's thinking to himself, while he's in that hole, Jesus, I'm in this hole for you.

Thank you for the work, despite the pain and the strain. And then his mind goes to his boss Jerry, and instead of being bitter towards him, he prays for him. Oh God, Jerry seems to be having a hard day.

God, would you bless him? Would you help me to be a blessing to him? Would you use me, even in a subordinate role, to bless my boss? And if that weren't enough, as this brother is digging, praying, this thought dawns on him while he's digging this grave.

There are no graves in the new Jerusalem. There are no graves in the new earth. There are no grave diggers there, because there's no death there.

And all of a sudden, you see a brother in a hole with his mind set on his eternal reward. Being a blessing, blossoming where he's planted six feet in a hole.

[33:48] As he's thinking these thoughts, he laughs. His bitter co-worker says, what's so funny? The Christian replies, I don't know, I could have had so much joy digging a grave.

And you know what that bitter worker would ask? How can you be joyful in a thing like this? I work for Jesus. If you are blood-bought, you work for Jesus now.

And you work for Jesus, mindful of the reward waiting for you. Serve. serve. At the end of verse 24, we read, you are serving the Lord Christ.

This is, in the English, it's kind of weak. It's a really strong statement. Literally, word for word, from the Greek, it would read, the Lord Christ you must be serving.

It's emphatic. It's about Jesus. And you must be serving him. Think about this command to serve Christ with your work.

[35:05] Think about it as a summary command, which the apostle is making sure that Christians are prioritizing right their masters.

the Lord Christ, you say, serve. Here's the point. All the work we do for our earthly masters is to be done for our ultimate master, Christ Jesus.

Paul is saying that all work done is to be done in service to him. What's interesting to note is what Paul doesn't do.

He doesn't disconnect secular work from sacred work. He doesn't disconnect saying, yeah, you serve your masters, earthly masters over here, and then when you come to church, you can serve Jesus over here.

He doesn't disconnect them. He integrates them. Work done for earthly masters is to be done as service to Christ, and it's a lifeline for us all in our workplaces.

[36:17] All the work we do for our earthly bosses is to be done as service to Jesus. Our culture has driven a wedge between the secular and the sacred.

There's secular work and there is sacred work, but the implication here is that all work for Christians is sacred because it's done unto Jesus. One can make the mistake of thinking that a guy like me serving as a pastor, my work is sacred work, and that the work of a garbage collector or an investment banker or a teacher or an air plane pilot, they're secular work.

work. But that's not true because Jesus is our Lord and all of our Lord. We get to value all types of work because all types of work get to serve Jesus now.

It's all sacred. All our work is sacred. Now, you could say this, that the work that you do, data entry, cleaning rooms, analyzing data, listen to heartbeats, you could say that all the work that you do now is an offering of worship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we just don't do our work unto Christ. We do our work as a representative of Christ. to do good to others.

[37:57] Verse 25 is a really interesting verse. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. The same Jesus who will reward those who do their work for him, the first part of 24, Jesus will impartially pay back those who do the work of a wrongdoer.

It's a warning. If you're in the room and you're doing your work and you're doing it as a wrongdoer, you're looking to not bless people, but to take advantage of people, you're exploiting people, you're exploiting your work, you've got to hear this.

The Lord Jesus himself is going to hold you accountable. You've got the ultimate job review at the end of time. But there's also a promise.

If you've been bought by the blood of Jesus, he's redeemed you from sin's corruption. He's restored you as his image bearer to do good to others, and if that's true of you, you need not fear this warning, but take heart because the Lord sees.

If you're in a context right now where you are being wronged by another worker or your supervisor, take heart. Jesus sees and he will pay them back impartially on the day he rewards you.

[39:22] In this section to subordinate workers, we see that we need to obey our earthly masters out of fear of the Lord, to work hard for our earthly masters as to the Lord, and we are to serve Jesus with our work.

It's all about Jesus. It changes the way that you work. When you were bought by the blood of Jesus, he called you to work for him.

As for masters in chapter 4, verse 1, those in positions of authority, what Paul is referring to here is if you have people reporting to you, people you need to be managing, whether that's one person or a thousand people, whether that's paid or volunteer, you need to know that God is very interested in how you conduct yourself with those people.

You have an opportunity to represent Christ to them and to do good to them. If you're in a position of authority, chances are you are in a subordinate role too, that you yourself are reporting to someone else.

And Paul plays on that here. Those in authority are commanded to treat their subordinates with justly and fairly.

[40:52] Do you see that in verse 1? Justly and fairly. Justly means to do what's right. You are to do right to those who you have responsibility for at work. You are to do them right.

You are to treat them with respect and dignity. Don't use your position to wrong them. Use your position to bless them, to right them. Know their names.

Know their situations. Know their strengths and weaknesses. Don't jump to conclusions if something goes sideways. But treat everybody with respect and dignity. And if you're wondering, hey, can you just help me out?

How do I treat somebody rightly? It's the golden rule. How would you want to be treated? Fairly means to be treated with equity.

Fair pay for their work. Fair expectations for the performance. Fair preparedness to get them ready to do what they've called to do and fair treatment of them as another person.

[42:00] If you're in a position of authority, you are not more valuable than they are because you have a different position or you have a greater pay. You are equal in God's sight as image bearers.

So treat them fairly. If you're in a position of authority, can I encourage you to begin to pray for those who report to you?

Pray for them by name. I've got a friend. He's a manager. And when someone who is working for him is out of sorts, do you know what he does? He calls them into his office and he prays for them. He hasn't been turned down yet. He treats people fairly, kindly, with dignity. He loves them. And look how Paul motivates this.

Knowing that you also have a master in heaven. What a sober reminder. The master language is purposeful. Paul is implying that though someone may be an earthly master, if they are blood bought, they are a slave to the Lord Jesus.

[43:09] They have a master. They must serve the Lord Christ in their position out of a subordination to Jesus. That's who you are.

If you treat people the way that you're being called to treat people here with justice and fairness and dignity and kindness, you're going to bloom where you're planted and you're going to stand out. Managing people is hard. So instead of coping with the stress of managing people by drinking in a way or by entertaining in a way or by sleeping around or trying to get as much stuff as you can, climb the ladder, try to just cope with the hardness of it, you get to love Jesus through it.

It's for his sake. You represent him by doing good to those under your authority. Your work is holy work because it's done unto Christ and he will cause you to bloom where you're planted.

So whether you were working as a subordinate or working in a position of authority, Christ redeemed you with his blood to work for him. If you're a blood bought, you work for Jesus now.

[44:39] Now, we were created in God's image to represent him by doing good to others through our work, but sin has corrupted that good gift and we rejected being an image bearer of God to represent ourselves and not too good to people.

But Jesus has come, the offspring of Eve, and through his death and resurrection, he's vanquished the serpent of old. And so now we represent him in our workplaces.

We do good to others and he will cause us to blossom where we've planted. And so when Jesus said from the cross, it is finished.

It was his good work to free you to work for him. Let me encourage you with three things.

First, before you go to work tomorrow, set your sights on Jesus. Remember, he is more valuable than anything at work.

[45:40] Value him above all else. Second, commit to memory. Verses like Colossians 3.24. Just the words, you are serving the Lord Christ and personalize it.

You go to work tomorrow and you go in with Jesus saying, I'm serving the Lord Jesus today. I'm serving the Lord Jesus today. Halfway through the day, I'm serving the Lord Jesus today.

Jesus, I'm serving you. Doing this all for you, for your sake. And then finally, pray. Pray for those you report to.

Pray for those who report to you. See them through God's eyes as image bearers needing redemption. When Jesus is your all in all, he will cause you to blossom in the very place where he's planted you.

And that's good news for those who are wilting. Let's pray. God, thank you so much for your word. I pray that you would use your word now and stir our minds and hearts that, Lord Jesus, we would

serve you tomorrow and Tuesday and Wednesday in whatever place of work you place us.
[47:01] Ultimately, Lord Jesus, it's your fame and glory that we want. In
Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
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Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.