

Grace and the Humble Truth of Salvation

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[0:00] I want you to turn your Bibles this morning to John chapter 6, and we are going to pick up! Actually in verse 35 to set the frame and the context of the passage that by God's grace! and the power of the Holy Spirit I will preach to you.

I want you to follow with me as I read the first several verses so that your eyes are fixed on the text that we're going to study together. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. I'm going to pray, you're going to pray, and we're going to plead with God that He will do a work that we can attribute to no one but the Holy Spirit. Amen? Holy Father, this morning we are together because of Your grace, and we are here as people that are desperate in our own flesh, absolutely unable to handle the glory and the supremacy of Christ, and thankful for the fact that we who know You may rely upon the Holy Spirit that You have given to us.

It is my desire, and it is the desire of every informed believer this morning that Jesus Christ be lifted up.

[2:01] That those who are here that do not know Christ may be convicted of the hopelessness and the misery of their sin, and that they might find complete forgiveness and salvation in Jesus.

And that those who are here who know Jesus might have a heart that is encouraged and strengthened by understanding who He is more, and comprehending to a greater depth the love that He has for us.

That as we leave this place, we might go out into a broken world as ambassadors. As people who understand that our life, passion, and purpose is to lift up the glory of Christ that other people might find Him and know Him as God and Savior.

And so, Father, we ask that the way we attend to the Word, the way I preach, the way we pray together, might be reflective of our confidence in the things that You have written in this book.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, it goes without saying that there's probably seldomly a week that does not go by without me at one point or another in the office saying, this is a really good text.

[3:35] It happens to the point that it's almost redundant, and it's just the way it is. I mean, I get wrapped up in a passage, and I'm an emotional person.

And sometimes I get cooked in the office, and studying is like, I can't wait till Sunday. It's really hard. And then we get together, and I listen to you sing, and it's like, wow, I like it.

I do. I like it. And I am so thankful. How many of you notice that every now and then I turn around and look at you guys? Do you notice that? I am not counting. My dear father, he's in heaven now, he used to ask me every week, not every week, but often.

He'd say, so how many were there? I said, I don't know. So how did it go? He says, I'm not sure. And I say, well, no, come on, give me some idea. I said, I'm hoping they have me back next week. That was a standard.

And it's like he never learned. He did the same thing again. How many were there? I don't know. How did it go? I'm not sure. You know, so anyway, one of the things I could tell you is that it's a privilege to preach the word, and I trust this morning that your heart gets a hold of this passage.

[4:52] It's a tough one. Can I tell you that ahead of time? It's a tough one. In relationship to this, I want to remind you, put your finger in John and go back to Deuteronomy 29.29.

Go back to Deuteronomy 29.29. Look at the text, right? And the reason I want you to do this is because when we deal with some of the more challenging passages in Scripture, it helps us to remember that these things are really not a surprise to God.

And while they're a little complex and challenging for us, it's okay. Deuteronomy 29.29, the secret things belong to the Lord our God.

I bump into people periodically saying, well, when I get to heaven, I'm going to ask God. You know, I imagine when I get to heaven, I just go, whoa! It's just overwhelmed.

It's like, where's my list of questions? I'm not thinking about that. It's like, boom! I'm there. The secret things belong to the Lord our God.

[6:04] But the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. I've got to tell you up front that what we are looking at here and in the remainder of John chapter 6 are the unfolding ministry of Christ in a more and more public setting that is going to lead ultimately to His rejection.

The way in which John 6 closes off. Remember, after He preached the conclusion to His sermon, most everyone left except for His twelve, the disciples.

And He looks at them and says, hey guys, are you leaving too? And Peter comes through this time. He says, where are we going? You're the one who has the words of life. You're it. Most everybody else left.

And so we're kind of in the early stage of watching this unfold. And remember that already in John 6, we find that Jesus had fed a throng of about 20,000 people.

And everybody who had witnessed that understood that something spectacular, something supernatural had happened. On the heels of that, in a much smaller setting, He had displayed His deity and His supremacy in that in the midst of a storm that He actually sent His disciples into, He had come and He had delivered them from that.

[7:39] Now, you would think that in the face of what had happened there in the early part of John 6, that the people would have been just absolutely persuaded that Jesus was the answer to their spiritual needs and the deep issues of their heart.

In fact, if you look just back a little bit, you'll remember that after the feeding of the throng, they had come and they wanted to make Him their king.

Do you know why? It wasn't because they understood the darkness of their heart and the despair of their spiritual condition. They were just interested in something on a very superficial basis.

Yesterday morning, I was walking along... Is it Scioto River? Is that where we were? Scioto River. Man, they're doing a lot of work downtown. And I'm walking along Scioto River and I stopped and was talking with a particular individual.

And towards the end of the conversation, I said, So how can I pray for you? This individual was an upgrade from a couple weeks ago where the person said with words. And the individual said, Well, why don't you pray for health and prosperity?

[8:56] Well, that's like saying sick them to a dog. So I did. I said, you know, I prayed. By the way, I think I did miss the health and prosperity part and think about it. But I did get to the main story.

Do you know who that is? That's Jesus. The only one who can make a real difference in anybody's life is Jesus. And the people were pretty pleased that Jesus had fed them.

They wanted to kind of move it along and make Him king and see that He kept on pulling off these all wonderful things. And so we find here in John chapter 6 as we move our way through that Jesus, earlier, He explains the issue of bread of life.

And He says, I am the bread of life. Now, that's a pretty open statement about His deity and His ability to solve the deepest needs of mankind.

But you know what? They didn't buy it. They didn't get it. And so as we look at this passage this morning, we're going to find several very significant spiritual truths that I want you to kind of hold in tension.

[10:05] Do you know what I mean by tension? I'm going to use a big fancy word probably. If I use fancy words beyond this one, I want a deduct on my box.

You know, it's like, you said this. The word is antinomy. Will you write that down? Anti-nomy. And what it means is opposing laws. What we're going to find in John chapter 6 is the seemingly opposing truths of the absolute sovereignty and glory of God in saving individuals and the absolute responsibility of mankind of responding to the offer of the gospel.

And I want you to know that this passage is one that is profoundly humbling to believers. In fact, when someone says to you, so how did you come to salvation?

Probably what we ought to say is, well, it's really because I'm a good person. I had good genetics. No! I'm a super rat! Thursday, Judith and I were in a situation with a bank, and I was waiting for Judith, and I ended up talking to the lady.

And somehow or another, we got around to talking about marriage and what God had done in our lives and stuff. And I was telling the person what a skunk I was and had been in particular.

[11:32] And later on, I said, you know what? If it weren't for Jesus, I'd be dead. The person said something very interesting. She said, you know what? I think what you have is real.

Yeah, it is. I said, well, why would you say that? She said, well, you're not talking much about yourself. I'm not the hero in my story.

Is that true for you? You're not the hero? You see, as this passage, we're going to come to grips with the reality of the truth that salvation is something that God does.

But He also expects us to be involved in it. And so, as we work our way through this, let's kind of step into the text there in verse 36. And let's deal, first of all, with human unbelief.

Verse 35 makes it clear that Jesus let people know that He was the bread of life. He had already proved His deity, His divine power.

[12:34] He had done a noteworthy miracle, and people had no reason to doubt His person. And yet, we find that when He went forward and revealed Himself and let them know that He was the answer to their deepest needs, their only interest was just like that woman who said, will you pray for health and prosperity?

They just wanted Jesus, like many people do today, just for the outside part. Look at verse 36, and you see that Jesus spotted the attitude that they had.

He says this in verse 30, I said to you, but I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. What was He saying? He was saying that they had received adequate information about who He was and what He was there to do, and yet they were consciously and willingly choosing to deny Him and to reject His offer.

By this point in Christ's public ministry, He had done many notable, undeniable miracles. John does not give us many of those because John's focus is different than the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

But if you were to work your way through a harmony of the Gospels that kind of puts the Gospels together in a chronological fashion, what you would find is that by this time Jesus had cleansed the temple.

[14:08] He had done so announcing His undeniable deity and His unquestioned authority. He had performed many different public miracles.

He had healed innumerable individuals of sicknesses that were undeniable and without question. In every case, when He performed a miracle, it wasn't something that had a long tail on it before it came to fruition.

It was something that was immediate, at the moment, powerful. He'd cast out demons. He'd raise the dead. And in every case, people had marveled at the evidence of His power.

They had no question that this was someone abnormal, exceptional, unusual in strength and ability. And yet, for all the display of power and the throng that willingly followed Him, wanting to be witness to the next spectacular thing that He did, in the midst of all of that, they were unwilling to believe in Him.

[15:12] And you see, the throng was interested in what Jesus could do for them on a very superficial basis. They were not interested in having

Jesus got a hold of the bankrupt and dark hearts that they had and having Jesus solve the most terrible problem that they had, namely, their own sin.

And so let me draw several conclusions for you when you look at that verse 36. I said to you that you have seen Me and don't believe. Understand this.

Unbelief and refusing to come to Christ does not happen because of a lack of information. Unbelief and a refusing to come to Christ does not happen because of a lack of information.

In the case of the people that were standing around Jesus when He preached this sermon in John chapter 6, and I don't know the biological facts of digestion, but it probably was about 24 hours. I'm not sure that all of what they had consumed the day before had already finished off. And here they were. They'd seen the miracle. They'd enjoyed the food.

[16:26] They were probably having a little bit of aftertaste as they thought about, I wonder if He'll do it again. And yet they denied the truth. I want you to understand that they're a little bit like Thomas.

Remember Doubting Thomas? Unless I see the nail prints and I can put my fingers in those holes, I'm not believing. Now, by the way, they had adequate proof.

So I want you to recognize something else in relationship to this truth. Unbelief is a conscious choice to reject God in the light that He has given to us.

Unbelief is a conscious choice. Turn over your Bibles for a moment to Romans chapter 1. We're in John chapter 6. We will come back there. But I want you to pay attention for a minute to what we find in Romans chapter 1.

Romans chapter 1, verse 20 and 21. For His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

[17:40] So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God nor give Him thanks. But they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

That's pretty interesting, isn't it? Because it tells us that men are without excuse and that actually, as you work your way through the remainder of the passage here in Romans, it is undeniably clear that men choose to reject the truth that they have and they shut down the work and convicting power that is in the evidence around them.

I don't want to know the facts. How many of you have ever dealt with an individual when you're in the conversation talking with them about a certain matter? In emotional terms, what they do is they put their fingers in the air and they go, la, la, la, la, la, la.

What are they trying to do? Trying to shut you up. They don't want to hear it. Jesus said, you've heard it, you've seen it, and you choose not to believe. So when we look at verse 36, and we see that these individuals willingly rejected Christ and His offer of salvation, we know what they did, but the question follows, why did they do it?

Why would an individual in the face of the power of Christ willingly turn away from the work of God and choose to walk from the light and to stay in the darkness?

[19:04] I want you to look with me at divine grace that we find there in verse 37. Let me read it to you. All that the Father gives me will come to me. Saving faith is the work of God.

You see, when Jesus explained to these people why they were unbelieving as they remained, He made it clear that despite all that they had seen, that their choice of not believing in Him had something to do with the work of God.

So what we'd have to say in part as we read this passage, those who come are those who are given. Those who come are those who are given.

The ones who come and believe in Jesus are the ones who are given to Jesus by the Father. This truth is profound, and it deserves some careful thought. Behind the coming is the giving.

Everyone, every single person that has ever or will ever come to Christ comes because of the blessed work of the Father in the individual's life in bringing them to conviction.

[20:17] Five children in our family. I'm referring to my brother and sisters. All five of us sat night after night and listened to my father as he held family devotions.

All five of us together heard the stories, remembered hearing of the power of the gospel, and of the five, three of them walk presently with Christ, and two of them are far away from the Lord Jesus. And when I asked myself, well, what is it that made Tim Knoyer respond in that environment, and my brother and sister not respond? I don't have a logical answer.

We all heard the same thing. We all heard the same thing. And so I would have to say that if I were to give an answer for the reason for my salvation, salvation is of the Lord.

It's the work of God that called me. And I got to tell you, God had to chase stubborn, arrogant, selfish, wicked, ungodly, just a miserable skunk named Tim Knoyer all the way across.

[21:29] And as we read in the Scriptures, we find this, that the story of redemption is always and invariably a picture of God at work and in His mercy pursuing people who are hopelessly lost apart from Him.

I love the fact that in the Old Testament, we hear that statement so many times, salvation is of the Lord, salvation is of the Lord, salvation is of the Lord.

In fact, does anybody know what the name Jesus means? How many of you know? Raise your hand. Wave at me. I know what the name Jesus means. Come on. Would you get it up like this so I know the amount of information that is out here in the crowd?

Raise your hand high. Thank you. Way in the back. Extra points. See that he gets a hamburger for lunch, okay? Okay. Do you know what Jesus means? It means Jehovah saves.

Jesus means Jehovah saves. How's that for a name for our Savior, right? Salvation is of the Lord.

[22:34] And so when you look here at Jesus displaying His incredible power that made people chase Him around the lake because they wanted to be around Him, their interest had nothing to do with their spiritual need.

I want you to understand the Bible makes it clear that salvation necessarily is the work of God. It's only the work of God.

And why is that? Let's stop for a moment and think about a couple different passages in relationship to this. Turn to your Bible. You're there in John. We're going to come back to it. But go to Ephesians chapter 2. Why is it that salvation has to be something that God does?

Because several years ago, I had a shoulder that needed a surgical procedure. And after my surgery, I had to go for therapy. Therapy is lots of fun.

Am I right? Who anybody here wants to tell me how much fun therapy is? Hi, Abby. Is therapy fun? Huh? No. Katie, is therapy fun?

[23:40] Hi. No, it's not fun. But in therapy, here's what you do. You go and they smile at you and then they put your arm or your leg or whatever to a position that you didn't think it should go to.

Am I right? And they say to you, and now do this about a thousand times when you're at home. It's kind of a partnering deal. They make you suffer and then send you home with information to suffer more.

That's not how salvation is. Over in Ephesians chapter 2, it says this in verse 1, and we get hammered on this or with this repeatedly in chapter 2.

It says, you were dead in your trespasses and sin. How many of you have ever been around dead people? Raise your hands. Been around dead people. Can you imagine having a conversation with a dead person?

Do you understand lying there does not make everybody happy? Would you please get up and do something about this? You don't have to stay that way. If you just start breathing now, it would be better.

[24:42] You know, I mean, there are lots of things you could say to a dead person. How are they going to respond? Room temperature. That's it. Won't change. Do you know why? Because they're dead.

And when the Bible describes our condition prior to conversion, the Bible makes it undeniably clear that our condition is marked by our spiritual death.

Let's look at another thing in relationship to that. Salvation is necessarily the work of God because, one, we are dead in our sins. In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 8 and 9, it says, for by grace you're saved.

It's something that happens to us, not something we of our own initiative do. Then go back, if you will, to Ephesians chapter 1 and look at verse 4. Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love.

Well, I've got to just step aside for a moment here and go off on a tangent. How many of you know what a tangent is? That's a tangent.

[25:51] I'm moving away from the pulpit because I'm going on a tangent. Here's the tangent. Salvation that is authentic produces transformation in a life that is recognizable.

Everybody heard me say that, right? Now, it's not all that it could be immediately. And I wish that Jesus, in Tim Kenoyer's case, the minute I got saved, had made me just about as close to holy and perfect as conceivable because it's been a long, arduous journey to make slow progress.

Everybody agree with that. How many of you wish you didn't have as much problem with indwelling sin as you have had? Okay. But the point I want to make is that genuine salvation, genuine conversion does produce a walk that is undeniably different from where you were before.

Last week, talking with an individual about the Lord, I'm amazed how many people I bump into that tell me they have been saved but are living scandalous lives.

You know what I mean by scandalous? I mean they're living lives that are deeply marred by the unintended consequences of sin. And one of the things I love telling people is that, hey, let me tell you something about real salvation.

[27:09] Real salvation brings the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the indwelling Holy Spirit is a take-no-prisoners helper to help you change, to be different than who you used to be. And everybody said, amen.

Whew. One. Thank you, Jesus. Okay. Let me say it again because it's an important point. Salvation brings, among other things, a Holy Spirit who's at work in us, helping us be different than we used to be.

And everybody said, amen. That's better. And so people watching you should say to you, how come you're different?

How come you're different? Our neighbor came in Friday afternoon. I'd been working so bad. My batteries died. And so Friday evening, providentially, we're sitting there, and our neighbor come knock on the door and wants to talk to us.

Hindu girl. She wanted to tell us that she is in love with some young man, and, you know, I knew that. Truck had been there several nights in a row, and, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah.

[28:26] You know, I live in the world. And so she says, you know what, I'm hoping we can get married and that we can have a marriage like Judith and you.

I thought, oh. I mean, that's like saying sick him to a dog. Do you understand that? I mean, well, you know what, I'm really a good person.

And Judith is pretty lucky to have me. Here's what I said.

I said, I'm not the hero in my story. I'm not the hero in my story. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love.

Look at verse 11 and 12. In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory.

[29:54] I'll tell you the truth. Friday evening, as Judith and I sat together in our living room and shared what God had done in our life, I shared that I had been an absolutely miserable husband that by my selfish arrogance had so deeply harmed our marriage that Judith had left me for a while.

And only God had put our marriage back together again. And Ruchika looks at me and she says, how can that be? I said, the line, you know, it's like, well, Ruchika, I'm not the hero in our story. Is that true for you? Do people look at the life you are living and recognize that it's different? And are curious.

Are you taking supplements that make you this way? You know, I mean, that's the answer to most everything today. You know, it's a supplement. You know, no, no, it's not. But I've got to tell you who it is.

It's Jesus. It's Jesus. So, John adds to our understanding of this issue of grace. Go back to John chapter 6.

[31:10] We don't want to miss the lesson here. In verse 44 here, John makes it clear. He says, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. Anybody here ever deal with a well and water?

Okay. I grew up in India. We got our water by walking to the well and dropping a bucket down deep down into the well and then pulling it up.

Okay. You had to draw the bucket up. It didn't come up. Water, water, come to the top. You had to pull it up. And here is Jesus.

He's talking to people who understood the process. And he says, no one can come to me unless the Father who calls, the Father who sent me draws him. So, I want you to understand that when we think about what happens in salvation, on the divine part of it, we recognize that God does it. But let's not stop there because Jesus doesn't. And I will raise him up at the last day. Go back to verse 37.

[32:21] And whoever comes to me, I will not cast out. There's another piece that I want to draw attention to. Those who come by grace are kept by grace.

Let me say that slowly because I don't want you to miss it. Those who come by grace are kept by grace. Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

I love that. Draw two thoughts for you here. Jesus won't throw you out. He won't show you the door. Those who are saved can be certain that he who saved them will not lose patience and decide it's time to dismiss you from his family.

In fact, one of the things I will tell you, I have no hesitation saying to believers, and by the way, how many of you know that believers can sin? Can sin horribly.

Can sin for years. And I don't know whether an individual who's sinning is a believer or not, but here's what I do know. If you are a believer and you are involved in sin, the Father who cares for you will not let you get away with it.

[33:40] In fact, I can tell you, in terms of the short run, it is practically easier to be a non-believer engaged in sin than a believer. Why is that?

Non-believers basically do not endure the progressive chastening of the Father who is bent on bringing you to holiness.

The unbeliever is not dealt with the same way that the believer is. And so I want you to recognize that when we are saved by Christ, we are kept by Christ.

And I love that truth because his unfailing love means that there's nothing I can do that is going to make him love me more or nothing I can do that's going to make him love me less.

He loves me. That won't change. One more thing that I want you to recognize in this passage, and I want you to mark it. Salvation is of the Lord, and he's the one who keeps us.

[34:39] But salvation's call is to whosoever and to everyone. I confess the two truths in this text are hard to hold in tension, but they're true, and they're there, and they're for our benefit and for our encouragement.

And I am blessed by the reality that he who came to be the Savior of the world makes such a welcome call to all. Look at the passage with me. Whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

I want you to recognize this morning as you think about the reality of the work of God in salvation that one of the blessings that we have is that in his love he calls us.

He draws us to himself. And yet that is something he is doing all over the world. He is drawing people to himself in every corner of this globe. In fact, I kind of take not pleasure in what's happening in America, but I take pleasure in what is happening all around the world in some of the most difficult of environments.

That's where the gospel and its power is most radically and powerfully displayed. Why is it? Because Christ is drawing people to himself.

[35:49] And whosoever will may come. So I want you to think this morning. Where are you in relationship to the sweetness of the gospel?

Let me give you two different pictures. One is the woman at the well who when Jesus came into her life, she was exposed as a sinner and humbled by her condition. And she came to grips with the fact that only Jesus could be the remedy for the darkness of her heart.

And what did she do? She came to faith. After she came to faith, she scampered into town. And what did she do then? Hey, she was fired up. She was like a person who was selling longer burger baskets, but for heaven.

Do you understand what I'm saying? I hope nobody sells longer burger baskets anymore. I didn't want to use other illustrations. But she was into town. Come see the man. Why? Because her heart was cooked by that.

Is your heart cooked like that? Have you come to grips with the beauty of Christ and what he's done in saving you? And does it make a difference in the life that you live and the passion with which you share the Lord Jesus Christ with other people?

[36:59] Yes or no? Well, earlier this morning as we were in our Sunday school class listening to James McDonald talk about the matter of witnessing, I said to our congregation that the reason people don't witness is first of all because they don't see the power of the cross at work helping them change and grow.

And if you're a child of God, listen to me carefully, you can be confident that the Spirit of God indwells you and he is interested.

In fact, he is invested in helping you be different tomorrow than you were today. And all God's people would say amen in theory. Try it. Amen. Yeah.

He is interested. In fact, he's invested in helping you be different tomorrow than you were today. And when you see the Spirit of God working to help you change, it gives you energy and enthusiasm to go out to other people and say, Hey, you don't have to stay the way you are. Second thing, when we understand how much Christ loves us, given the fact that we're really unlovable, everybody said amen.

[38:20] Amen. Amen. Amen. When we understand how much Christ loves us, that overwhelming fact makes us love him and drives us to talk about him. Jesus looked at that crowd and he says, Hey, let me tell you something. I've showed myself to you and you don't believe all that the Father intends are drawn and it may be this morning in the preaching of the word of God that where you are sitting there is something going on that cannot be explained apart from the drawing of God to bring you to the point of recognizing that the darkness the depression the emptiness of your soul is nothing other than God at work helping you come to grips with the bankruptcy of your spiritual condition and his intention is to draw you to himself and there stands Jesus with his arms wide open and what does he say?

he says come unto me come unto me come unto me and it would be wrong it would be wrong for me to stand at this pulpit and not plead with you in Christ's stead if you're here and you do not know Christ it is my plea this morning that you confess him as your savior and believe on him alone for salvation that's to unbelievers to believers it's this so when was the last time that you were so overwhelmed with the love of Christ that it made a difference in what you said to other people fair question?

so when was the last time that the love of Christ so overwhelmed you that it made a difference in the way you live that unbelievers ask you what was going on and what was different?

I am on temporary assignment here this is not my favorite job my favorite job is coming in the future when I in the presence of Christ will enter joy unending praise and adoration but while I'm here I have a job that's pretty clear and by the way that's your job too let's close in prayer holy father this morning as we think about the passage we understand that Jesus is the center he is the savior of the world he is the only one who can change the wounded and broken heart and bring complete forgiveness and there are those who are here today that need Jesus as their savior and I would plead with you that you would grab a hold of their heart and bring them to the cross and there are believers here this morning that have lost sight of the glory and the power and the joy that they have in Christ and only your spirit can rekindle their affections and Lord we would ask that you do that that in the temporary period we have between here and eternity we who know Christ will be faithful in our high and holy calling we ask this in your precious name amen amen