

"Acceptable Worship" Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

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- [0 : 0 0] Lord, we thank you that you are a God of love. And your love isn't merely a sentimental kind of love,! But a love that desires to see us enter into and walk in fullness.
- And sometimes your love means that you have to expose some of our shortcomings, our sins, our bad habits, the things that hold us back from walking fully and wholly as your children.
- Lord, your love disciplines us. And as we enter into this time of listening and learning this morning, help us to have ears to hear. Those kind of ears that don't just hear your word, but do your word, consider your word, take heart your word.
- And Lord, we pray that by your Spirit's help, that we would walk in this fullness, walk in this obedience. Lord, that you offer to us not an inferior vision of the human life, but the most superior vision.
- We pray all this in Christ's mighty name. Amen. The term virtue signaling was introduced, at least from my research, into Western vocabulary about 10 years ago, during the U.S. elections.
- [1 : 3 0] Things got really intense with social media. People started throwing barbs at one another, and this idea of virtue signaling became a thing. It describes an act of openly showcasing one's awareness of important issues, the important issues, especially political and social ones.
- And we do this by showcasing our moral superiority with whatever issues are the right issues, rather than taking meaningful action.
- So it's no surprise, then, that virtue signaling remains still a very highly political and social practice online.
- And we've observed this in Canada in the last few years. We're condemning historical figures of our past, or overlooking the flaws of past heroes becomes a thing.
- Another example of virtue signaling is wearing a mask, or not wearing a mask. Labeling people as Hitler. Labeling people as Stalin. It's a way that we can show that we are better than others without doing much.
- [2 : 4 2] Without having to get much skin in the game. However, virtue signaling, if it's about 10 years old, it's not just limited to politics and social issues.
- It affects religion. Moreover, it's not a recent phenomenon, but a very ancient one. We refer to such religious virtue signaling, at least in a religious sense, as hypocrisy.
- Something that is too close to home for religiously minded men and women. We hear hypocrisy a lot, and either we've had experiences with hypocritical church leaders, or hypocritical churchgoers, or we ourselves find ourselves in the position of being a hypocrite.
- We know this term all too well, all too personally. We continue on in Ecclesiastes chapter 5. And here the sage has, up till now, spent a good amount of ink reflecting on the human experience.

Examining what it is to live as a human, being a man or woman, as one under the sun, in this mortal life. In chapter 5, he switches a little bit, and he begins writing instructions to us.

[4 : 09] All of which articulate what it means to properly worship the Lord, and to avoid hypocrisy. And in doing so, he helps us to understand that true and godly worship, free of show and pomp, is worshiping God with reverence, integrity, and a sincerity and honesty.

Notice that perfection isn't in that list. I'll read that list again. That we would worship God with reverence, integrity, and a sincerity and honesty.

One of the commentators I spent some time looking at this week, a guy named David Kidner, he's since passed away.

He spoke of this section, Ecclesiastes 5, verses 1-5, as a text written for, the well-meaning person who enjoys a good sing, and cheerfully attends church, but who listens with half an ear, and never quite follows through on what they have promised to do for God.

In other words, the text reveals the outwardly pious person whose inner life remains untouched. Friends, let us listen carefully to God's word this morning, because I have a feeling that it's going to hit kind of close to home.

[5 : 41] We are in the same boat together this morning. Let's dig in. Verse 1 of Ecclesiastes chapter 5. Guard your steps when you go to the house of God.

To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know what they are doing is evil. To understand the depth of verse 1, we need to recall two key stories from the Old Testament that verse 1 draws upon.

The first instance is from Exodus chapter 3. It's a very, very famous scene, but if you're unfamiliar with it or forgotten about it, it is a scene where Moses, he has fled after killing an Egyptian, even though he is one of the princes of Egypt.

He escapes into the desert, and he gets married, and he is tending his father-in-law's flock. And in doing so, he encounters the Lord for the first time as the Lord appears to him in a burning bush.

Exodus chapter 3, verses 5 and 6, it reads like this. Then he said, this is God speaking, Do not come near. Take your sandals off of your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

[7 : 03] Verse 6, And Moses said, or sorry, and then God said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

In this scene, again, a very famous scene, a famous biblical story, Moses cautiously approaches the Lord. He does not approach the Lord as an equal.

In fact, he has no business being in the Lord's presence whatsoever. He rightly removes his sandals, rightly hides his face from the Lord. His posture towards the Lord is a cautious, reverent one.

It's connected to that first part of verse 1. Guard your steps when you go to the house of the Lord. The second scene is from 1 Samuel chapter 15. Not as well known as Exodus 3, but still a fairly well known section in scripture.

The background goes something like this. King Saul, the first king of Israel, he is doing right by the Lord, but doing a lot of wrong by the Lord as well.

[8 : 15] Now, he is told by the prophet Samuel to go to war against the Amalekites. We won't get into the reason why. The Amalekites, by and large, are a rotten people.

You can talk to me afterwards why I'm saying that. In scripture, they are described as being a very evil people. And Samuel says to Saul, the words of the Lord, that he is to put everything to the sword.

Everything. He is to utterly wipe out the Amalekites, even their livestock. The victory is won. Samuel goes to visit Saul. And there's a very famous line, I'm not going to read it, but I will read a section of it shortly, where Samuel says to Saul, what is that bleeding I hear?

Because what he is hearing is the bleeding of sheep. Which is to say that King Saul did not obey the words of the Lord. He did not obey God to put everything to the sword.

And he did not do that because he wanted to keep the spoils for himself. I'll read 1 Samuel chapter 15, starting in verse 21, verse 22 rather, to verse 23.

[9 : 31] And Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is a sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because, Saul, you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.

It is worth a read. It is a heavy, heavy chapter. But the point is, Saul thinks, I don't have to obey the words of the Lord because I'm going to keep some of the spoils for myself, but I'm going to sacrifice to God.

Surely he's going to delight in that. I'm not listening to him all the way, but I'm listening to him enough. And Samuel comes at him very hard for his disobedience.

King Saul believes he only needs to appease God. As if the Lord is just a divine being with an appetite that needs to be satisfied.

[10 : 45] See, Saul here is less concerned with listening to the Lord, obeying the Lord, and more focused on his own glory, his own prize, his own bounty, his own well-being.

God, for King Saul, is an inconvenient reality in his life. So we have two examples that the sage draws upon for verse one.

Both are connected to how one ought to approach God reverently. Moses, his posture is praised. King Saul's rash disobedience is condemned.

And the sage here emphasizes that the Lord values genuine reverence, obedience, loyalty, and love from the heart. That one has a desire and affections towards the Lord rather than a mere ritual or religious experience.

experience. It's not that God disregards sacrifice. Rather, sacrifice should be an expression of gratitude and love.

[11 : 56] A heart directed towards the Lord, that is what he is after. That is essential. In fact, offering sacrifice to the Lord with a heart that is distant from him and that continually fails to listen is considered an evil act.

we see this at the end of verse 1. For they do not know, that is the fool who sacrifices with a heart that is distant from the Lord, for they do not know that they are doing evil.

So what we are seeing here is that a heart that does not come to the Lord with reverence isn't an indifferent act, but an evil one. Again, I'll go back to the beginning.

The Lord is in his kindness and love bringing us through Ecclesiastes not to pound us into dust, but to open up our eyes so that we may see how we have misstepped and by his grace, by his strength, we can turn towards him.

The key to all of this, of course, is to listen. Again, we see this, verse 1. To draw near to listen is better than to offer a sacrifice. To listen and hear in the scriptures always implies obedience.

[13 : 14] James says, do not be hearers of the word only and so deceive yourselves, but be doers of the word. So listening must be active. Taking in the word of God, considering it with reverence and recognizing that life and death truly hang in the balance.

Why? Because the words of God aren't merely advice or a series of best practices, but the very foundation of life itself. The word of God created the cosmos.

The opening verses of the Bible describe God speaking life into existence. He speaks it into existence.

With Jesus on the boat in the Sea of Galilee, the wind and the waves are crashing in. And he merely speaks and the wind and the waves are stilled.

And then finally in the book of Revelation, at the end of the age, we will read that Christ will decisively defeat all of his foes with the word of his mouth. The word of God isn't, again, a nice suggestion or some good advice or even a wonderful proverb verb or a haiku that you need to incorporate into your daily meditation.

[14 : 38] It is life itself. After a difficult teaching that he is the very bread of life, Jesus is abandoned by the crowds that had been following him.

And as he turned to his disciples to see if they too would abandon him, the apostle Peter says this, this is from John chapter 6 and verse 67 and 68, do you want to go away as well?

Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. The point is this, God's words are powerful and ought not to be casually considered or conveniently dismissed because God himself ought not to be treated casually or conveniently dismissed.

Yes, we must approach the Lord with reverence and honor and awe. We must understand that he is big and we are small.

And on one hand, the beauty of the Christian faith is that we can approach the Lord as a father because Christ is our brother. The church is the bride of Christ.

[15 : 53] There's a lot of familial, intimate language used in the Bible to connect us relationally with God. But we must remember that God is the Lord and that Christ is the King and he therefore deserves our reverence and respect.

We're not an every single day, every single morning family, devotions, family. We're trying our best to do it. Do like 15 minutes of Bible reading and prayer. And we have wiggly kids so sometimes they need to, we have this balance board, they need to sit on the balance board or they need to be in a weird position because they're kids, they can't sit still.

But sometimes their posture is very much lackadaisical. They're kind of sprawled out. You can see in their face that they're bored.

And often we'll say, listen, if King Charles was here this morning and he was doing family devotions with us, okay, in his regalia, would you be sprawled out like this?

Like digging breakfast out of your teeth? Or would you sit up straight? And of course they sit up straight because they think, well, if the king was here, I go, well, listen, is God bigger and stronger and greater and more glorious than the king?

[17 : 13] Of course. Just goes to show that, yes, on one hand, the Lord is close. He has made himself close, but let us not embrace this wonderful, beautiful gift and vision of the closeness of God at the expense of his gloriousness, that he truly is the king.

So we must remember that when we come to worship, whether we feel his presence or not, he is here. We should not enter his presence carelessly. Having a reverent posture and attitude towards God is key.

the Lord delights in such reverent worship because it honors him, because he is the transcendent Lord. And in doing so, we will learn to worship with integrity.

And this brings us to our second point, that proper worship is a worship that is integral, that we ought to worship God with integrity.

Look with me at verses 2 and 3. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven, and you are on earth.

[18 : 31] Therefore, let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words. The imperative here is similar to verse 1, but it goes a bit further.

The sage, he is urging us to see that the Lord is transcendent. We are not. He is in heaven. We are on earth. We are under the sun. He certainly is not under the sun.

And we have touched this in past weeks. However, it's worth revisiting this idea of God's transcendence because often we are forgetful people.

So, really briefly, God's transcendence reminds us that he has attributes that we do not possess. So, theologians, they'll look at God's attributes, what makes God God, and some of them we share with him.

We are made in his image, so we have the capacity to love. Not like God, but still, we can love, we can show mercy. Again, not like God, but because we are made in his image, we can extend mercy.

[19 : 39] But there are other attributes that we do not share with God. God. We, unlike God, do not, we change. God does not change.

Nor does he experience passions. He knows everything. He sees everything and is present everywhere. We do not. We certainly do not. He transcends both space and time, and as we discussed a couple of weeks ago, we are certainly bound by time.

And we are limited by our location, by our lot in life. God is different than us. This is what the sage is getting at when he says, God is in heaven, and you are on the earth.

Disregarding God's transcendence means treating him as just another person under the sun, and certainly he is not. In doing so, we engage in a form of atheism.

Again, this isn't the modern kind of atheism that relies on a kind of Darwinian evolution to deny any deity. But a practical atheism that overlooks or dismisses that God is the highest authority and there rejects God's ultimate justice.

[20 : 51] It renders God powerless. Toothless. He has no real authority over our lives because he is not the final judge. In fact, we are in that circumstance.

So, it's not an atheism that denies God's deity, but lessens his deity. Twice in the psalter, the psalmist, he will say that the fool says in his heart, there is no God.

And what he is not again describing is this Darwinian, this proto-Darwinian atheist, but somebody who is a part of God's covenant people, that are part of the people of God, that are treating God as a lesser deity and putting themselves in the ultimate place, the ultimate throne.

In doing so, in denying God's transcendence, we speak and act as if God doesn't truly exist. But whether or not we act or think that God truly doesn't exist, he does.

God is not, again, limited like we are, and therefore he is not limited to whether or not we believe in him or functionally believe in him.

[22 : 17] Therefore, when we go through the motions when we come to church, when we are like what Derek Kidner says, the people that come to church, that love a good sing, but listen with half an ear, such words become empty and foolish and as unreal as the dreams that we have.

Dreams are filled with meaningless events. So too are the words of a fool. The Bible calls this hypocrisy.

Empty words, half a heart, a functional type of atheism. In Matthew 6, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, he gives three examples of how religious hypocrisy shows itself.

When we do charity, when we pray, and when we fast. All these actions become empty displays aimed at gaining the benefit of being a religious person, a moral person, an upright person, without truly committing to God as a transcendent one.

Instead, we end up using the Lord's gifts as tools for our own benefit, rather than serving him with the things that he's given us. I'll give you an example.

[23 : 44] Just this past week, I'm on a group chat with some guys. One of the guys shares a medical situation. Guys are saying, yeah, we'll pray.

And I said, have my prayers 100%. Something like that. It was just a quick text. I did not pray for him. It was like maybe 48 hours, and then I met with some of the guys a couple days after, and I didn't pray.

But I sent the message there because I wanted to be the type of guy who says, hey, I'll pray for you. I care. Hey, I got your back. I'll pray for you.

And what I ended up doing in this situation is using a religious language that should be integral, that should have integrity to it, as a means to just puff out my chest and to show myself as a morally upright person.

Friends, pray for your pastor. Pray for yourselves, because this is something that's very easy to fall into. And I'll just say this. I want to be cautious here, because what I am not saying is that in the pursuit of being authentic and genuine and having a faith that is full of good, godly integrity, what I don't want to suggest is that we don't obey the Lord.

[25 : 13] The Lord commands us to pray for people. So what would be wrong would be for the next situation to come out for me to say, my thoughts are with you, or to maybe even not respond at all, but rather instead to say, I will pray for you, in fact I'm going to pray right now, and then pause whatever I'm doing to pray.

pray. As with verse 1, the point isn't to never make a religious vow to the Lord, or to act religiously, but to do so with honesty and integrity.

Again, verse 1, what does it say? To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools. What God is saying is don't sacrifice. He's not saying, listen, never sacrifice to me.

He is saying, don't bother sacrificing to me if your heart is not there. In the same way, he is saying, listen, make a vow, but don't bother making a vow, taking an oath, if you're going to do so with an empty heart, with a heart that's turned towards everything else except me.

We must resist the tendency to treat God as if he exists only within our heart, as if we can turn on the God switch when we need him, turn it off when we are going about life.

[26 : 47] Instead, we need to embrace the reality that God has always existed and always exists, that he sees all, that he is involved in all. He is the creator and we are his creation and therefore, we conform to him, not the other way around.

Our agenda, our desires, our motivations regarding life and spirituality, it must be subordinate to who God is and what he has ordained. God is not a tool to make us look better.

To worship God with integrity is to worship him on his terms and not ours. And this challenges this idea that was really a very popular thing a generation ago.

where Christians, well-meaning Christians, would say, I don't have a religion, I have a relationship. You cannot have a personalized Christianity. Christianity is very personal, okay, it's very personal, but it cannot be personalized, your own version of it that suits your own needs at times that you feel like you are able to be a religious person.

And the reality is this, you cannot stay true to both your authentic self, which may change every few years, and to the authentic God who was and is and is to come.

[28 : 07] The only way to have an authentic faith, a faith that is full of integrity, is to worship God for who he is, with hearts turned to him, not based on how we feel.

Yet, yet we do not want to worship the Lord as robotic beings. We can't force ourselves to have hearts turned towards him.

We can't shut off our emotions and our feelings. Sometimes we feel crummy. Sometimes we are super distracted with life. We are whole beings called to worship with all that God makes us, and sometimes parts of us are turned away.

Therefore, we must learn and grow in our worship with sincerity and honesty. And this brings us to our last section.

Look with me at verses 4 to 7. When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. That's a third time fools have been used in this short section.

[29 : 12] Pay what you vow. Verse 5. It is better that you should not vow than you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake.

Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity. But God is the one you must fear.

the sage continues to build upon verses 1 and 3 by instructing us to be sincere in and honest in our worship.

Verse 4 to 7 describes a religious person taking a vow to make a sacrifice or to bring an offering at the temple. If only God would grant their prayer or appear in the or so that they may appear religiously upright.

However, when the time comes for them to pay what they have promised or to give what they have guaranteed, they plead ignorance.

[30 : 26] I didn't know that it was going to cost that much. Or they delay payment. Yeah, I will pay, but next week, next month, next year.

The sage is describing a person who takes for granted the mercy of God, presuming that God is available to meet their needs first and foremost. Again, we see a faithless religion.

This is grievous in God's eyes. It is a cause for his judgment, not mercy to be extended. We see this in verse 6. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

There are many instances, especially in the gospels of Jesus taking the religiously pomp, the faithless religious leaders to task on this very thing, on this very issue, that they worship God without sincerity or honesty.

Many different examples. One of the examples I'll give this morning is from Acts chapter 5. And it's a chilling section. And it describes exactly what we are reading about.

[31 : 35] But I'll give a bit of a background. I won't actually read it from Acts chapter 5. It's a short 11, I think it's 11 or 12 verses. It's after Pentecost.

The church is growing by huge amounts of numbers. And the disciples are leading the church with bravery and courage and their spirit filled.

It's an incredible time in the church's history. People are bringing tithes and gifts and offerings to the disciples, to the apostles, and they are distributing them equally.

And then this couple comes. And by the way, the giving of gifts, it's voluntary. People can give what they feel led to in their heart. There is no religious compulsion.

It is an act of thanksgiving. And then this couple comes by. Ananias and Sapphira. We know nothing about them, only that they had a good amount of money.

[32 : 38] And that they sold a portion of their estate and they brought it to the disciples. And they came separately. First, Ananias, he came, he gave the lot of money and he said, this is all of our estate.

And Peter, knowing by the Holy Spirit that they were lying, that he was lying, he gave him a chance and he doubled down and he was struck down dead. The same thing happened to his wife, Sapphira.

It is a very chilling story, especially if we consider that the New Testament is all about grace. Judgment is marbled all throughout the New Testament as well.

But it highlights for us that making public vows and not going through with them, declaring to God and to the people around us that we are so morally upright and that we are religiously astute.

When our hearts are turned away from God, when we are bankrupt inside, it is a very grievous thing to the Lord. It is something that he does not take lightly.

[33 : 54] But making public vows is quite uncommon for us. We certainly make private vows to the Lord. We expect him to deliver if we do the religious thing.

But God's economy isn't a pay-to-play economy. He doesn't promise us health and strength, well-formed children or children, lots of money, a spouse, a job, or anything else if we would only spend 30 minutes in the morning with him in prayer.

If only we would read through our Bibles once a year, straight through. If only we never missed a Sunday. If only we made sure that we gave in the tithing basket at the back of the church.

If only we would do all the religious things. No, instead God, he wants, again, our hearts turned to him so that as we worship, we do so sincerely and honestly, knowing that all good gifts come from him and that a life of devotion to the Lord isn't this inferior life, but actually a superior way to live.

That with sincere and honest hearts, we can come to him and say, listen, Lord, I am trying my best. My heart is divided.

[35 : 19] Please help me. I believe, but help my unbelief. faith. It is a religion that is fueled by faith. See, the faith that the Lord values is an honest and sincere faith.

It is about God's own glory and not our own. And we cannot use this transcendent God and this beautiful faith that he has given us to satisfy our own often selfish desires as men and women who live under the sun.

So the big question is, what happens when we are constantly tripping up? When we are constantly finding ourselves with insincere hearts, with dishonest motives, with hearts that don't really revere God, when we aren't that integral in our faith?

What do we do? do we do? There's this beautiful gift that God has given us. And it's something that we practice every Sunday and it's something that you ought to practice every day, maybe multiple times a day.

It's called repentance. Okay? And God delights in it. He delights in it. As I ask the Lord for forgiveness, for using his things to bolster my own kind of moral superiority this past week, he doesn't say to me, well, too bad, you have slighted me, now my turn to slight you.

[36 : 57] He delights in the repentance. He delights in us turning our gaze back to him. But this is our lot as people living under the sun.

We are constantly bound to live inauthentically in this faith. So the only proper response is the end of verse 7.

Well, read all of verse 7. For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity. But God is the only one, is the one you must fear. But God is the one you must fear.

What we are truly after is not a God confined to this life under the sun, but rather to join him as we transcend this mortal life. The problem is we cannot transcend this mortal life.

Our hearts genuinely desire to be in the presence of God forever, but my goodness, how do we get there? The promise of the church is that it should be the very place where the separation between heaven and earth is at its thinnest.

[38 : 12] For as we gather as God's people, the triune God himself inhabits our praises. And this is an act of his kindness and mercy, where he condescends to us.

We don't ascend to him, for we can't. But he condescends to us, and he inhabits our praises. This is why at communion, every single Sunday I ask, is the Father with us?

And you respond, he is. He is. He is the Son with us. He is. Is the Holy Spirit here? You respond, he is. We are affirming a reality that is just as real as the coffee that you will drink after the service and the hands that you will shake.

And friends, this is an act of God's kindness and goodness towards us who are under the sun, who live a very hypocritical faith.

what an incredible gift, and it's a gift that came at quite the cost. For the price of our entry into the presence of God is the very precious blood that Christ Jesus shed on the pavement where he was scourged, on the cross that he carried, and on the dirt underneath the cross where he hung.

[39 : 28] Nothing less, nothing less grants you access to his presence. not upping your sincerity, although it's very important, not upping your reverence, although it's very important, not trying to live with more integrity, very important.

That doesn't get you entry into God's presence. But the spilled blood of the Lamb is the only thing. You see, the idea that we could use God's gift to benefit ourselves is so foolish on so many levels, because we are trying to get something that we already have, but in such a way that is far exceeding anything that we could somehow get by by manipulating God and his faith that he has given us.

We want belonging. Again, I'll use myself as an example. I wanted belonging to be looked at in a certain way, but God has already given me a place in his presence that I belong to him forever.

We want to seem morally upright, and yet constantly we are riddled with sin, disobedience, and yet, because of Christ and the righteousness he has given us, we are as white as snow in his very presence.

Whatever we try to do here on earth to ascend to heaven, it will utterly fail. He has made a way. Let us not be fools to try to disregard what he has already done and climb some ladder that only goes so high.

[41 : 28] So friends, let us approach the Lord in worship with reverence, integrity, sincerity, and honesty. He deserves our very best because he is worthy of our very best.

In Christ, the triune God has shown his love for us while we were still yet sinners. What does he do? He dies for us, initiating our salvation, descending to us so that we may ascend to him through him.

Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of salvation. And Lord, we confess and ask for your forgiveness for trying to find salvation in our own works, in our own religious strivings.

And in doing so, we make a mockery of what your son has done on the cross of Calvary. And it is not an indifferent thing to you. It is a grievous thing to you.

And it is evil. Lord, we ask for your forgiveness. Lord, help us to be honest about who we are. Help us to have eyes that open. And as it says in verse 1, that we would be people that listen well.

[42 : 39] We can all listen well. We do not need to have a remarkable IQ to listen well. We do not need to come from a fantastic family to listen well. By virtue of us hearing what you would have to say to us this morning, we can listen well if you would but help us.

So Lord, help us to have ears to hear and to be people that don't just hear your word and forget it, but rather be doers of your word. And Lord, help us more than all of that to value and to cherish and to hold up and to esteem the cross of Jesus Christ above all.

We pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen.