

A Life Like No Other

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[0 : 00] So, please take out your Bibles. Turn with me to Luke chapter 1. Luke chapter 1. As I said earlier, this is kind of a different type of sermon.

It's more of an introduction to where we're going to be going over the next several months. But I hope I'm able to communicate clearly what I think the benefits are going to be for you.

Just as believers in Jesus Christ, in my prayer that your faith would be strengthened. One of the biggest questions that all of man needs to face is, what are we to make of Jesus?

Jesus appeared on this earth over 2,000 years ago. And man, ever since that time, has been struggling with that question. What are we to make of Jesus?

What are we supposed to do with Jesus? Who was Jesus? It's interesting. In the early 1940s, as war raged over England, the bombs were dropping mercilessly over England.

[1 : 13] The BBC decided to start a radio program with religious themes. Because one of the things that they noticed is, with the war coming and bombs just being dropped day after day after day, there was this pointlessness to life that arose.

So they asked this Oxford professor, by the name of C.S. Lewis, to come and present, sometimes they were 10 minutes, sometimes they were an hour, addresses on God and what it meant to have a life whose purpose was found in God.

Some of his radio broadcasts or what he shared was saved for us in one of the books that he eventually wrote in the 1950s called Mere Christianity.

Has anybody read Mere Christianity? Yeah, it's a great apologetic book. A lot of people want to give on believers because he asked some interesting questions that every man has to deal with.

So, one of the arguments that he makes, and I want to spend some time with that, when it comes to the person of Jesus Christ, he uses this argument that has been used beforehand, but he kind of gave popular eyes to it, was when it comes to the question of Jesus Christ, there's only three options that we have.

[2 : 39] You must, if you believe that Jesus was a true person, and certainly history demonstrates that, there's one of three types of people that you can accept him as.

Liar, lunatic, or lord. You see, what was really interesting about Jesus, that he made two stunning declarations about himself.

All right? The first claim about himself, we read in Luke 4. So, if you want to turn with me to Luke 4. In this passage, Jesus declared himself to be the long-awaited Messiah.

Now, you have to understand, in all of history, he was not the only one to proclaim himself a Messiah. We've had many people, even during this generation, who've proclaimed themselves to be Messiah.

But he was the long-Jewish Messiah. So, he made this claim, and we read about it here in Luke 4, beginning in verse 16. And he, being Jesus, came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.

[3 : 48] And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

He enrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

So that's the first proclaim that he made, or the declaration, that he is the long-awaited prophetic prophecy of the Messiah. The second claim we're going to read in Matthew 16.

So Matthew 16, verses 13. And this is recorded in several other Gospels, but we're going to use Matthew. And this is in the Gospel of Matthew.

[5 : 05] It's also recorded in Mark. Jesus is hanging about with his disciples. They're actually in the northern part of Israel. And he finally sits down and he says, Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

And they said, Some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. And others, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. And he said to them, But who do you say that I am?

Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

So, who was the Messiah? Was Jesus really God in human flesh?

Well, as Lewis explains, the argument goes, It's either true or untrue. If it's untrue, and Jesus made that proclamation, knowing that it is untrue, he's a liar.

[6 : 27] So, for people who say that Jesus Christ was a good moral teacher, or a good prophet, what kind of good or moral prophet would lie?

So, you're either left with, he's either a liar, or it's true, he's the Christ. The other question is, now what happens if Jesus really believed these things that are true about himself, but he was wrong? Right? So, what do we make about them? Well, Lewis defines that type of person as being a lunatic, on par with a poached egg.

Right? So, how can someone really believe those things that he said, that he was a great moral teacher, he had great ethic, great philosophy, but you still want to follow someone who's a lunatic? What does that tell you? So, here we are left with only one option. If Jesus is not lying, if Jesus is not a lunatic, therefore, Jesus must be true in what he says about himself.

[7 : 39] Now, why is this such an important argument? Because it reveals to us that Jesus can only be who Jesus reveals himself to be.

He's the one who reveals himself. And, if it is true, who Jesus claims to be, the implications of such a truth is staggering to our lives and for the entire world.

But, as we all know, this is a question that has been burning for many years. See, the reality is people have a lot of good things to say about Jesus.

The man. Right? You guys all know, you've talked to your friends. Some of your friends will outwardly say, man, I love Jesus. You know, you can talk about Jesus, his teachings, and all those kind of things.

But, as soon as you bring him up at that he's his savior, or he's God's son, then the conversation kind of takes a quick left. Right? They don't want to get into that type of stuff.

[8 : 49] It's interesting, just in a conversation with someone who is clearly not a Christian, who accepts all religions, loves Jesus. Loves Jesus.

And she will say, completely, without a doubt, I love Jesus. But is that who Jesus claimed to be? Is this the Jesus we read about in the Bible?

You see, the reality is, this is the key question that people, for over 2,000 years, have been trying to answer.

One of the questions is how human was Jesus? And just to give you guys a little bit of understanding of church history, whenever an issue, and especially this was one of the first issues in the Christian faith, so in about 325, so the Christianity had been around for about three centuries, and people were trying to make sense of Jesus Christ.

There was different teachings that were arising that were saying that Jesus, and two of the big arguments was one, Jesus was actually born, and that's when he became God.

[10 : 01] So he never existed forever. So there was really only God and the Holy Spirit at 0 AD, when Jesus was born, the Son of God. This teaching arose that that's when Jesus was born.

So he was a God that was born. Another teaching that the early church struggled with was, is Jesus 50% human and 50% God?

So some people argued physically he was human, but mentally he was divine. So what they did back in those days is they held these councils, and 325 was the Council of Nicaea, and they came together to answer these type of questions.

So the doctrine of the Trinity, which we now have, was kind of certified as all the Christian leaders at that time came together and said, this is what the Bible teaches.

To teach anything else is heresy, and you would be thrown out of the church and not considered a Christian. So that was when we talked about the Trinity. That's when it was rubber-stamped that Jesus wasn't 50% man and 50% God.

[11:10] He was 100% man and 100% God. And it also, they stated, unconditionally, that Jesus was born of eternity past.

Amen? Amen? He's always existed. So there was these times they'd have these early church councils. Why? Because people continued to struggle with this idea of just, who is Jesus? What did he look like? Well, we would think that would have settled it, right? But as we all know, when we just even read what C.S. Lewis wrote, he's actually responding to what had risen to be modern liberalism.

Modern liberalism basically teaches that Jesus, we invite all his moral ethic into our life, but we get out, we push out the God stuff.

Are you guys familiar with Thomas Jefferson? I know we're Canadian, but some of us we know about Americans, right? He was the third president of the U.S. He was one of the founding fathers, and he actually made a Bible.

[12:18] If you didn't know, it's called the Jefferson Bible. And the Bible was created by him going through the Gospels with a sharp blade, and he would literally cut out all the sections that demonstrated that God, that Jesus Christ was God.

Anything that had to do with the supernatural, he would cut it out, and then he would glue the other portions out. So he would cut out and kind of reconstruct. So anything that Jesus said that would have been miraculous, or anything to do with the resurrection was totally gone.

And today it's known as the Jefferson Bible, or I believe it's the philosophy and ethic of Jesus of Nazareth.

So he wanted to follow all this stuff about the humanity of Jesus, but he rejected the divinity of Jesus.

So this series that we're beginning, one of the goals that I have for our time together is I really want us to come to grips with the humanity of Jesus.

[13:32] Now that seems like an obvious question. We all get that Jesus was human. My question is, do you really? And as we jump into this sermon series, I believe I'm going to be challenging some of the stereotypes and ideas you may have of Jesus Christ.

It was interesting. One of the holes that scholars believe that we have in modern day evangelical Christianity is an undervalued doctrine of the humanity of Jesus.

And I'll tell you why. It's because we read those early councils which focuses on the divinity of God. We read all the liberals that talk about how God was, they reject the divinity.

So we kind of overbalance the other way. And it was interesting. I was just sharing with Dave and Dave just gave me this great comment from this one author, Paul Little.

And he makes this quote and I really believe in what he says. He says, of course the church loves and worships Jesus and the studies of the gospels. He says, Jesus is the glowing center of our faith.

[14:46] But in her ongoing quest to plumb the depths of justification, and we just talk about the deeper matters of theology of what Jesus' death made to us, the church has inadvertently become more enamored with what Jesus has done than who he is.

So what's happened is our focus sometimes is on the work of Christ rather than who Jesus was and what happened with him.

And I agree with Paul Little when he says this. We have a woefully underdeveloped sense of who Jesus was as a person and as he actually walked on this earth over 2,000 years ago.

One of the views that I believe many evangelicals have is they believe that Jesus Christ is kind of like Clark Kent. Do you guys know who Clark Kent is? Does anybody not know who Clark Kent is? All right, Andy Wilson, you have some serious educating you need to do with your family, all right? It's Superman's alter ego, right? So what happens is we all know Superman, in order to hide his superpowers, creates this secondary alter ego as this reporter Clark Kent.

[16:05] And some people believe Jesus is like that. He goes around on the earth 2,000 years ago. He kind of has his disguise on. He's human, human, human. Oh, there's something that needs

to be done. I'm going to take off my glasses, put on my cape, and I'm going to rely on my divinity powers to get me out of that.

When no one else is looking, I go back and put on the disguise. That's how, when we sometimes read the Gospels, we kind of quickly get to that understanding.

reading. But what I hope to demonstrate through these series is that Jesus Christ lived under the same human limitations that you and I do.

That when the Bible teaches us that he was fully human, that he truly felt as a man, thought as a man, got hungry as a man, needed sleep as a man.

But he didn't have our fallen nature, of course. But I want us to see that Jesus lived out his life with the same limitations that we have as human beings, but he lived his life in utter dependence of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of his life.

[17:33] And I know some of you guys might be going, I don't know if this is true or not. I don't know what to make of this. But we're going to go through some of the gospel truths and I'm most assuredly, you're going to look at that text and you're going to go, you know you saw the Holy Spirit in there, but you really didn't see it.

It's just amazing. I've just been going through over these texts and we see how that power of the Holy Spirit is so much there in the life of Jesus Christ. There was a reason why Jesus prayed so much.

The obvious implication for us is if we, not being sons of God, not being without sin, and if Jesus Christ had to rely on the Holy Spirit in prayer and communion with his Father, how much more we should be.

That if he depended on the Holy Spirit, how much more. You see, this is the mystery of the word became flesh that we will see developed.

Now, before you denounce me as any sort of heretic for what I just said, I want to remind you that I believe that in no part did Jesus ever give up any part of his deity.

[18:57] I believe what Paul proclaimed in Colossians 2, 9, it says, for in him being Jesus, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. What Paul is saying is that all of Jesus Christ was indeed God.

But we have this tension in the book of Philippians, which says Philippians 2, I'm going to read this passage 5 to 11. He says, have this mind among yourself, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

What we're seeing there is what does it mean to empty himself? Now, this is a debate, and that's the tension that exists.

And I'm here to tell you, at some points, there are certain mysteries in the text that we are never going to completely understand. All right?

We all know this. When people have this tension about Arminism and Calvinism, there's tensions between the two that man will never be able to answer. And we're not meant to answer.

[20:31] They are above us. They are beyond us. And this is another one of those truths, that how is God, Jesus Christ, fully God, at the same time, what does that mean to empty himself?

Now, I believe it's to him to willingly choose he's not going to rely on his divinity, but he's going to rely on the Holy Spirit.

That's what I believe what we're going to see. And I hope to demonstrate through this sermon series that we see this so clearly in some areas. And we will truly come to understand that Jesus Christ is fully human, fully God, and fully dependent on the Holy Spirit.

So that's the first truth I want you to take away from this sermon series, is how wonderful it is to understand the humanity of Jesus Christ. The second point I want you to clearly understand is that Jesus Christ was a man of his time.

What that means is Jesus Christ lived in history. He actually walked on this earth. He walked in a part of this world.

[21:43] And all the implications of what was going on at that time of history mattered. And it's amazing. Next couple of sermons on this series, we're going to talk about what went on to the intertestamental series that explains how perfectly God reordered that world for the perfect time for Jesus Christ to come.

And it's mind-blowing. And we're going to look at the prophecies in Daniel and how he prophesied how it would all come about and everything that the Greek culture played a part in and the Roman culture.

So when we read our Bible, we read these gospels, why we see, why is Jesus talking to Pilate here? Why is he being influenced by Herod over here? Why is he dealing with Samaritans?

These questions are all answered for us in this history. Now, why do I want to understand that he was a man of his time?

Because I want to demonstrate to you how incredible the Bible is as historical narrative and truth. From a point of defending the faith, the gospels measure up in any way with any other historical document when it comes to proving the person of Jesus Christ.

[23 : 14] It's interesting. He just came across a quote this weekend. And I believe it aptly fits this thing. He says, the gospel is not just a theory to apply, but it's a story to believe.

It's not a theory to apply, but it's a story to believe. And all too often, we sometimes think the Bible is just an instruction manual.

I have to read it to get something out of it. That's the do's and the don'ts. And some of you who grew up in a legalist background, you kind of know what I'm talking about. But there is this beauty in the story that happens itself.

And I really want us to understand this. Now, I'm not sure if you pay attention to certain books or documentaries. But if you go on PBS or YouTube and just type up, I want to look at documentaries about Jesus.

You'll read some that say the quest for historical Jesus, the investigating the historical historical Jesus, there's the biography of Jesus, the hidden story of Jesus.

[24 : 26] And for years, secular scholars have been trying to place the story of Jesus together. And what's interesting is they try to ignore the Bible.

Right? And they pull in all these truths. And they tell you on TV or these documentaries, this guy is a world-renowned expert in geography or history or archaeology.

And they're really trying to come to some conclusion of who Jesus was. And more often than not, they always say he was a moral teacher, a bit of a revolutionary, a prophet, a philosopher.

He taught really good things about loving your neighbor. But they always fall short of declaring that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Now, I'm here to tell you the documents and the background we have for the Gospels completely outnumber the documents that they're using.

They're looking at maybe 200 total references. And actually, most of the references about Jesus Christ outside of Scripture at that time were people writing about how Jesus didn't exist.

[25 : 35] Think about that for a second. Why would someone ever write a book about someone that doesn't exist? Right? Unless you're trying to prove that he never existed. But if he didn't exist, why would you bother writing about him?

And that's sadly what some of the things, right? So anyhow, we get these scholars and historians that treat the Bible like it's not some credible historical document.

But throughout this, I want you to see how the Bible is completely trustworthy and is a complete credible source on the events surrounding the life of Jesus.

And we're going to look at history and how it demonstrates that. In fact, the Bible gives us four eyewitnesses to who Jesus Christ is. Our courts only need two to verify.

We've got four and they're unique. And some of the things that people will do is they try to discount some of the Gospels because, well, they have different views on the stories. Well, if you've ever been to court and you have multiple witnesses, they will always tell you that there's different sides of the story.

[26 : 48] And they're seeing this story develop before their eyes in their own point of view. So that is the other point that I want to get across.

So the first point, I want you to come to appreciate the humanity of Jesus Christ, perhaps in ways you've never considered. Number two, I want you to see, and your hope is that you will see the Gospels being more than just an instruction manual or biblical text, but you'll also see it as historical text.

One that can be used in apologetics and defense of the Christian faith. So let's take a look at Luke 1. This is what I base this sermon point after, but what was really interesting is, and we're going to learn, the Gospels were written at different time periods.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not all written at the same time. They were written at different times to different audiences. And we're going to see the implications of that when we go into this study.

But what is interesting about Luke is Luke begins by telling you the type of work that he put in to bring to you the most detailed of all the Gospel accounts.

[28 : 01] He says, Most excellent Theophilus.

The same goal that Luke has for Theophilus is the same goal that I have for you.

To have certainty about what you have been taught. And my third point that I want to give to you this morning is what is the basis of this study.

And the basis of this study will be based on what's called the harmony of the Gospels. And what it is, we're not going to just be using the one Gospel, what we're going to be taking all of the Gospels, and we're going to harmonize them together.

So we're going to be looking at certain teachings and actions of Jesus from multiple points of view. And I really hope that you will appreciate the Gospels and how different they are and how they come together in reconstructing the life of Jesus.

[29 : 35] And our main goal is we're going to try to do it chronologically. We're going to work from different themes. We're going to start with pre-Jesus. That's the intertestinal time. We'll look at the birth of Jesus, childhood of Jesus, the first beginning stages.

We're going to divide it into two sections. One, the first two and a half years of Jesus' ministry. And then the second part will be on the final six months of Jesus' life as he marched to the cross.

Now, it might blow your mind here. The Gospels aren't written in chronological order. Do you guys know that? A lot of people think they are. They're actually not written in chronological order. And some of the authors actually took.

So when we look at Matthew 5 and the Sermon on the Mount, a lot of people believe that that was one big, long sermon that happened. But that was, we believe, just Matthew loading in on the majority of Jesus' teaching in that one time frame.

But scholars believe they happened at different points. We're going to see how that's brought out in the other Gospels. So there's certain things that we kind of think about. We don't ask.

[30 : 45] And let's be honest. There's some questions that you read in the Bible and you kind of scratch your head and you just kind of glaze over it, right?

One of my professors brings up the idea. It's, remember when Mary, his mom, they're at the wedding in Cana and she asks Jesus, you know, hey, we're running out of wine.

Let's create the wine. And then Jesus says, my time has not yet come. But then the next verse says, she instructs the people to have, like, it's kind of this curious story, right?

Like, Jesus just said, my time has not yet come. But Mary kind of, whatever, Jesus, I'm your mom. You're going to do what I tell you, right? I ain't going to make the wine. Something happened in that verse that all of a sudden Jesus' time had come.

And I actually want you to struggle with those kind of things. I want you to struggle with those parts of the text. What really happened? I don't want you just to glaze over it. I want you to think about it.

[31 : 52] So one of the things that I want to do for you is on the website for every sermon, there's going to be readings for you. So if you do your daily devotions, and it's going to be when we read on a section, it's going to be a checkmark of all the sections so you can read it in the order that it's kind of chronological.

And I'm going to ask you questions along the way that I'm hoping to challenge and draw points out for you.

So yes, so that's going to be exactly what we're going to be talking about. And that's what I'm hoping to do for you. So your time here will be greatly blessed, I think, if you do the readings ahead of time.

Do you guys have the bulletin? You want to look in the bulletin there for a second? We're doing an advertisement. Over the next couple of months, we're going to feature some books that are precisely on Jesus Christ.

There's a book that we have right now. We're selling a couple of them. It's called One Perfect Life. We're selling them at cost. That is some of the faculty at Master's Seminary put together a harmony of Jesus Christ.

[33 : 09] So it's a chronological order of all the readings of Jesus. That's actually what I do my devotions in. You're just getting everything from everywhere. So I'd encourage you, if you want to do it that way, there might be some differences in how we harmonize certain things, but we're kind of going on the same direction.

So I'm going to conclude today. It's a short sermon, so you guys can be excited about that. There's a lot here, but I really want you to understand the goals that we're in.

And it's going to be a little bit different of a sermon series than what you're used to. I know a lot of you are used to an expository sermon, one book pulling out, but we're going to be pulling out from multiple books.

And I believe we're going to pull out some really great truths. I'd like to say all these truths began in me that you guys have a really brilliant pastor, but I'm going to tell you right now, it's not true.

I had the pleasure of sitting under probably one of the foremost experts in the life of Jesus Christ. Remember I've told you guys I used to be a college minister when I lived in Pasadena to the kids at Caltech.

[34 : 26] I don't know. I might've waded into the stories, but I served as a college pastor. And my pastor at that time was Doug Bookman. And back then, 15 years ago, he got me hooked. And I've just gotten every book.

He's like a PhD in Old Testament. So he and I still get in touch. So he's working with me on this and just thinks it'd be really blessings to me because I've been going through it.

And we're always talking about some of these issues though. So he said, here, take all my notes, take all the research, take all the books and you can claim it's all yours. And just so you guys know where we wanted to go with this.

Previous to COVID, we were actually planning on taking a trip to Israel. I don't know if many of you guys doing this, but people were just starting to get that ball rolling. Doug is actually going to be the tour leader in Israel for us and take us through that.

So our prayer is after we get through this, when we get through COVID, we're going to be able to get this trip up and going again. So what he does is he is, he has the license to go over and lead trips.

[35 : 31] And he's an incredible mind for absolutely everything that goes on in the life of Jesus. And he is a great way of bringing history into this. So just to conclude, one, I want you to really see the genuine humanity of Jesus Christ.

That when the Bible tells us that he thought as he thought, he wept as we wept, he felt as we felt, he knows absolutely everything what it is to be us.

When we struggle and we're perplexed by life and we don't understand how we work, Jesus does. So when he talks about casting your cares and burdens on me, Jesus knows. And he just doesn't know because he created us.

He knows because he lived us. Two, I want you to see the deeper appreciation for the historical record that we find in the Gospels.

[36 : 37] That it is a defensible faith in every way. And that you will come to see this and not be ashamed to present this as a truth. When I was in university, I took my first philosophy class and it was proof for the existence of God.

And it was so hard because you couldn't use the Bible, right? That was, and I just, all the things that came out and how I used it. But later on when I, when we talk, everybody comes with a different point of view.

And the Bible is just as credible as any other point of view. There is no such thing as neutral. People think you can come with a blank slate. You can't. You always come with presupposing ideas.

So with that, like I said, a deeper appreciation of the apologetic value of the Gospels, and my biggest point that I want to draw out of you is I want to see an enlarging of your faith by the greater knowledge of Jesus Christ.

So, like I said, we're going to have some maps. We're going to have different readings for you. And please pray for me as we put this together because there's a lot of work here, probably more than any.

[37 : 50] It's kind of easier to preach expository. I just have to stay in one text and get everything. But the fact is I'm moving around with these other texts. It's far more challenging. So I would

appreciate that time. So I'd appreciate not only the prayer, but that you'd be exciting for your walk as well.

And just pray about committing to these readings. They're not a lot. You're going to be reading just certain stories all at the same time and giving yourself over to these truths. All right?

All right. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we just, it's a little bit different of a sermon, but I pray that it's a challenge to us, an encouragement to us, and it kind of brings out a hunger in us to know more of you.

Father, if we're going to call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ, how amazing it is that we have these documents that actually told us of a time when you wore sandals on this earth.

And Father, sometimes it's true. We think about the amazing works that by walking here, you live the perfect life so that we can claim your righteousness and faith and have eternal life and know that we're justified and to look at you and to follow you in order to become more holy and sanctified.

[39 : 13] And those are all incredible things, O Father. But let us not forget the you who walked here and the powers of these stories of the Gospels.

They make up the majority of our New Testament, O Father. And of those in the Gospels, half, over half is actually spent on your last six days here on earth.

That's power, powerful. So for those people who are here and do not know you as Lord and Savior, I pray that this sermon would educate them into who you claim to really be.

What you really did. How these different testimonies confirm who you were and what you did on this earth 2,000 years ago.

Father, I just pray for the power of the Holy Spirit in putting this all together in a way that, yes, keeps our interest and keeps it relevant and keeps us understanding these great and glorious truths.

[40 : 23] Father, right now I pray for health for not only us, but our province. Just with the rise of COVID again, we read certain articles that more people are, it's getting more contagious.

We also know that people are getting sick just with colds that seem to be languishing a little bit longer than normal. Father, we know that these things are not a mystery to you, but I pray that we will put all things before you, our will, our attitudes.

May you reign supremely from the thrones of our lives, O Father. So God, I just ask you these things, your most holy and precious name.

Amen.