

The Greatness of God

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[0:00] We extend a very good evening to everybody and thank you for joining in as we gather here at Stord Free Church and we pray that we will know God's blessing as we come under his word.

We're going to begin by reading from Psalm 93, Psalm 93 in St. Psalms, page 1, 2, 3 of the Psalm book. The Lord is King, his throne endures, majestic in his height.

The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength and might. The world is founded firm and sure, removed it cannot be. Your throne is strong and you are God from all eternity.

The seas, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up their voice. The seas have lifted up their waves and made a mighty noise. The Lord enthroned on high is strong, more powerful is he than thunder of the ocean waves or breaker of the sea.

Your royal statutes, Lord, stand firm. Unchanging is your word and holiness adorns your house for endless days, O Lord.

[1:10] The Lord is King, his throne endures. Let us pray. Lord, we give thanks that you, like your throne, endure forever.

We give thanks that you are the Lord of heaven and earth, the God, the exalted King, the ruler, the one who has brought everything into being and the one who will one day bring everything to an end as we know it.

The world will pass away. And everything to do with this world. We give thanks, Lord, that you are in control of all these things.

And that is the amazing thing that you people are not filled with anxiety about the thought of this world coming to an end. We know it will.

And there are so many people today who are filled with anxiety at the thought of what might happen. But we know, although there are things we don't understand, that you will come again.

[2:11] A day is going to come when the Lord Jesus Christ will come again to take his own people home with him. And there will come a day when the very elements will burn with a fervent heat.

But there will be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. And, O Lord, how we look forward to that time. But as we journey through this world where we are now, we give thanks, Lord, for everything that you have done for us and given to us.

In the way that you have displayed your glory, even in the very creation. When I look up unto the heavens, which thine own fingers framed, even to the moon and to the stars which were by thee ordained, your fingerprint is all over this creation.

And we give thanks, Lord, for your handiwork that reveals your power and your wisdom and your glory and your might. And we pray that we might be filled with a sense of awe in your presence.

And realise that we are before the God of creation, the God of providence, the God of salvation, the God of grace. We ask, Lord, that you will be with us.

[3 : 20] And that we will know your presence and that we will know your peace. And that you will guide us and lead us in the way that we should go. Lord, we recognise that life is often challenging and difficult for us.

And so often we do not know the right way to go. We know we have your word and it is a rule to direct us. But often we face decisions and we wonder, do we turn to the left or to the right?

Or do we go straight down? And so we look to you and we pray that every day that you will guide us and instruct us. And you have promised from your word, I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you shall go.

I will guide you with mine eye. And we pray that our lives might be lived under that guidance from the Lord. That your hand will be on the helm of our lives. And that you will be directing us in a way that is God honouring and God glorifying.

Oh, forgive us, Lord, for our own selfishness and self-centredness. And when our stubbornness refuses to bow to your word.

[4 : 21] And where we will do our own thing. Where we go against you. Oh, Lord, forgive us. There is within us a fearful tendency and sympathy towards sin. And we have to confess, like the Apostle said, The good that I would, I do not.

And the evil that I would not. That is what I do. And Lord, so often we find ourselves coming back again and again and again. Lamenting because of our sin and our failure.

But, oh Lord, we give thanks that there is within us, by your Spirit, this sense of sin and sense of unworthiness. And yet knowing where to go with it.

And we pray, Lord, that you will deliver us and free us from the guilt of sin. And we give thanks that in your word we are assured that if we come to rest in you and accept you as our Saviour, then that we are delivered from the punishment and the power and the guilt and the dominion of sin.

Oh, Lord, we pray then that you will bless us and bless our homes and our families and all whom we love. And we pray that you will be with each and every one. Be with those who mourn and those who are going through hard times.

[5 : 32] Those who sorrow over the loss of loved ones. Dry up the tears of their eyes and bind up the broken heart, we pray.

We ask, Lord, for those who are ill, those who are in hospital, those who are undergoing treatment or have done so, or undergoing surgery or have done so and are waiting for it.

Lord, we pray your blessing and your healing power will be upon people. Pray, Lord, for those who are nearing the end of their life. Prepare the dying for death. What an awesome step it is from leaving time into eternity.

We pray, Lord, that you will work in those who are dying. If they have not yet found Christ, that they will. Because it's an awful thing to enter into the great eternity all on one's own.

So we pray that you will watch over each and every one. We give thanks for our young people. We give thanks, Lord, for the virtual Sunday school. We give thanks, Lord, for teachers and how they prepared and for parents helping.

[6 : 36] We give thanks, Lord, for the success of it and for all the gifts and abilities and talents that you've given. We pray, Lord, that you will be with our young people. We ask, Lord, that you will bless teachers as well and all who are seeking to work in the education of our young.

Lord, we pray to bless our nation, particularly at this time of uncertainty as we are going through this pandemic. And again, so often we do not know what is the right thing to do.

We find that our leaders are making decisions this way and that. And they are obviously trying to do the very best for us. But we would ask, Lord, that it might come that they will look to you.

Because we never hear your name being mentioned and asking that their prayer would be made. We don't hear our leadership even asking that the church would pray. O Lord, O God, we pray that you would be merciful to us and that you would heal us.

And give thanks, Lord, for the progress that's been made with the vaccine. And ask, Lord, that this will prove so effective. And that you will enable us to get back to a greater level of normality.

[7 : 51] Although there are aspects of life as it was which weren't good. But we pray, Lord, that the best of life might be restored to us.

And we ask, Lord, for all those who are casualties of this illness. Whether these are casualties through physical illness, those who are struggling with the aftermath of COVID and all the sorrow that has been brought through death.

The exhaustion through NHS staff dealing being stretched to the limit very often in dealing with the illnesses that are there. And those who are financial casualties.

There are so many people that have lost their income, lost their job. There's so much uncertainty. And, O Lord, we pray for every home, every household that doesn't really know what's going to happen.

What a fearful thing. When we go from what looked like security and all of a sudden everything up in the air. Help us, Lord, to look to you. Because you don't change.

[8 : 53] And you knew all this. And you know the outcome. And so we pray that you would bless us. That it might please you to bless us and do us good. And so we pray for our leaders and all in authority over us.

Bless your word throughout this world. And that throughout this day that many will have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Be with us now as we come to your word and take away our sin in Jesus' name.

Amen. Now, a wee word to the young people. I suppose I could ask you this question.

How tall are you? Obviously, I can't hear your answer from here. But I'm sure that all of you have had yourself measured. And that you know roughly how tall you are.

I still do the feet and inches. Probably you're into the meters and centimeters. But my thinking is I always think of a person's height with regard to feet and two inches.

[9 : 56] I remember as a boy when I was growing up, I used to, there were marks on the wall. Because every so often I would say to my mom or dad, oh, go and measure me. And I would go right against the wall like that.

And they would put a ruler just above my head. And then put a mark. And then when they had done that, they would take out this thing which is so important. Should be in every house. And that's a measuring tape.

And the measuring tape has the inches and the feet. And it's got the centimeters and the meter. There we go. That's two feet.

Two feet. Down to three foot. and there you have, then you have your, that's now the first metre, one metre. Now, what I still remember is the day when I reached five feet, when I became five foot tall, which I think is one metre fifty-two or something like that, but I still think of it in feet and inches.

The day I came to five foot, I thought, wow, what a day that is. I felt so, so tall. And I thought, I'm going to be big, because, you know, in primary school, I was actually quite tall.

[11 : 10] You wouldn't believe it now. But I was quite tall. In fact, there's a photo when I was in primary seven in the football team, and I'm standing in the back row, and with the exception of one boy, I'm the tallest boy in the back row.

I didn't stay like that. But it's very interesting that the actual boy that I was beside, who was the same height as me, a boy called John Weir, there's a photo of when we were in the senior football team, I was in school, probably about fifth year, and again I'm standing beside John Weir.

I grew to five foot six. He grew all the way to six foot six. So, on primary seven, we were the same height, and then he grew that much more than me.

So, we don't know when we're young just exactly what height we're going to grow to. But as I say, measuring tapes are very, very important, because we don't just measure our height.

We measure loads of things. If you were, maybe you're not going to do it just now, but supposing your mum or dad or somebody's in the house, you say, well, we're going to build a wee shed, or we're going to build a garage.

[12 : 23] The next door is building a house, and you see the joiners and the breakies, they're all using this, they're using the measuring tape, because you have to know exactly how things are.

It's no use saying, I'll take a bit of wood, about six feet, that'll do. It's got to be exactly right. Supposing you were going to get a very special suit made, and you say, I'm going to go to the tailor and get a maid to measure, or you're going to the dressmaker to get a maid to measure dress.

It's a special occasion. The tailor or the dressmaker wouldn't just kind of look at you and say, I reckon you're about this size. No, they would get a tape, they would get the measuring tape, and they would put that tape round you, they'd be measuring this way and that way, because they have to get it exactly right.

You know, as we go through life, we have to measure our lives as well, to see how we're getting on. It's very important that we live our lives in a right way, that we're kind, and careful, and helpful, and that we don't lie or swear, all these kind of things, and that we don't hurt people by what we say and by what we do.

And we have to measure our lives. Now, we can, you and I, we can measure our bodies with a measuring tape, but we can measure our lives to see how we're getting on with a measuring tape.

[13 : 55] It doesn't work. When you measure, you have to measure against something. And with regard to our lives, it's not measuring against something, but against someone.

And that someone is Jesus. So we need to measure our lives to see how we're getting on by looking to Jesus. And there's two things that we have to do. First of all, we look at Jesus, at how he lived, the example he gave us, and how, what he has told us in his word to do.

Every day we have to ask the Lord to help us to live as Jesus lived. But the second, and this is the most important thing, it is impossible for us to really live like Jesus until Jesus comes in, into our heart, to be king, to be king of our life.

And that's what we ask every day. We must say, Lord, please, please come in to me. I want, and this is a prayer that Jesus loves above all, because Jesus in heaven, his Holy Spirit, he will send his Holy Spirit, and Jesus will rule your life by his Spirit within you.

And it's then that you will be led in the right way to make the right choices, to do the right things. I know sometimes we'll still, when we're Christians, sadly we'll sin and do our own thing, which is wrong, and we have to go back and ask Jesus to forgive us.

[15 : 30] But until Jesus is there within our life, we can't really live like Jesus. And that's the most important thing to do. And if we have Jesus within us, we go to the Bible and we measure up our lives by looking at what the Bible says.

So you ask Jesus in, and once Jesus is in your heart, you're going to start measuring up right in life. Let's say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen. We're going to read God's word now from the book of Psalms in Psalm number 96. Psalm number 96.

O sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord. Bless his name.

[16 : 41] Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations. His marvelous works among all the peoples. For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols. But the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him.

Strength and beauty are in the sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name.

Bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. Tremble before him all the earth. Say among the nations, the Lord reigns.

Yes, the world is established. It shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice.

[17 : 48] Let the sea roar and all that fills it. Let the field exult and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord.

For he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in faithfulness. Amen.

And may God bless to us this reading of his own holy word. I want us this evening to think about the first few verses, verses one to five of this really wonderful psalm, this psalm of worship.

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name. Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols. But the Lord made the heavens.

[18 : 54] As we see in this psalm, this psalm is really pulsating, as it were, with energy and vibrancy in the praise and adoration of God. And it's a psalm that goes to the furthest corners of the world, embracing, as it were, all people.

Now, as we know, back in the Old Testament, we find that God's glory and God's word in particular was confined to a very small area.

We know that he had his people, Israel, and that he dealt with his people. But he gave great promises through that, that the word that he had given to his people in this little part of the world, there were little indications right throughout the Old Testament that this word was going to spread right throughout the world.

And of course, we know that that is exactly what happened with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world. He ushered in, as it were, the New Testament age, the kingdom had come, and of course, at Pentecost, we had the great coming of the Holy Spirit in a very powerful way.

But there are indications, as we see, right through the Old Testament of what is going to happen globally with regard to the gospel. And this psalm is obviously a mission psalm because it talks of all the earth, it talks of among the nations, and among all the peoples.

[20 : 24] So you can see, this is a psalm that spreads out into all the world. Now as we know, the book of Psalms is a wonderful book and it's a book that we go to all the time.

We can't help it. And it's a book that deals with all the problems and all the issues of life. There is really, I don't know of any book that is its equal.

The book of Psalms is unique because it gets right into the heart of the problem. Because so often, as we go through all the differing experiences of life, whether it could be hurt, brokenness, disappointment, uncertainty, anger, frustrations, all the different things, the joys, and how to deal with these things.

This is part of what this book of Psalms does. It gets right in and you'll find it doesn't really matter what experience you go through. You go to the Psalms and you'll find and you'll say, poor, the Psalm has just been there.

He's expressing just how I feel. And that is how the Psalms really are so precious to so many people. Now, again, we find in the Psalms that the Psalms are often dealing with all these kind of issues and often we find that the Psalm is confronting these things.

[21 : 56] But the Psalms are often also full of praise. And constantly in the Psalms we're told to praise God and to honour God and to sing to God and to bless his holy name and to thank him and to ascribe glory to his name.

And God is looking for our praise every single day and looking for our thanks. We should praise him for who he is and thank him for what he has done.

Praise and thanks to a certain extent that they join together they're different. The praise is ascribing glory to his name. Remember, your chief duty and my chief duty in this world is to glorify God.

And we're told in God's word that whoever praises him glorifies him. So if our lives are characterised by praise, genuine praise from our heart, praising God for who he is, ascribing glory to his name, then we're glorifying God.

We're living in the right way. Now verse 1 we're told here, sing to the Lord a new song. Now that doesn't mean that every single day we get up we've got to write a new song.

[23 : 11] Now, great if you can do that. By all means, if you have the ability to every day you compose a new song and sing it to the Lord. Hallelujah! But I don't believe that that is precisely or particularly what it is meaning.

I think it is more a reference to each day sing a new the songs that we have. For instance, we read God's word every day.

And supposing you have read supposing you read through the Bible supposing you read through the Bible every year you will still be reading year after year the same thing.

And you and I we read the same things over and over and over and over and over again. But we never tired of it. And every day it's new although the words are the same words that have been there for generations.

And every day they're new words because it's a new day in our life new day in our experience and that word is relevant for our day and our experience at this particular time.

[24 : 17] So it's a new day for us God's word is ever new just like his mercies are new every morning. So we should be in the habit of every day singing the song to the Lord of thanksgiving and of praise.

And one of the very worst things that we can do is to go through life and not acknowledge God not be praising him not be thanking him in any way at all.

Praise as we say should be an integral part of our lives. You know it's almost like first thing in the morning it's almost like the very birds are in their dawn chorus you'd almost say that they're praising God.

but here we are who have been made in the created way that's how we were originally made we're created in the image of God. We can get up and there's not a word of praise there's not a word of thanksgiving and so many people never lift their eyes or their hearts heavenward and they just live down in this earth with their heads down not looking to the Lord of heaven and earth.

And so in verse 2 then it tells us along with singing to the Lord and blessing his name we are to tell of his salvation from day to day. You see this is our Christian duty and our Christian responsibility is to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and when the Lord gives us an opportunity as he often does we should share our faith.

[25 : 57] and you know it's often that people I remember after I became a Christian and at work sometimes people would say how does a Christian look at this?

Or very often people that I worked with after I became a Christian say what happened? You became a Christian what's all that about?

What happened? And you know they ask the question so there's the opportunity it's a golden opportunity without you opening the thing the door is open so you've always got to ask the Lord for the wisdom to answer these questions right but so often you get the opportunity of giving a short account of how God has worked in your lives of the transforming power and grace of God and God's people are living letters living epistles read of all men that's what we're told so as we live out our lives by word but also by life it should be challenging people because you know the beauty of Christianity is we don't witness to people by conforming to this world but by conforming to Christ because Christ was different and it's we don't set out to be different but if you live a Christ-like life in this world there will often come points where you will be different and people will know it and see it and that life is a witness and a testimony so by life and by word we are to tell people about the Lord

Jesus and we are to tell of his salvation and we are to declare his glory we're to remind people that God is because you see sin has distorted everything and sin has closed people's minds to the truth and people sin has closed people's minds to the reality of God and who he is and it really is quite extraordinary how so many people have so closed their minds that they now say there is no God throughout this world it would be very interesting to hear just to discover how many people say there is no God when you take in like the vast expanse of China and places under communist rule where there is no God and they are thinking and yet we know there is a huge work going on in the church in China where not only thousands but millions are coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout this world there are so many people who say and the people label themselves agnostics or humanists or atheists or secularists or all kinds of different things but the Bible actually is a name for the person who says there is no God it's not me who's saying it but this is what

God says what does God say of those who say there is no God he calls them a fool that's the term the fool has said in their heart there is no God and that's a very very solemn and a very serious name that's God's verdict and it's God's verdict because the reason that they say there is no God is because of the blindness and the distortion and the prejudice of sin and Satan because if you remove the prejudice and you honestly look out at this world and look at the creation look at the marvel of it the intricacy of it God's handiwork is everywhere the heavens declare the glory of God the heavens of a voice his fingerprints are seen in the whole creation this world and all its times and its seasons and everything is speaking of God and then there's this word he has given us the general revelation of the creation and we're told in Romans 1 very clearly that we are without excuse because the heavens declare the glory of God and it reveals to us his eternity his power and his Godhead so people cannot say there is no God it's screaming to us there is a God but his word also is revealing to us

[30 : 26] God has made this given us this special revelation where we're able to discover so much of who he really is but you see one of the reasons why people want to say there is no God and push God out of their thinking is that they want to live their lives free from any obligations and they want to live life according to how they want to live it it's my life and I will do what I want so they feel that they're free from any obligations and that they're not in any way answerable to God but you know irrespective of what a person may think in this world irrespective of what a person may do in this world it doesn't matter how much they may rage against God and against those who believe in a God one day you see there is an accountability one day we all have to give an account of what we have done in this world in the body good or bad everybody's going to have to whether we believed in God or not that doesn't alter the fact that there is going to be a day where all have to give an account of all that has been done so as we said the whole creation speaks of

God in the beginning God now of course that doesn't mean that God had a beginning God had no beginning God is eternal but God at a point brought this world into being through the creation he spoke the word and he brought everything into being and the psalmist is comparing our God to the worthless idols and gods that have no words isn't it extraordinary statues have no words graven images have no words and people worship things that have no power within themselves it's really when you really begin to think of the madness of idolatry and then the psalmist is telling us that in verses 4 and 5 that the living and through God is the one to be feared and he reminds us in verse 5 of what the Lord did he made the heavens talk of something to stop you in your tracks you know children quite often like to boast about say somebody in the family and they might say oh you know my my uncle my uncle's a pilot my uncle he flies a plane or he pilots a helicopter and people go whoa wow that's quite something or my mum she's running marathons all over the world and people say whoa so children often like to boast but you know the Christian can boast and say you know my heavenly father he he he he he made the heavens out of nothing he spoke the world he made this world and all he said let there be and he brought into being that's what my heavenly father has done talk of being able to boast in

God and then that's really in a sense what we're to tell people because going back to verse 2 it's interesting the change in direction verses 1 and 2a we're told to sing to the Lord and all the speaking and singing is to the Lord but then it changes direction and it says tell of his salvation and that means tell other people and you see the order that is given to us there is deliberate because we can't tell other people properly until we first of all have been speaking to the Lord that's the order there's no point going to speak to people until we've first spoken to the Lord because we begin we begin with the Lord we can try and tell people about the Lord but unless we have been in his company and in his presence it's not really going to work the same and you know when you spend time in the presence and company of the

Lord something of the Lord's presence lingers with you when you leave remember when Moses came down from the mountain having spent so much time with the Lord his face actually shone it could tell of the disciples that they could see that they had been with Jesus and so there's a lingering presence of the Lord and when that lingering presence is saved it makes our witness far more powerful and effective it has a lasting impression and verse 4 says the psalmist says great is the Lord great is the Lord let's stop for a moment here and think exactly who the Lord is because it helps us just a little to remember who it is that we follow and who we worship God is a spirit and that is infinite in other words he has no limits he's everywhere at once he is everywhere at the same time he knows everything at the same time it's quite extraordinary that he knows everything he is everywhere at once and he's eternal everything in this world is temporary nothing lasts even the world itself is not going to last everything passes no relationship in this world is forever in the in the when I have probably the closest relationship in the world is marriage remember what it says when you take one another until death do you part so there's everything in this world separates everything in this world comes to an end but there's one thing that doesn't and that is the salvation that God gives us because although we are not eternal we enter into eternal life a life that never ends and that's why it says in John 3 16

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life an eternal life a life that never ends which is the life that God is he is eternal he is he is the only one that is eternal but we are given eternal life and it's we've got to remember that God's eternity eternity affects everything it affects our life of salvation but it also affects judgment because God's judgment is eternal and those who are under his judgment who die out of Christ are entering into eternal judgment it's an awful thought again following on from that we know that God is unchanging now we find that hard to understand because we're all changing our moods changing some days we're in a good mood other days well mood might be a little darker some days we might be unhappy other days we're full of the joys our attitudes our feelings our environment changes physically we change but God never changes and that's wonderful because we don't have to question how he'll be when we come when we come to him because he's always the same and it means his word is always the same he never goes back on any promise he's a God who is all wise he never makes mistakes and we can't understand that but God never does and he has a purpose in every single thing that he does and his wisdom is revealed to us in his creation in his providence in his salvation all the time his wisdom and and he's all powerful he does according to his will with the armies of heaven and with the inhabitants of the earth he is holy altogether pure he is free from any taint whatsoever of of of sin or injustice every single thing he does every motive is pure and he is just and because he is just he has to punish sin he cannot bear sin tolerate sin but because he is just it means that because he punished his son Jesus Christ on the cross for us he will never punish twice if Jesus Christ has taken your place and you have received

[39 : 19] Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior then Jesus then God the Father will never punish you because he has punished the son you see this is this is a wonderful thing this is what how just he is and this is where his love and his justice and all these things meet together and he is good his goodness fills the whole earth good unto all men is the Lord you know we should sometimes stop and just reflect on how good God is because his goodness affects and touches every aspect of our being let me ask you today do you know this great God this good God this wonderful God this God of heaven and earth but today you seek that you will know this God as your God and that you will live in praise to his name and to his glory forever we're going to conclude by singing in Psalm 145 Psalm 145 and we're going to sing from verse 7 to 12 it's a second version they utter shall abundantly the memory of thy goodness great and they shall sing cheerfully whilst they thy righteousness relate the Lord our

God is gracious compassionate as he also in mercy he is plenteous but unto wrath and anger slow good unto all men is the Lord and so on Psalm 145 7 to 12 the earth shall abundantly the memory of thy goodness great and just in graces cheerfully whilst they thy righteousness be laid the Lord and God is gracious How passionate is he also, and mercy is plentious.

God unto wrath and anger, so, God unto wrath and anger, so. Good unto all men is the Lord, for all his works, his mercy is.

Thy words all praise to thee afford, thy sins, O Lord, thy sins shall bless.

The glory of thy kingdom show, shall be unto thy power tell.

[42 : 12] Thus all men's sons is dismayed, O. His kingdom's grace at God excel. His kingdom's grace at God excel.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.