

# A Degenerate Society - What Hope Is There?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Isaiah 59, we're going to consider verses 9 to 15 especially, but we can read particularly at verse 14.

Justice is turned back and righteousness stands afar off, for truth has stumbled in the public squares and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

We looked last time, as you recall, at a passage from Amos, a passage that in many respects is similar, and a prophecy that in many respects is similar to that of Isaiah.

Isaiah, of course, is much longer and has more in it to do with gospel promises, you might say. But Isaiah and Judah, in Judah and Amos in Israel, the northern kingdom, their ministries, their prophecies overlapped by a number of years.

If you look at the kings that are mentioned, the beginning of Amos and the beginning of Isaiah, you can see that there was an overlap in their ministries. They were addressing the same people, though divided into these two separate nations now, as it were, in the northern kingdom of Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah, focusing on Jerusalem, centered in Jerusalem.

[ 1 : 21 ] But by and large, the problems that the prophets faced were the same. We mentioned last time, who would want to really be in the position of Amos? Well, you could say the same course of Isaiah as well, as they were given words from the Lord to speak to the people, to speak into the situation that they faced in their society at that time.

That was a very difficult thing for them to do, because they met with very little support and did not see much by way of response, positively, on the part of the people.

And Isaiah, right at the very beginning of his prophecy, as you know, plunges right into God's case against the people, as if it were God in the court of law, acting as prosecutor.

This is really how Isaiah opens his prophecy. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. For the Lord has spoken. Children I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know. My people do not understand. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly.

[ 2 : 37 ] They have forsaken the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel. And so on and on it goes, down to the early part of Isaiah, right through the first chapter there. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom.

Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah. Where could you find words that were stronger than that? Yet, if you took Isaiah and imagined him standing somewhere central in the UK, would he not be saying the same thing or pretty similar?

Is it not the case that the society we belong to is characterized by these very same features that Isaiah found in his day?

And we don't want to be too condemnatory. We don't want to be overly pessimistic. We don't want us to labor things in a negative way. But it's important that we address the situation that we see in our times with the light of God's word.

And even if that gives us, like tonight's study, it will be, first part of it at least, the marks of a degenerate society. But then we're coming to ask, secondly, what hope is there then?

[ 3 : 49 ] Where do we find hope in that kind of situation? Where does Isaiah, for example, here in this passage, where does he lead us? Where does he lead us to seek to find hope in the midst of such darkness and such gross wickedness, such evil, such departure from the Lord?

Well, let's look firstly at the marks of a degenerate society as you find them here in this passage. And though you find it elsewhere, of course, in Isaiah, as we've said. The first mark of this

degenerate society that we apply to our own circumstances too, is what we can call a moral collapse.

A moral collapse. Because there you see in verses 14 and 15, justice is turned back and righteousness stands afar off. For truth has stumbled in the public square and uprightness cannot enter.

Truth is lacking and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Now we're talking here about justice and righteousness and truth. And by justice, he means more than just the, than merely what happens in a court of law, where justice is dispensed, where things are dealt with legally. He means more than that. But that too, in Isaiah's day, had broken down. There was corruption. Even to that extent that people were accepting bribes, injustices were being perpetrated even through a legal system.

[ 5 : 15 ] But justice here means dealing justly with people. Dealing justly with one another. Dealing in a way that is honest. That deals with people righteously.

And the same way, righteousness, as he mentions it there in verse 14, which stands afar off. You see, what he's doing here is really personifying these qualities as if they were people.

As if they had a life of their own. What he's saying is justice is turned back. It's actually refusing to go any further, as it were. And he's now saying righteousness stands afar off.

It's at a distance from us. It's not prepared to come near to us. Righteousness meaning uprightness. Integrity of life. What you read elsewhere frequently in the Bible as holiness of life.

And he's saying righteousness stands afar off. Holiness is distant from us. This is not what characterizes us, he's saying. And then he gives us the underlying reason, or one of the main underlying reasons.

[ 6 : 19 ] And you see that in the little word for. That's really an explanatory word. Justice is turned back. Righteousness stands afar off. For. For truth has stumbled in the public squares.

That's the underlying reason why things are as they are with justice and with righteousness.

Because truth has collapsed. Truth is just like somebody that you find in the street having collapsed for one reason or another, unable to stand up.

And of course when he talks about truth, he's talking about God's standard. The standard that God has laid down for us in the whole of his word, in the entirety of his word.

You could say that it all amounts to God's truth. And this is what was lacking in Isaiah's day. They weren't paying attention. They were dismissing the word that God had given them.

The teaching that God had passed on through the prophets. It was of no interest to them. Indeed, they had a distaste for it. They weren't prepared to apply it to their lives. Not only privately, but also in terms of public.

[ 7 : 25 ] You notice what he's saying here. That this standard of God, this truth of God, has stumbled in the public squares. Not just saying individual people have dismissed this truth and put it behind them.

Our public life, he says, is missing this truth as a vital ingredient of it, foundationally. And of course that too is something we need to bear in mind for our own generation too.

And as you look around you, isn't that what you see? You don't have to go very far to see it.

Because truth is something that has to apply not just to our lives individually.

It has to apply to public life. It's truth for politics. It's truth for business. It's truth for councils. It's truth for healthcare. It's truth for the courtroom.

It's truth for all of these areas of public life. Wherever you find public life. Wherever you find things done and decisions taken that affect us all. Whether it's affecting us legally or in terms of our health provision, whatever.

[ 8 : 33 ] You find truth is lacking. You find truth is lacking in the teaching that's given to our children, sadly. Many parts of our country. Truth about what it means to be a child.

Truth about what it means to have a relationship with God. Truth about relationships on a human basis. Truth about marriage.

Truth in terms of applying to all of these areas of human life. It's collapsed. It's lying collapsed in our streets. The imagery here is society really like a town, if you like.

Like a city and you're going through the streets and you come across this body, this person, this collapsed individual. And it turns out to be truth. Truth has collapsed in the public squares.

It's a very sad and a very solemn and a very telling and a powerful image of the degeneracy of Isaiah's society. It's a mark of a degenerate society that you find moral collapse.

[ 9 : 37 ] And where truth has collapsed, then other things follow. Why is there such views as there are of the lives of unborn children? Why is there such a demand further for abortions?

Why is there such a cry now for ending the life of those who've reached serious illness and can't cope any longer? Why is there such a drive towards legalizing euthanasia?

Why are all of these things now features of our society? Because truth has collapsed. People no longer go to God's word or think that God's word or the Bible is relevant in this day and age for public life.

Even if it is, for some people, an important feature of their lives privately, what you find increasingly is that the views you come across from those in authority, from those in power, and it doesn't matter where you go, it doesn't matter which political party you tend to support, but as you look into our parliaments, as you look into philosophy, the ideology of our political leaders, you'll find exactly the same thing pretty much, the same view of these critical moral issues.

Because truth has collapsed. We no longer rely on God's reliable word. We put that aside. It's collapsed.

[ 10 : 59 ] And this is the result of it. That's what you end up with. The moral chaos and degeneracy that sadly blights our society. You see in verse 13 as well, there's another underlying reason for it there.

The truth has collapsed and it's collapsed because we've come to, he says, deny the Lord and turning back from following our God. How many people in public life do you find nowadays saying, well, the answer to all the ills of our society is a turning back to God.

And the reason things are as they are is because we've turned away from God and away from following the Lord. You'd be laughed at if you suggested that any political party nowadays, apart from Christian parties, would actually include something like that in their manifesto.

And you don't expect people, leaders in our country, to actually say in any public speaking that this is what's wrong with our society. That this is the answer for the ills of our society. The laws of God. The standard of God. The truth of God. But that's, you see, what Isaiah is leading us. That's when you believe this Bible and take it as you do tonight and as I do, as the Word of God, as the standard of God, as the Word that God has given us to guide our lives individually and publicly, you can see clearly that Isaiah is saying here, this is really what's wrong with the UK.

[ 12 : 21 ] This is what's wrong with our society. This is where we've wandered away from God's truth. And this is what it's led to. And in verse 12, you see, you can see it comes back really to an individual level as well.

Our transgressions are multiplied before you. Our sins testify against us. Our transgressions are with us. We know our iniquities. It always begins here, doesn't it, in the heart, in the soul of man. That's where the degeneracy exists to begin with. And unless that is overcome by submitting our hearts and our lives and our minds to the Word of God, then it's going to itself be the dominant feature of life.

That's what you find in our society today. It's not the truth of God. It's not the Bible. It's not what we try to commend as Christians to our people, to our leaders. It's the degeneracy of the human heart. That's what's leading us. That's where it comes from. And this word iniquity, in the Old Testament in Hebrew, is a word that literally means something that's twisted.

[ 13 : 32 ] Something that's gnarled, that's twisted from being straight. That's what our human heart is like. That's what God does in His redemption, in His saving of us, in our conversion.

That's what God does. He straightens out our hearts. He straightens out our lives. He takes what is essentially twisted in our sinfulness. And He straightens it out. And even if it takes time for that finally to reach a complete straightness, that is what God is committed to in our salvation, in our sanctification, in making us like Christ, the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

That's the first thing then. It's a moral collapse that Isaiah is conscious of and is facing. The second thing that marks a degenerate society, we can call a frustrating search.

A frustrating search. Because he talks here about searching for the light. In verse 9, justice is far from us. Righteousness does not overtake us. It's similarly to verse 14.

But then he says, We hope for light and behold darkness. And for brightness but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind. We grope like those who have no eyes.

[ 14 : 46 ] We stumble at noon as if it were twilight. Among those in full vigor we are like dead men. We all growl like bears and moan and moan like doves.

We hope for justice but there is none. For salvation but it is far from us. You see what's happening in his society, in our society. It's not that people don't want to have a life that is proper and good. A life that is beneficial to others. A life that lives by a certain standard. It's not that people really don't want light and guidance. Living in a way that will actually be commendable.

But they are looking in the wrong places. They are looking to the wrong source for that satisfaction, for that happiness, for that contentment, for that good life.

That's what was happening in Isaiah's day. Instead of accepting the word of the Lord. Instead of actually saying this is our standard. Let's seek to match up to this standard.

[ 15 : 52 ] Let's come to God with our sins. Let's repent. Let's seek the Lord's guidance of us. Let's come back to him. No, they are actually following their own inclination. What they think best.

And they are just, he says, as Isaiah says, they are like someone who has never had eyes or has never been able to see. And you put them in a room that they have never been in before.

And you ask them, right, you are on your own now. Let's see if you can find your way about. And you know what happens. That person is groping around and stumbling and fumbling with her hands.

Trying to pick out things that they won't fall over. Or, that's he says, the image of this society that I belong to. That's what he's really saying. We cannot find the light.

We cannot find the hope. We cannot find the justice. We cannot find the peace. We cannot find the satisfaction that we would want to have. Because people in our society, as in every society, want peace.

[ 16 : 49 ] They want satisfaction. They want justice. They want things to be right. But when they're not right with God, they're not going to be right. That's the problem. They're blind.

They're looking in the wrong place. They're like people fumbling and stumbling along. And when he says here, we are growling like bears. We moan and moan like doves.

Well, there's a pain involved in looking for something that you desperately want to have but can't find. There's an agony of soul when you realize, I'd love to have peace.

I'd love to have peace in our society. I'd love for violence to be diminished or gone altogether. I'd love for people to love one another for a change. I'd love for all of these things that mark our society now to be gone.

People are saying that. Let's deal with this. Let's deal with unemployment. Let's deal with the moral violence that's in our day. Let's deal with the problems among our young people.

[ 17 : 45 ] Let's deal with the problems of teenage pregnancies. Let's deal with these things. We want to have a solution to these things and the problems of people living to a longer age. All of these things.

We want solution to these things. But we don't want it from God. We don't want to find it in the truth. And so they look somewhere else.

And because they're looking somewhere else, they're acting like people who are blind and groping for the wall, like those who have no eyes. Frustration.

Frustration. The frustration of looking in the wrong places. Tonight I hope you and I, ourselves personally, who want our lives to be lives, fulfilled lives, satisfied lives, lives that are doing good to ourselves and others, that we're looking to Jesus for that.

That we're looking to God for that. That they are lives which are penitent. That come to God with our own sins. As well as the sins, as we'll see, of the nation, as we'll see in a moment.

[ 18 : 55 ] There's a moral collapse and there's a frustrating search. Truth has collapsed. And all of that follows from it. And for all that the people would like to have, the very things that they're missing, they're not going to get them where they're looking.

That's where we're at as a nation. That's marking, that marks us as well as a degenerate society. Remember when Jesus was in the presence of Pilate.

Pilate started asking various questions and Jesus, for a while at least, answered him. And one of the things Jesus said about himself was that he had come to bear witness to the truth.

And in John's Gospel, you'll find him saying elsewhere, I am the way, the truth, and the life. Where you find Jesus, you find the truth. You find God's revelation of his truth, his standard, in Jesus himself preeminently.

He is the truth. He is the truth embodied in his very person. This is Pilate, this strutting official of the Roman Empire. And here he is, asking the Son of God, what is truth?

[ 20 : 09 ] As Jesus is saying to him, I have come to bear witness to the truth and contemptuously we believe, if you can read into the words at all, Pilate would have said, what is truth? Tell me what truth is.

You're talking about witnessing to the truth, but what is truth? What did he do then? He turned on his heel and he walked out. He didn't wait for an answer. Many people will today say the same thing.

What is truth anyway? Why should I believe what you Christians are saying, that this is the truth of God, that this Bible is really God's truth for us, for our lives? Why should I believe that more than any other philosophy, any other ideology, any other book indeed?

And they walk away like Pilate and are not prepared even to consider that this indeed may well be the truth they're looking for and missing. Somebody has discovered very cleverly that if you turn the words of Pilate's question into Latin, you'll find *quid est veritas*, what is truth?

And if you then reassemble these same letters, you can actually make *est vir qui ad est*, which means truth is the man beside you or in front of you or the one who is here.

[ 21 : 33 ] You can translate it different ways. What is truth? Truth is the one beside you. Jesus. The truth of God as you find in him.

The way, the truth, and the life. These are the marks of a degenerate society. Let's ask secondly, what hope is there?

Do we have any hope that things will change? And if we entertain the hope that things might change, where will we go to find some semblance of hope or something to give us encouragement that this will not go on or even get worse as time goes on?

Well, the first thing to say in answer to the question what hope is there? You find it in God's view of things. We stopped reading at verse 15, but then verse 15 has a second part which is hidden in a sense by this heading that translators here have put into the text.

It's not part of the original text, but it does help us as you find these headings throughout various parts of the text, but it kind of spoils it here in a way because verse 15 is divided by it. Truth is lacking and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

[ 22 : 49 ] The Lord saw it. The Lord saw it and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no one to intercede.

Then his own arm brought him salvation and his righteousness upheld him. Verses 15 there through to 16. What you find there is God is depicted as somebody who has just been astonished by what he saw.

As if he didn't know about it, which of course is not what you take from the verse. It's just the way the language is put to show particularly the gravity, the seriousness of sin.

The seriousness of what was going on in Isaiah's day. He's saying here, it displeased the Lord. He wondered, he was astonished that there was no one to intercede.

It didn't take him by surprise. He knew all about it. But what this is saying is it is such an enormous thing that God sees when people turn away from him and put other gods in his place and denigrate his name and vandalize his cause and his truth and his church.

[ 24 : 13 ] That's the language that's used there and it's very similar to what you find in verses 1 and 2 of the chapter. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save nor is the ear dull that it cannot hear but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

He saw that there was no one to intercede. In other words, there was nobody there that would actually come between the Lord and these people in a way that would make reparation for them, that would provide an atonement for them.

And so very often in the prophets you find that we are taken on our leap into the future because he comes then to speak of redemption. And of course, this is all leading towards the coming of Christ, the coming of the Redeemer, the coming of the Mediator, the coming of the Intercessor.

And when God here says he saw that there was no man and wondered, there was no one to intercede, then his own arm brought him salvation and his righteousness upheld him.

And from then on in the prophecy of Isaiah, though you have this before as well in chapter 53 and elsewhere, the servant of the Lord, a prophecy of Jesus, this is where the Lord is taking us.

[ 25 : 30 ] Taking us forward into the coming of Christ, into the righteousness of Christ, the way in which the Redeemer came to redeem us as sinners from the dilemma of our sin.

You could say he saw that there was no man, so what did he do? What did God do? He took up the role himself. He took up the task himself and provided for us in his Son, the one who would intercede for us.

He acted in redemption. As you find there in verses 20-21, a Redeemer will come to Zion and those in Jacob who turn from transgression declares the Lord.

To those in Jacob who turn from transgression, verse 21, he speaks then about his spirit. But let's come back to the question what hope is there? Well, we find God's view of things but we find also God's intervention.

Although that's taking us as we say into the future as far as Isaiah is concerned and prophesying about Christ and the coming of Christ, there's a principle there that you must really hang on to. And the principle is that our hope is in God's own intervention.

[ 26 : 44 ] Our hope is in God himself coming and with his power and with his intervention coming to actually cast himself, if you like, into this situation and rescue us from where we're at.

You see, what hope is there? Well, you go to chapter 64, you'll find it in words that are similar to the Apostle Paul. Chapter 64 and verse 8.

Well, he's saying in verse 7, similar to chapter 59, this is chapter 64, verse 7, there is no one who calls upon your name who rouses himself to take hold of you.

This is Isaiah speaking to God, praying to God, for you have hidden your face from us and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, doesn't that remind you of the words of Paul in Ephesians chapter 2, where he talked there about the exceeding sinfulness of the Ephesians and their lifestyle and their way of life before the gospel came to them, where he says, you were the children of wrath.

We were all, he says, the children of wrath even as others. but God, who is rich in mercy. That's what Isaiah, it's almost as if Paul was just picking up the words of Isaiah.

[ 28 : 09 ] I'm not saying he's doing that, but he might have been. But now, O Lord, you are our father, we are the clay, you are our potter, we are all the work of your hand.

Be not so terribly angry, O Lord, remember not iniquity forever. Please, behold, look, we are all your people. Will you restrain yourself at these things, Lord?

Will you keep silent and afflict us so terribly? And when you become convinced of that, as you and I must, then you take note of the fact that Isaiah is often using in this passage in chapter 59 the words we and our and ours all the way through there.

Our transgressions, our iniquities, our God, us, we. Why is he doing that? What's the reason? What's the theology in that? What can you and I take from that that is important for our own prayer life, for our own pleadings with God? Well, it's this. Isaiah is not coming before God and saying, Lord, they are like this, but I'm different.

[ 29 : 24 ] I'm outside of what's going on here. It's the same in chapter 6, isn't it? When God called him to be a prophet and he saw the Lord high and lifted up and the holiness of God struck him with such a powerful, such a powerful vision that he had of God.

Woe is me for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips. What is Isaiah doing?

He's identifying with these people. He's actually, as it were, speaking for them because he belongs to them. The society of Isaiah's day is not something he's detaching himself from, far from it.

He's putting himself into the mix, as it were, and he's praying on their behalf and he's saying, I'm one of these people. I belong to these people. These are my people as they are your covenant people, he's saying to God.

And you'll find Daniel doing exactly the same. Now, Daniel wasn't guilty of the kind of sins that he expresses in chapter 9 as he prays for his people.

[ 30 : 33 ] Let me just remind you two verses. You can read it later on yourselves all the way through that chapter of prayer down to verse 19. You'll find Daniel saying this in verse 5, for example.

He's saying, when he says, I prayed to the Lord and made my confessions and I said, we have sinned. We have not listened to your servants, the prophets. To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame as it is this day to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of

Jerusalem.

So on through the chapter he goes through his prayer. We have done this. We have departed from your ways. You know, when our people do not repent of their sins, do not turn back into the ways of God, we have the privilege before God as Christian people, as people who know the scriptures, as people who do business ourselves personally with God in prayer, we have the privilege of praying for them.

And we have the privilege of praying for them like Isaiah and Daniel, not in a detached way, but in a way, as it were, that acts by proxy on their behalf and comes before the Lord and say, Lord, we have sinned.

We have departed from your ways. We have done evil in your sight. We continue to spurn you. We continue to act unjustly.

[ 32 : 09 ] And we continue to leave truth collapsed as a heap in the street. So walk down, as it were, the street, the main street, if you think of society as we've been saying, pictured as a town, as a city.

Walk down the streets of society, walk down the main street of that town called society. And as you do so, you come across this figure in the main street, collapsed, just like somebody who in a drunken stupor has just collapsed in the street.

And as you go nearer to that figure, you discover it's truth. Truth has collapsed. And as you stand over the figure of truth tonight, as you have the privilege of calling upon God in prayer as I do, sadly, I don't often, often enough think of it like this myself.

But this passage really brought it home to me, or helped me to bring home to myself the importance of praying by proxy for a degenerate society. and for having the privilege from God of being able to know that He hears our prayers on behalf of people who don't pray for themselves and plead with Him.

And plead with Him especially the words that you find in chapter 62 and chapter 63. If I can read from chapter 63 just to conclude our study this evening.

[ 33 : 42 ] As you stand over that collapsed figure of truth, pray, as follows. Verse 15 of chapter 63.

Look down from heaven and see from your beautiful and holy habitation where are your zeal and your might the stirring of your inner parts and your compassion are held back from me for you are our Father.

Though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us you, O Lord, are our Father. Our Redeemer from of oldest your name. O Lord, why do you make us to wander from your ways?

He's talking here of God's judgment of course. In many ways giving the people what they asked for what they themselves thought as a preference to leave the ways of God. So he's saying that's what God has done He's left you to your own choice.

Why do you harden your heart so that we do not fear you? Return for the sake of your servants the tribes of your heritage your holy people held possession for a little while.

[ 34 : 45 ] Our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary. We have become like those over whom you have never ruled like those who are not called by your name. O that you would rend the heavens and come down that the mountains might quake at your presence as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil to make your name known to your adversaries and that the nations might tremble at your presence when you did all some things that we did not look for you came down the mountains quaked at your presence.

You can just picture Isaiah can't you? Identifying himself with these people and saying we have sinned and we need you Lord to come back to us and to take us back to yourself and you can just picture him and he's not sitting there just almost still he's not sitting there unagitated as it were you can just picture him can't you with his hands stretched up openly pleading with God Lord fill my hands in answer to your prayer.

He has moved he has worked up about this it's not a cold formal prayer is it? And that's the pattern that he's leaving for ourselves we have the privilege of private prayer the privilege of prayer meetings where we can pray together for God's blessing where we can come to look over the degenerate society we belong to and where we come to find our hope in God and God's intervention so we plead that he would come that he would show his arm that he would intervene for our good may the Lord bless to us these thoughts on his word let's conclude now by singing to God's praise we're singing from Psalm 31

Tuna's Wareham Psalm 31 verses 19 to 24 and these are words of encouragement to us words that express in the previous verses similar to other psalms we sang tonight difficulties of living in a degenerate society living for the Lord being true to the Lord and I didn't say so during the sermon it is important for all of you young people here tonight not to be led away from the standard of God from the truth of God and as you sing this psalm together with us adults this is what we are encouraged by as we seek to live for Jesus from verse 19 your goodness Lord is very great prepared for those who fear your name you show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim verse 19 down to verse 24 in conclusion your goodness

Lord is very great prepare for those who fear your name you show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim your presence hides and shelters them from those who plot to take their light and in your tent you keep them safe from evil towns that stir up that stir up strife the Lord be praised because he showed the wonder of his love to me love to me when in the city

[ 39 : 30 ] I was trapped surrounded by the enemy and my in my alarm I rushly said that I was hidden from your eyes but when I called to you for help help and grace you listen to my Christ O love the Lord all youth his saints the faithful will be kept by

God but he will give the proud their due be strong take heart open the Lord I'll go to the main door after the benediction Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore Amen