

# Easter Family Service

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[0:00] Well, as I say, it's a family service today and we're thinking about the theme of Easter. And Easter, when we think about it, maybe brings many different things to our minds.

We often think of it as a time of holiday. It's good to get a break. It's a time when maybe you've been looking around outside. Maybe you started to see lambs appearing in the crofts around you. I saw my first lamb this week in the field beside us up at the manse. And it's lovely to see that. And our dog Benji is now keeping a watchful eye over them all to see them as they arrive.

He loves watching over the wall as well. And the amazing thing is how often they come up to the wall. They don't seem scared of him, which is lovely to see as well. So there's a lot of different things that we associate with this time of year, Easter time.

But the main thing is the Easter story. And on Thursday night, if you were at Explorers, we were talking there a little about the Easter story.

[1:02] And I said on Thursday night, and I think, was it a mistake? I'm not sure. But I said if you came to church on Sunday, and if you went through to the hall next door, I would share my Easter egg with you.

So here's my Easter egg. And maybe if you were there on Thursday, you're thinking, that's not the one you had. You had a different one.

What happened to that one? You said it was your favorite chocolate. It was a Galaxy one. And this is not a Galaxy. This is Malteser. So you're thinking to yourself, maybe I ate it.

Well, no, I didn't. I said I would share it with you, and I will. It's hopefully next door. Unless Lizzie ate it since Thursday night.

But it should be next door. So if you come through next door, you'll get a share of that one and this one as well, just to make sure there's enough to go around. Because we're talking then about sharing and how important, how good it is to share.

[2:05] And what we're going to do today is not just share an Easter egg together, but we're going to share, as I was saying on Thursday, God's Word together as well. Because it's important that we think about Easter and the message of Easter.

So we're going to look at the Easter story today, and especially people who were involved at that time. And three people in particular we're going to look at today are three people who had been arrested.

They'd been arrested. Have you ever been arrested? I'm not going to ask for a show of hands, but it's a scary thing to think about being arrested. When the police maybe catch up with you, there was somebody in America this week, a famous golfer, Tiger Woods.

And he was arrested because he did something silly. And it's there in the news. Everybody hears about it. When you think of someone being arrested, you always think, well, they must have done something wrong.

I wonder what they did. And when we look at the Easter story in particular, we're looking today at three people who were put on a cross at this time.

[3:14] Two criminals and one who was Jesus. We're thinking of these three people who were on the cross that day. And we're going to look at them and see, well, did they all deserve to be there?

Had they all done something wrong? Well, two had, because we're told that they were criminals, that they were thieves, that they were robbers. So they had done things wrong and they deserved to be punished.

But Jesus was there. And if we ask ourselves, well, what had Jesus done wrong? That's the question that the people had at this time. You've got Pilate, you've got Herod. They were two people who were in charge at this time. And they're asking, what has he done? I can find no fault. He's done nothing wrong. He doesn't deserve this. But the people said, no, he does. He deserves this. But why was Jesus on the cross? Well, it wasn't that he had done something wrong. It was because we had done something wrong.

[4:20] And that we keep doing the wrong things. We keep making mistakes. We keep doing the wrong thing. We keep sinning, as we call it. And that's why Jesus was on the cross.

And that's the Easter story that we're going to think about today. To share this word with each other. To think about Jesus and how he was there with two criminals who had done wrong.

And how he reached out to one of them in particular. As a reminder to us that he did that for you and for me as well. That if we believe in him, we can be saved by his love and by his grace.

So we're going to consider these three crosses together today. We're going to think of one cross that had a blind thief. The second cross that had a bold sinner.

And the third cross that had a blessed Savior. So we're going to think about these things. But before we do, we're going to sing again. We're going to sing in Psalm 30.

[5:26] And if the younger ones want to go out, they can do so at this point. Through to the holiday tweenies. Just going through the door to my left here. We're going to sing in Psalm 30. The Scottish Psalter version.

Page 239. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 4. Lord, I will thee extol.

For thou hast lifted me on high. And over me thou to rejoice. Made not my enemy. O thou who art the Lord my God. I in distress to thee with loud cries.

Lifted up my voice. And thou hast healed me. We'll sing from verse 1 to 4. To God's praise. And we stand to sing. Amen. Lord, I will thee extol.

For thou hast lifted me on high. And over me thou to rejoice.

[6:42] Made not my enemy. O thou who art the Lord my God.

I am distressed to thee. With love cries lifted up my voice.

And thou hast healed me. O Lord my soul.

Thou hast brought up. And rescued from the grave.

That I to pay. Should not go down.

[7:54] A life thou did me say. O ye that are his holy ones.

Sing praise unto the Lord. And give unto him thanks.

When ye his holiness record. Amen. We're going to turn to read.

In the Bible now. From God's word. We're going to read in Luke. Luke chapter 23. You'll find it around page 1064.

Of the church Bibles. Luke chapter 23. We're going to read from verse 26. Down to verse 43.

[9:11] Luke chapter 23 at verse 26. And this is the time when Jesus was taken out. On the cross. And as they led him away.

They seized one Simon of Cyrene. Who was coming in from the country. And laid on him the cross. To carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great multitude of people.

And of women who were mourning. And lamenting for him. But turning to them Jesus said.

Daughters of Jerusalem. Do not weep for me. But weep for yourselves.

And for your children. For behold the days are coming. When they will say. Blessed are the barren.

And the wombs that never bore. And the breasts that never nursed. Then they will begin to say to the mountains.

Fall on us. And to the hills. Cover us. For if they do these things. When the wood is green. What will happen when it is dry? To others who were criminals.

[10:08] Were led away. To be put to death with him. When they came to the place. That is called the skull. There they crucified him. And the criminals. One on his right.

And one on his left. And Jesus said. Father forgive them. For they know not what they do. And they cast lots. To divide his garments. And the people stood by watching.

But the rulers scoffed at him. Saying. He saved others. Let him save himself. If he is the Christ of God. His chosen one. The soldiers also mocked him.

Coming up and offering him sour wine. And saying. If you are the king of the Jews. Save yourself. There was also an inscription over him. This is the king of the Jews.

One of the criminals. Who were hanged. Railed at him. Saying. Are you not the Christ? Save yourself. And us. But the other rebuked him. Saying. Do you not fear God?

[11:07] Since you are under the same sentence. Of condemnation. And we indeed justly. For we are receiving the due reward. Of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong.

And he said. Jesus. Remember me. When you come into your kingdom. And he said to him. Truly I say to you. Today. You will be with me in paradise.

And so on. And may God bless that. Reading. From his word. Well. We are going to look at the three crosses. Like I say. And the first one we are looking at. Is the cross where we see.

One of the criminals. Who I am going to call. A blind thief. And if you just look again. At verse 39. It says. One of the criminals. Who were hanged.

Railed at him. Saying. Are you not the Christ? Save yourself. And us. We are told that this man.

[12:03] Was a criminal. He's been caught. He had done something wrong. We know that he was a thief. A robber. He'd been caught. And he'd been convicted.

That means he'd been charged. With his crime. And as a result of that. There was a consequence. And that was. That he was going to be put on a cross. He would die there.

And yet. At this moment. When all hope seems lost. For him. In so many ways. He was blind. To the opportunity.

That was before him. In the man that was. Beside him. And we could ask ourselves. Well. How. Was this man.

Blind. It. Seems that he could see. Everything that was going on. Around him. He could see the people. That were beside him. And yet. He was still. Blind.

[12:59] How. Was he blind. And what kind of. Blindness. Was this. Well. It's the same kind of blindness. That you can have. And I can have. As well. It's to be blind.

In a certain situation. Which means. We're just not aware. Of what's happening. Around us. And the danger. That we are in. When I was younger.

And living over in Shabbos. I used to enjoy. Going fishing. On the rocks. Sea fishing. On the rocks. And there was one place. Just beside the beach.

And Shabbos. When the tide was out. That you could walk. Across the rocks. And get to a. Higher point. And go across that. And then fish. On the other side. Of it. And so this one day.

I had gone out. Obviously catching lots of fish. Because I'm a good fisherman. And I lost track. Of everything that was going on. Around me. I lost track.

[13:55] Of the fact that. The tide. Was coming in. I lost track. Of the fact. That the tide. Was coming round. The back of the rock. That I was fishing on. And that I was being.

Cut off. That if. I didn't notice. Quickly. That I was going to be stuck. On the rock I was on. Until the tide. Would go back out. And so. Eventually when I looked round.

And I thought the tide's coming in. I realized. That if I wasn't quick. That I would be stuck. Where I was. And stuck probably. For a couple of hours. Thankfully.

I managed to get back. To the shore. Just before the tide. Had fully come in. But I think. My wellies. Did get a little bit wet. But it was that kind of. Dangerous situation.

Where you're just. Carrying on as if. Everything's fine. Everything's normal. And you're not aware. Of the danger. That you're in. And it can happen. In so many different ways.

[14:50] It can happen. Day after day. With some of us. And we just forget. Or don't realize. Where we are. And what's going on. Around us. So to be blind.

In these situations. Is to be blind. To the trouble. That we are in. And here we see. This man. Who's described. As a criminal.

And we are told. That he was. There beside Jesus. That he was going. To die there. And yet. Even in his pain. He's blind.

To the person. Who's beside him. Because what you see. With this man. Is he is mocking. Jesus. He is making fun. Of Jesus.

You see that. In verse 39. Where it says. Are you not. The Christ. Save yourself. And us. He is questioning. Who Jesus is.

[15:47] He doesn't realize. The power. That he has. Can you imagine. In school. Seeing a door. In the school. That says. Headmaster on it.

Or headmistress on it. And you go into that. That room. That office. And you would say. To the teacher. Are you really the teacher.

I don't believe. That you are. And I want you. To do something for me. I want you to let me. Just go on holiday. Early. And come back. A lot later. You don't realize.

Who it is. You're not believing. Who it is. Can you imagine. Doing that in school. Or even at work. Going to your boss. And saying. Are you really the boss. Of this place. I think I'm the boss.

So I'm going to decide. When I take my holidays. Or what time I come in. Or what I do. Well. You wouldn't be there. Very long. But that's the kind of attitude.

[16:42] That this man. This criminal. Has towards Jesus. In the way that he's speaking to him. Are you not the Christ. Save yourself. And us.

He wants Jesus. To do things. His way. And in his time. Not. Recognizing. Who it is.

That's beside him. Now. Imagine if that was you there. And Jesus was beside you. What would you have said to him? What would you have asked of him?

What would you have shouted. Towards him? We see two very different responses. Between this man. And the second criminal. Which we'll see in a few moments.

But this first one. Is really just making a joke. Of Jesus. Because he's blind. To who he really is. And the way this man.

[17:40] Speaks. And the way he's behaving. Here as he knows where he is. He knows the danger. Of the situation he's in. And yet he's. He doesn't see that Jesus. Is able to help.

Well it reminds us. Of how often. We are like that ourselves. And especially. Maybe when we think of times. Like Easter. And Christmas. And these kinds.

Of occasions. Where we. We focus on the wrong things. I mean. As soon as I. Lift up this. Your eyes.

Are drawn towards it. Aren't they? You start thinking about this. But that's. Not the most important thing. As far from the most important thing.

Holidays. Are not the most important thing. About Easter. Food. Is not the most important thing. About Easter. Lambs. Are not the most important thing. About Easter.

[18:37] Remembering that the clocks changed last night. Is not the most important thing. About coming to hear. This message. The most important thing. Is the story that we share.

About the person. Who was there beside this criminal. So this criminal. He was blind. And he was mocking. Jesus.

And that's the danger. That we have ourselves. Do you. Do you make a joke of Jesus. At times. Do you make fun. Of Jesus. Or do you hear it around us. We hear it more and more.

These days. Where Jesus. Is just. A joke. That he wasn't. Real. That this wasn't. The reality. Of life. People deny him.

There's others. Who use his name. In a bad way. And it's so easy. To get caught up. In these ways. And that's what this criminal.

[19:32] Was like as well. He just got caught up. In the ways of everybody else. Around him. And he never realized. Who Jesus was. He didn't realize.

The danger. He was in. And that's what we all. Need to realize today. That we are in danger. We are in danger. Just like I was. On that rock fishing.

Of being cut off. From everything else. That we are in danger. Of being cut off. From God. If we carry on. Making just a joke. Of Jesus.

Or not trusting. In Jesus. This criminal. Was blind. To the opportunity. That was before him. But we are being told.

Today. Every one of us. Not to be like this. Not to just make fun. Of Jesus. Or make a joke of Jesus. Or not remember Jesus. At this time.

[20:27] But to remember him. So much. For what he came. To do. For us. So the first criminal. This first person. This first cross.

We see a blind thief. We don't want. To be like him. So we are going to read on. In a moment. We are going to see. The second cross.

And the man who was on that cross. And think about him. As a bold sinner. But before we do that. We are going to sing. Again. To God's praise. We are going to sing. In Psalm 26.

Psalm 26. The sing. Psalm's. Version. This is on page. 31. We are going to sing.

From verse. 7. Down to verse. 12. Psalm 26. At verse 7. Page. 31.

[21:24] And like. It says here. We are sharing. The story. Of all that. The Lord. Has done. For us. I'll tell. Of all your awesome deeds. Proclaiming loud.

Your praise. Your glory fills. Your dwelling place. I love. Your house. Always. We'll sing. From verse 7. Down to the end. Of the psalm. To God's praise.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Proclaiming loud your praise, your glory felt your dwelling place.

I love you as always. Sweep not away, my soul, O Lord, with those who hate your way.

[22:44] Nor take away my life with those who love to own and stay.

For their right hands are full of crimes. They plot iniquity, but I will lead a painless life.

In mercy set me free. My feet will stand with confidence upon a level place.

And in the people's gathering, I'll praise the Lord of grace.

So we come now to see the second cross. And here we see the second criminal.

[24:29] We're going to read there at verse 40 to verse 42. So this is the other criminal. But the other rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong. And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Well, this second criminal, first of all, we see that he was the same as the first. Because he had done something wrong.

He had done something wrong. But how do we see that he was different? How do we see that he was different to that first criminal?

Well, it's because he was seeing things differently. And there's three ways that we see that he was seeing things differently. And these are what made all the difference in the end.

[25:37] First of all, he sees that he had done wrong. He sees that he had done wrong. He sees his life.

He sees the wrongs that he has done. You see that in verse 41. It says, We indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. So he's saying, yes, we deserve this because we have done wrong.

Have you ever done something wrong? Have you ever done something that you weren't supposed to? You were told not to do it. I'm sure we've all done that.

We all do it every day of life in some way or other. And that's the reality of where we are as well.

Just like this criminal, we can all say we justly have done things wrong.

We are justly receiving that we are due because we have done the wrong thing. And there's no point in any of us trying to come to Jesus and hide these things that we've done wrong.

[26:44] That's what we do so often in our lives. When we've done something wrong, we try and hide it. We try and maybe keep it from people knowing about it.

And we try and hide it or fix it ourselves. But that's not going to work because Jesus already knows that we have done the wrong thing.

Jesus already knows everything that we have done wrong. And so this criminal is saying that. He is saying, we have done wrong. I have done wrong.

But then he also recognizes the situation that he's in. He realizes he's done wrong. But he also realizes that he is guilty before others.

Before the rulers of the day, the polices we would call them today. He knows that he's done wrong before them. But more importantly, he realizes that he's done wrong before God.

[27:49] He's done wrong before God. Look at what he says in verse 40. Do you not fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

It's a big word, condemnation. But it really means that he is lost. He realizes that he is lost before God. That there is nothing that he could do.

You don't see him here saying, I'm going to quickly change myself. I'm going to quickly make myself right. He knows he cannot do it.

But there's times, and I'm sure you have felt like this. Maybe you have feeling like this. Well, I'm going to sort my own life out. I'm going to fix all these things that I've done wrong in my life.

But you can't. And this man recognized that he couldn't either. And so we think of a word that's called repentance.

[28:52] And again, it's a word that we have to realize that it's about when we do something wrong, and what you see this criminal has done wrong, it kind of stops him in the direction he's going.

It stops him. But repentance is more than just stopping what you're doing wrong. Repentance means turning around and going in a different direction.

And that's the third thing that we see about this criminal. He recognized he'd done wrong. He recognized that he was lost. But the difference between him and the first criminal is he recognizes who it is that is beside him.

That Jesus is beside him, and that Jesus is able to help him. And that's the difference. He turned towards Jesus.

And very often that's what's lacking in our experience as well, in our lives as well. We know that we've done wrong. But we try to just bring Jesus into the mix in our own way and say, well, I'll sort it out and then I'll be right with Jesus.

[30:01] But that's not what it's about. It's about recognizing that only Jesus can make things right for us. And so we are to turn towards him.

And you see that in the way that he cries out in verse 42. And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And the psalm that we just sang, Psalm 26, it really is a psalm that reminds us of how the Lord sets us free.

It says in verse 10, For their right hands are full of bribes, they plot iniquity, those who are doing wrong. But then it says, but I will lead a blameless life.

In mercy set me free, the psalmist says. And that's the cry of this criminal. In mercy set me free. It doesn't say in mercy I'll free myself.

[30:59] But in mercy set me free. And that's what this criminal is looking for. The mercy, the grace of the Lord Jesus that will set him free.

And that is what his cry is all about here. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. You wonder what both these criminals had heard about Jesus.

Because they had heard about him. The first one said, are you not the Christ? He was making a joke about it. But the second one is saying, Jesus, remember me.

So they knew about Jesus. They would have heard, whether it was among other prisoners or around the crowds that were gathered at the time. They had heard about Jesus.

But they didn't recognize him in the same way. One made a laugh and a joke. But the other one, as we see here, is more bold. He's a bold sinner.

[31:58] He knows where to go. And he shouts on Jesus, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And it's a great place to arrive at that.

To recognize that we cannot help ourselves. But that all that we can do is cry out, Jesus, remember me.

Jesus, remember me. He believed in Jesus at this point. He looked to Jesus. And today, every one of us can do that as well.

You can look to Jesus and there you see the one who is able to remember you. And to help you. We have all done the wrong things in life.

We have all not listened to God's word. We have all turned away from the Bible, from Jesus, from God. Done our own things. But when we recognize that we have done wrong, that is where we come to that point of repentance.

[33:03] And that means turning. Not just stopping what we're doing, but turning. And turning towards Jesus. That's what this criminal did.

He turned and cried out to Jesus. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. So there we see the second criminal.

The second cross. A bold sinner. One who cries out to Jesus. And that is what we are to do. And to find our hope there as well.

And that then leads us to the third cross. And on the third cross, we see the blessed Savior. We see this.

I want to read just two verses to highlight this for us. First, verse 34. As they were put on the cross. In verse 34, Jesus said here, speaking to those soldiers who were around him.

[34:05] Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do. And then in verse 43. His reply to that criminal who had cried out. Jesus, remember me.

He said to him, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. So there were these two crosses with the criminals.

They had done wrong. But in the middle was a third cross. And here was one who was completely innocent. He had done nothing wrong.

And yet willingly gave his life. Alistair Begg has a clip about, a short clip from a sermon he preached about the man in the middle.

He's talking about the three crosses. And relating it especially to the second criminal that we looked at who says, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

[35:03] And it was how that middle man said he could come. It's worth watching if you haven't seen it before. The middle man said, I could come.

And that's what we see here as we look to the third cross. Here was Jesus, the one in the middle of the two criminals. And it is he who makes all the difference.

The second criminal saw what he deserved. That he had done wrong. And he looked at Jesus. And he saw him as one who didn't deserve it.

And yet he saw why he was doing it. He was doing it by mercy and by grace. That he and others who believe in him might be saved.

That's why he says, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And look at the reply of Jesus. Truly I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise.

[36:01] The love of Jesus there. Reminding us of his love for us today. What he was doing for us.

That him, man of sorrows, speaks of it. Bearing shame and scoffing rude. In my place condemned he stood. Sealed my pardon with his blood.

Hallelujah, what a savior. Guilty, helpless, lost were we. Blameless lamb of God was he. He sacrificed to set us free. Hallelujah, what a savior.

And that's who we see on the third cross. On the middle cross. It is the savior. And hallelujah, what a savior we have in him. The first thief mocked him.

And Jesus didn't reply to him. But the other thief, as he cried out, Jesus, remember me. Well, Jesus replied to him.

[37:00] And it's a beautiful reply. And as we think of our lives today, as you think of your life today, how are you looking at Jesus? How are you turning to Jesus?

Are you like the first one? He was just mocking him. Or are you crying like the second one? Jesus, remember me.

Because Jesus only replies to that second cry. He only replies to that criminal who cries out looking for mercy. And if you cry out looking for mercy, he will turn to you as well.

We can find that hope in him. This situation, it seemed hopeless in many ways. Even as they looked at Jesus, maybe they wondered, what can he do for us now?

And we know that many people turned away. His own disciples turned away at this time. But we have to come and see what he has done.

[38:05] And so this criminal who cried out, remember me. He found that hope in Jesus. And that's the hope that we can find today.

Many will be busy with lambing over these coming weeks. I want to share with you a little story about a shepherd who was going through that time of lambing.

And he was a very attentive shepherd. He knew his sheep well. And as he was going out this day to check on his sheep, he saw one of his sheep that had lambed.

But there was no sign of the lambs. The lambs weren't there with its mother. And he knew that this sheep was due to have twins. And so he went around and started looking for the lambs that she had had.

And eventually he came across the two lambs. But he found them in a ditch full of water. And the poor lambs, all that was above the water was their heads.

[39:08] The rest of their body was underwater. And he thought, immediately he thought the lambs had died. But then he saw one of them move. And so he reached down and took the two of them out of the water and realized they were both still alive.

And he took them home, dried them off, warmed them up and fed them. And they survived. They survived. They survived because the shepherd knew his sheep.

And he went looking for the lambs that were lost. And it's just a great reminder to us of what Jesus has come to do for us.

The reason why he was there on the middle cross. He was there as a saviour. And he could look on us and think, they're gone.

They're past it. They cannot be saved. But he doesn't. Instead he looks on us in love. And he looks on us, inviting us to himself.

[40:14] To his kingdom. To all that he offers us. And so here we are reminded of the Easter story. We are reminded of how important it is to listen to what Jesus has done.

That we might find life in him. One writer looked on this passage and the three crosses and said, One man died in sin.

That was the first thief who didn't acknowledge Jesus. He died in sin. He said then the second one, one man died to sin. Which means that he turned to Jesus.

Turned away from sin and turned to Jesus. He died to sin. And then he said the third one, the third cross, one died for sin.

And that's what Jesus did. He died for sin. So on these crosses, one man died in sin. One man died to sin.

[41:19] And one man died for sin. And we are to look to the one who died for sin. For your sin and for my sin. And that is the good news of Easter.

That Jesus came to die for our sins. But he also rose from the grave. And we know that through that he is victorious. And that we can have that victory in him.

So we look to the middle cross. To a saviour. And put our trust in him. Let us pray. Lord our gracious God.

We do thank you for all your goodness to us. For the way you remember us. And help us so we might remember you. Remember you as in all that you have done. And that we might look to you and cry.

Jesus remember me. In my need. In my sin. That we would find life in you. So hear us. Go before us. Pardon us.

[42:22] In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 36.

We'll sing from verse 7 to verse 10. Page 44 of the Psalm books. Psalm 36 at verse 7 to verse 10. How precious is your steadfast love. What confidence it brings. Both high and low. Find shelter in the shadow of your wings.

So we can find that shelter. That refuge. As we look to the Lord Jesus. Verse 7 to 10. To God's praise. How precious is your steadfast love.

What confidence it brings. To God's praise. Both high and low find shelter in the shadow of your wings.

[43:45] They feast within your house and wing, from sweet all your delight.

For with you is the soul of life, in your light we delight.

To those who know you as their God, your steadfast love impart.

Maintain your righteousness to those of you and of right are.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

[45:14] Amen. Amen.