

Teacher and Friend

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Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, church. Turn with me in your Bibles. And there are now Bibles in the pews if you'd like to use them, although we'll keep the words on the screen, I think. Or maybe not. Either way, John 14, starting at verse 25.

And before we read the scripture, let me just give you a few updates, as Jeff mentioned, about the format of our worship services going forward. We'll continue, as we did today, having open seating on the floor of the sanctuary, so you don't need to RSVP anymore, and just show up as you did today.

Sit anywhere you like. Also, starting next Sunday, we will follow the new CDC and Connecticut mask guidelines. So that means if you are fully vaccinated, masks will be optional, indoors and outdoors. You can still wear a mask if you want to, but you don't have to.

If you're not fully vaccinated, please continue to wear a mask indoors, but you can take it off when we go outdoors. If you're feeling a bit more cautious, but you would like to come to in-person services, we will have some socially distanced seating zones in the balcony and in the overflow seating area.

And in those areas, everybody will continue to wear masks, and the seats will be separated apart. So if you would like to sit in one of those areas, RSVP to the office during the week.

[1 : 1 3] If that would help you to be able to come in person, but to feel comfortable at this point, you can RSVP during the week or talk to an usher when you arrive. As we adjust to these changes, let's continue to love and honor one another to, as the scripture says, make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace, as well as Hebrews encourages us not to give up meeting together, right?

As much as possible, meeting together in person is how God designed the church to work, and we've tried to make the best of a difficult season. And again, we know that that season is sort of ending in different ways for different people or continuing in different ways for different people.

But we have, as the elders, just tried to do our best to offer a variety of ways through the live stream, through the indoor and outdoor services for people to stay connected. And so we just want to encourage you, continue to find ways to stay connected even as we adjust to the new guidelines.

If you have questions or concerns, please talk to any of the elders. So if you're sort of struggling maybe with some of the, just either the new guidelines or just questions about what does it look like for you or for your family to participate well in the life of the church, we'd love to talk with you about it so we can know your concerns and understand where people are better in our congregation as well as so we can pray for you and encourage you.

So having said that, let's read the scripture. These are Jesus' words to his disciples in John 14, beginning at verse 25. Hear God's word today.

[2 : 44] These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

You heard me say to you, I am going away and I will come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place so that when it does take place, you may believe.

I will no longer talk much with you for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father.

Rise, let us go from here. So I want you to imagine yourself as one of the 11 remaining disciples sitting in the upper room.

[3 : 50] The supper has ended. Night has fallen. Judas has left. You don't quite understand why he left, but it all felt somewhat ominous. And you're all sitting around the room, looking at each other and listening to Jesus.

And you hear Jesus say things like, these things I've spoken to you while I'm still with you, but I'm going away. I'm going to the Father.

I won't talk much more with you because the ruler of this world is coming. What thoughts would be running through your mind as you heard Jesus say these things?

What emotions would you be feeling as you hear Jesus tell you that he would soon be gone? For the last three years, if you were one of Jesus' 12 disciples, he had been your teacher.

And he has been a teacher unlike any other teacher that you have ever heard or known about. You know, throughout the Gospels, it says over and over that Jesus taught with authority.

[4 : 56] In other words, he didn't just sort of summarize all the interpretations of other religious scholars that had come before him. He wasn't tentative or wavering or hazy in his words.

He interpreted the Scriptures with confidence and clarity as if he had written those words himself. But Jesus wasn't only authoritative in his teaching.

He was also amazingly accessible. In the New Testament Gospels, there are 61 occasions when Jesus answered somebody's question.

Either a disciple's question or a curious onlooker's question or even a hostile opponent's question. There's 61 occasions recorded for us where Jesus answered people's questions.

And as one of his students, you had the freedom to walk up to him and ask him any question that was on your mind. Anytime you had forgotten something, anytime you were perplexed or confused or wanted to know more, he had been there as your teacher.

[5 : 58] But Jesus hadn't only been your teacher, he had also been your friend. Jesus has been an ever-present companion. A steady shepherd faithfully leading his sheep.

Now, as a disciple of Jesus, you have experienced a range of reactions from the outside world. Sometimes people have been hostile. At other times, they've been indifferent. At other times, they've been curious.

At other times, they've been surprisingly receptive. But the one constant amidst all the changing reactions of the world around you is that Jesus has always been there with you.

Now, there are only a couple of times in the Gospels when Jesus left his disciples alone. One of the few times when he did so is recorded in John chapter 6, beginning at verse 16.

And this story comes right after Jesus had taught and fed the 5,000 on the hillside. And it says that evening, Jesus went up on a mountain to pray.

[6 : 58] And his disciples got into a boat to row across the lake to the other side. And it says that before the disciples made it to their destination, they were rowing across the Sea of Galilee, the Lake of Galilee, which was a large body of water.

The sun went down, the wind picked up, and the sea got rough. And by this time, they had been rowing three or four miles. Now, normally, if you've rowed three or four miles, that's a good workout, right?

An hour, hour and a half on calm waters. And it's a good workout. But after dark, on choppy waters, facing a headwind, and you're still not at your destination.

And, by the way, what the disciples had done all day is they had distributed the food and cleaned up afterwards when Jesus fed these thousands of people. So imagine you've, you know, if you've ever worked waiting tables at a restaurant, imagine you just did a 12-hour shift.

Serving people, cleaning up after them, and then you got in a boat and rowed three or four miles against the wind. And how are you feeling now? And it's the middle of the night, by the way. Well, what did Jesus do to his disciples when they found themselves in that situation?

[8 : 11] Alone, afraid, overwhelmed, exhausted, he took the initiative to come to them. Walking on the water. Of course, when they first saw him walking on the water, that freaked them out even more.

But then he said to them, it is I. Don't be afraid. You see, that's who Jesus had been for them all along. He had been their friend who spoke to them, who spoke peace to them, who said to them, I'm here with you.

Don't be afraid. And yet now, he's saying to his disciples, I'm going to leave. And they're thinking, are we going to be left out on the boat in the middle of the lake again and he won't come?

And we'll just be left to fend for ourselves. Figuratively, at least. Jesus had been their teacher and he had been their friend, but soon he would be gone.

Now, maybe you can identify in one way or another with what Jesus' first disciples might have been thinking or feeling. Maybe you're feeling anxiety and facing an uncertain future.

[9 : 17] Or some fear of being left alone to fend for yourself. Confusion or weariness in the face of opposition. Last week, Pastor Matt spoke about the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised.

And Jesus described the Holy Spirit, he named the Holy Spirit as the helper, or that word could be translated, the advocate. The one who comes alongside to strengthen and encourage.

In the Holy Spirit, we have one who is like Jesus himself, just as personal and just as powerful and just as authoritative and just as accessible as Jesus was to his disciples when he was on earth with them.

Now, today Jesus expands on that promise of the Holy Spirit by focusing on these two themes. First, the Holy Spirit will be your teacher. And second, the Holy Spirit will be your friend.

Jesus had been their teacher and their friend. Now Jesus is saying, I will be gone, but the Holy Spirit will be your teacher and the Holy Spirit will be your friend. So I want to sit with these two promises about the work of the Holy Spirit.

[10 : 18] And I want us to consider what they would have meant for Jesus' disciples back then, as well as what they mean for us today. So first promise, the Holy Spirit will be your teacher.

We see this in verses 25 and 26. He will teach you all things, Jesus says, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. So Jesus was promising the Holy Spirit would continue the ministry of teaching that Jesus had engaged in with his disciples throughout his earthly ministry.

So Jesus' disciples wouldn't be left without any instruction or without any correction or without the word and wisdom of God. No. Jesus says, the Father will send the Holy Spirit in my name, that is, as my representative, in my place.

You might even say the Holy Spirit is Jesus' successor on earth in carrying out the mission of God the Father. Now Jesus had taught his disciples many things during his earthly ministry.

You can read them in any of the four gospels. But before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and ascension to glory and sending of the Spirit, his disciples failed to understand much of what he taught.

[11 : 24] And you can see this in all four of the gospels. It's perhaps a theme that's most prominent in Mark's gospel, the obtuseness of the disciples. But I'll just give you a few examples just from John's gospel, just from the gospel we're reading here.

Chapter 2, Jesus cleared out the money changers from the temple. And he said, destroy this temple and I'll raise it again in three days. And nobody quite understood what he was saying.

And John says, only after Jesus' resurrection did his disciples remember that word and believe what he had said. Going on, chapter 4, Jesus was talking with the Samaritan woman at the well.

Well, his disciples came back with some lunch. And Jesus says, I have food to eat that you don't know anything about. And his disciples sort of looked at each other strangely and said, did somebody else bring him lunch?

Ahead of us? And he said, no, no, that's not it. Talking about spiritual food. Right? They didn't get what he meant there either. Then in chapter 10, Jesus used the metaphor of sheep who can distinguish a shepherd's voice from a stranger's voice.

[12 : 28] And it says, chapter 10, verse 6, this figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. Chapter 11, Jesus told his disciples, let's go to Judea because our friend Lazarus has died.

And his disciples couldn't understand why he'd want to go back to Judea because people wanted to kill him there. Then chapter 12, he wrote into Jerusalem. On a donkey. And John says, his disciples didn't understand these things at first.

And chapter 13, he washed their feet at supper. And he said, you don't understand why I'm doing this now, but later on you will. Right? Over and over in the Gospels, you see this pattern.

Jesus is teaching them, but they only understand a limited part of what he's saying. There's a lot more that just isn't clear to them in the moment.

They might have remembered the words, but they didn't get the meaning. And why didn't they get it? Because they didn't yet see the big picture of who Jesus was and why he had come into the world and how his coming was the long-awaited fulfillment of what God had promised to Israel for hundreds and thousands of years.

[13 : 38] You see, only after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and ascension into glory, only after those things happened, would the big picture come into clearer view in hindsight.

Hindsight. Right? We experience that sometimes in our own lives. And we can, right? Sometimes we look back and we say, hindsight's 20-20. Well, I'd say not quite. Right? Sometimes we look back on things in hindsight.

Our memories can become distorted. So it's not always 20-20. But still, sometimes there are things that become clearer to us in hindsight rather than in the moment. And that was true with Jesus' disciples.

In the moment when he was there, they didn't understand the whole picture. Only Jesus saw that. But afterwards, with the help of the Holy Spirit, they would. And really, this is what the entire New Testament is about.

Right? The New Testament is a collection of 27 books written by about 10 different followers of Jesus over the course of a few decades during the first century. Some of the authors were eyewitnesses of Jesus himself, like Peter, John, and James.

[14 : 40] Others, like Mark and Luke, were closely connected to that original group of Jesus' disciples. But each of these books, in its own way, sort of looks back on the facts and the meaning of Jesus.

His life, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension. So in some ways, the whole New Testament is doing what Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would help his disciples to do. That is, to remember what he said and understand its meaning and apply it in a whole bunch of new situations that they would face as they proclaim the message of Jesus throughout the world.

So just a little bit about how the New Testament does this. The four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, focus on the historical events. They tell the story of how Jesus' life and ministry unfolded, where it happened, what Jesus actually said to his disciples and to the crowds in some detail.

They name the places. They tell us who was there on the scene. A lot of the people who are named in the Gospels are named because they were known individuals who could have been consulted during the time that the books were written because they were witnesses to the truth of the events.

So the people who are named in the Gospels are not just named randomly. They're named because they were people that if you were living in that time and place, you could go and talk to. You could go and talk to Mary.

[16 : 03] You could go and talk to Peter. You could talk to John. And they would say, yes, it happened like that. Now, the epistles or letters, which are sort of most of the bulk of the rest of the New Testament, written by Paul and Peter, James and John and Jude, and an unknown author who wrote Hebrews, in these books don't give us as much historical detail about the facts, but they focus on the meaning and the application.

Why did Jesus come? Why did he die? Why did he rise again? What does it mean for Christians to follow Jesus after he's gone with the power of the Holy Spirit?

So here's the point. Now, one way that, in fact, perhaps the primary way that Jesus promised in verse 26 has been fulfilled is in the writing and the compilation and the preservation of the New Testament.

Jesus says, the Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. And that's part of a large part of what the New Testament contains, especially the Gospels, Jesus' own words.

And Jesus says, the Holy Spirit will teach you all things. In other words, all that you need to know. He'll help you figure it out. So one writer put it this way, the Holy Spirit's teaching is neither wholly innovative, it's not sort of radically new, coming out of nowhere, nor is it simply repetitive of Jesus' teaching.

[17 : 28] Right? So it's not like Jesus led his disciples down one path, and then the Holy Spirit took over and leads the disciples down a different path. No. The Holy Spirit and Jesus and God the Father are all on the same page.

They're completely united in their purpose and mission. And so the Holy Spirit will never lead us in a different direction than Jesus does. He will never lead us in a different direction than the words that he inspired in the New Testament.

At the same time, the Holy Spirit's teaching, what Jesus promises to his disciples, is more than mere repetition. Right? The Holy Spirit is more than, I would say, a tape recorder, but that dates me way back.

Right? Or it's more than, right, an MP3 player that records what Jesus said and just replays, replays, replays. Right? No, the Holy Spirit is a person.

Right? Just as personal as Jesus. And so the Holy Spirit equips us as Jesus' disciples to face new challenges, new opportunities, and new situations.

[18 : 35] Right? When Jesus was on earth, his disciples were living in one place at one time. In the Middle East, in the first few decades of the first century.

But the Holy Spirit has taught and led the church for the last 2,000 years to the ends of the earth. Right? And there are all kinds of new challenges and new opportunities and new situations that God's people find ourselves in.

And yet the Holy Spirit takes what he inspired in the first century in the words of Scripture and helps us through that and through his presence with us to figure out the next steps in the place wherever God's put us.

Right? He never leaves us on a limb without anything else. You know, even this year, right, the church throughout the world has had to grapple with a worldwide pandemic.

And guess what? Almost none of us were prepared for it. In all my seminary classes, we never discussed how to lead a church through a pandemic. So we've tried to build the flame as we were flying.

[19 : 45] We've done the best we could. I'm sure we could learn lots of things. But, you know, what has been so encouraging is that I cannot count the number of conversations I have had with many of you asking, what has God been teaching you over this past year?

And so many people are like, this Scripture passage has come alive in a new and fresh way. Right? This, God has shown a spotlight on an area of my life that I hadn't really examined for a while.

God has helped me to treasure the gift of gathering together in person with people when it's been so challenging in the last year. Right? There's all kinds of ways that the truths of Scripture have come alive to us in fresh ways.

And that's a way that the Holy Spirit continues to teach us. The Holy Spirit will give us what we need. So if you're facing a really challenging situation, then the Holy Spirit can come through in really powerful and amazing and even miraculous ways.

Right? There's nothing that's too big. For God to handle. And so just as he equipped the disciples in the first century, he can equip us for whatever we're dealing with today.

[20 : 57] The Holy Spirit is our teacher. So that's the first point. But second, Jesus also says that the Holy Spirit is our friend. Verse 27, he says, Peace, peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. In chapter 15, Jesus is going to say, I'm going to give you my joy and I'm going to give you my love.

Abide in my love. Abide in my joy. Love, joy and peace. And when the Apostle Paul talks about the fruits of the Holy Spirit in Galatians, guess what heads the list?

Love, joy and peace. Jesus says, I'm going to give you my love, my joy, my peace. And so we experience these things through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our friend who brings us peace.

Just as Jesus brought peace to his disciples. Right? Jesus, for Jesus' disciples back in the upper room, Jesus had been the one who comforted them in their sorrows, who calmed their fears, who mediated their conflicts, who redirected their frustrations and ambitions.

[22 : 13] And Jesus would no longer be there to say, it is I. Don't be afraid. But he says, guess what? The Holy Spirit will. He'll be there to keep on doing those things that you've seen me doing.

The Holy Spirit is just as real and personal as Jesus. He's just as real as the flesh and blood guy who prayed for his disciples on the hillside for half the night and then walked out to them on the water in the middle of the night when they were overwhelmed and exhausted and afraid.

And throughout the rest of the New Testament, we see that when Jesus' disciples are exhausted and overwhelmed or fearful and anxious, the Holy Spirit comes alongside us and says, take courage. It is I.

Don't be afraid. Just a few examples of where we see this happening in the New Testament. In Acts chapter 18, the apostle Paul goes to Corinth. And it says certain people in Corinth opposed and reviled him.

That is, they talked badly about him and slandered him. And in chapter 18, verse 9, it says, The Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, Do not be afraid.

[23 : 23] But go on speaking. And do not be silent. For I am with you. No one will attack you to harm you. For I have many in this city who are my people.

Or later on in Acts, Acts 27, Paul was a passenger on a ship that got caught in a bad storm. It was a larger ship.

There were 200-something passengers aboard. It was traveling across the Mediterranean. It was during the wrong season of the year that you really shouldn't be sailing across the Mediterranean. And the ship was caught in a storm for many days.

It says they, for several days, they saw neither sun nor stars, and they gave up all hope of being rescued. But Paul stood up and said, This very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship.

And he said, Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you. So he said, Take heart, men. Don't be afraid.

[24 : 23] Or Revelation 2, 10, the Holy Spirit's message to the church in the city of Smyrna. It begins, Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation.

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Now, what's the common thread in these instances where the Holy Spirit gives peace and assurance to God's people?

The common thread is they're facing trials, storms, and persecution. And that's one of the main differences between the peace Jesus gives and the peace that the world gives.

Jesus says, Not as the world gives do I give to you. All right, what does the world say? The world says peace is found in escaping from conflict, trial, or difficulty.

Peace is found in getting away on vacation to a secluded place, or moving to a quieter neighborhood, or maybe distancing ourselves from people who are difficult to deal with, or putting on our noise-canceling headphones and losing ourselves in a TV show.

[25 : 43] Right? In one way or another, the world says, You can find peace by putting the Do Not Disturb sign on your front door. That's the kind of peace the world offers. Leave me alone, let me do whatever I want to do without side interference, and that's how you'll find peace.

Now, now many of these things that the world offers are not inherently bad. Vacations, quiet neighborhoods, appropriate boundaries and relationships, none of those things are not inherently bad.

But there are two problems with the world's promise of peace. First of all, it's completely self-centered. The world's version of peace has nothing to do with God at all.

It's only about finding peace within ourselves or at best within a limited circle of other human beings. The second problem with the world's promise of peace is that it's not sustainable or realistic in a fallen world.

Right? The world is full of turmoil and conflict. All our attempts at finding peace on the world's terms will eventually, inevitably, be rudely interrupted unless we continue to distance ourselves more and more and more and more and go into the middle of nowhere and even then we'll have to deal with the unrest in our own heart, which sometimes is enough to leave any of us in turmoil just dealing with ourselves.

[27 : 12] D.A. Carson writes, the world is powerless to give lasting peace. There is sufficient hatred, selfishness, bitterness, malice, anxiety, and fear that every attempt at peace is rapidly swamped.

But Jesus displays transcendent peace. His own peace throughout his perilous hour of suffering and death. death. And by that death he absorbs in himself the malice of others, the sin of the world, and introduces the promised peace from God in a way no one had envisaged.

You see, if you read the rest of the Gospel of John and you notice the character of Jesus leading up to his own crucifixion, which was brutal and shameful, Jesus is at peace.

He knows that God is carrying out his plan. Now, Jesus also felt anguish. At some point, it says Jesus was troubled.

Right? Or in Matthew and Mark, record Jesus saying from the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Which is a quote from a larger psalm and should be interpreted in the context of the whole psalm.

[28 : 30] But Jesus felt anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane. He sweated drops of blood. But Jesus was also at peace the whole way along. And if you read John's account of the crucifixion, John sort of emphasizes that.

At the end of the day, Jesus says, it is finished. It's done. It's accomplished. Jesus is at peace because he knows that God is carrying out his plan and his Father will not ultimately abandon him.

Earlier in the service, we read from Isaiah 54, which is God's promise of peace to an afflicted and storm-tossed people. You know, if you read the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 54 comes right after Isaiah 53.

And you know what Isaiah 53 talks about? It's a prophecy of the atoning death of a suffering servant. Isaiah 53 says, he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. By his wounds, we are healed. And chapter 54 comes after the work of that suffering servant who died in the place of others, who died so that others who were not at peace with God might have peace with God and the forgiveness of their sins.

[30 : 07] So you see, Jesus is promising his peace and he's promising that the Holy Spirit will be their teacher. In fact, chapter 54, Isaiah 54, 13 brings these themes together.

It says, all your children will be taught by the Lord and great shall be the peace of your children. So the promise of the Holy Spirit being our teacher and the promise of the Holy Spirit bringing us peace, all is rooted in the work that Jesus would do in dying for us on the cross.

When Jesus promised his disciples peace, he wasn't promising them an easy life. He wasn't promising them vacations or quiet neighborhoods or a way to avoid difficult people, but he was promising God's very own presence to sustain us through conflict and storms and opposition.

Is everything, should we, everything going okay back there? Should we stop and pray or should we keep going? Okay. Thank you, those of you who are caring for our brother or sister.

Jesus promises his disciples peace. And in his systematic theology, Wayne Grudem defines peace as the orderly activity of God.

[31 : 44] And that's an interesting definition. That's not the definition that would have come first to my mind. But he connects these peace and order. Right? God is not a God of confusion or disorder, but of peace.

Right? God is steadily working out, intentionally working out his plan and purposes in the world. And so we can be at peace because God has peace within himself.

Right? God is not anxiously fretting over the future of the world. And so we can know this peace that Jesus gives because God is carrying out his purposes providentially.

And I think sometimes we think of peace and we think of the peace that I can feel on my own terms. a subjective feeling. But when the Bible talks about the peace of God, it is talking about something we can experience, but it's actually talking about something that's an objective reality.

Right? The peace that comes from God, that God has within himself that he bestows upon us, that even in the midst of all the turmoil and all the uprisings in the world, that God is steadily carrying out his plan.

[32 : 59] And so we can have peace in resting in his sovereignty. You know, sometimes the peace of God enables us to lay our head down on the pillow and go right to sleep and wake up rested and refreshed the next morning.

And some psalms talk about that. Psalm 4 says, In peace I will lie down and sleep for you alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety. But you know, God is still working out his purposes even if we're awake in the middle of the night and wish we could go back to sleep.

But, and there's other psalms that talk about this. Psalm 77 was written by a man who couldn't sleep and who was troubled in the middle of the night, wide awake.

And so he wrote this prayer, he wrote this psalm to help his heart turn to the Lord and find peace in the Lord, even in the middle of a troubled night. When pastor put it this way, God's peace is not like anesthesia that temporarily numbs us.

God's peace is a gift that helps us to keep going. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

[34 : 18] See, the Holy Spirit is our teacher and the Holy Spirit is our friend. God, let's close in a word of prayer. Father God, we pray, we thank you for this promise of the Lord Jesus, that the Holy Spirit would be our teacher and our friend.

We pray that we would be taught by you through your word and by your Holy Spirit, bringing that to life within our heart. We pray that we would know your peace, even in the midst of turmoil and storms.

We pray that we would know that you are carrying out your purposes for good in our lives and in this world. Thank you for that gift. In Jesus' name, amen.