

# Today You Will Be With Me In Paradise

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Date: 09 February 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] Shall we turn once again to that portion of scripture that we read together with regard to the crucifixion of our Saviour.

And we shall read once again in verse 43. We shall read in verse 42 first.

And the thief said, Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom. And he, Jesus, said to him, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.

Today you will be with me in paradise. The last time I was here we sought to speak a little bit about the first saying of the cross.

And we turn again to the cross today to look this time at the second saying of the cross. The second of seven sayings that our Saviour said when he was being crucified.

[ 1 : 11 ] And we shall look under this as the Lord will help us under two headings. The first being the words of the penitent thief on the cross.

And secondly, the words of Christ to the penitent thief on the cross. There are very few people who open their eyes in the morning.

And as they open their eyes the thought comes to them. Today will be the day that I will die. I don't suppose any of us in here today thought that.

We may very well have opened our eyes and said today might be the day that we will die. But on this day our Saviour knew that that particular day was going to be the day he would die.

And not just to him but it was also revealed to the penitent thief. That he too would be in the exact same category. When the Lord said to him today you will be with me in paradise.

[ 2 : 24 ] We will refer to this thief that was saved on the cross as the penitent thief. It's all I've ever known since I've grown up. And I'm sure you have heard many sermons on this before.

But hopefully there will be something in here today to encourage us as the Lord's people. And perhaps more importantly to challenge us as those who have yet to trust fully, completely in the Lord as our Saviour.

If I had brought the dictionary that I had mentioned earlier on with me today. As I have said the word gooder wouldn't have been in it. But the word penitent would have been in it.

And the word penitent simply means to feel or to show sorrow or regret for something that you have done. Something that you have done wrong.

It's what we would know today as being repentant. And those of us who have placed our trust in the Lord know exactly what that means.

[ 3 : 30 ] Here is this man, this thief, who was the penitent thief. So we shall look at our first heading then today.

Which is the words of the penitent thief on the cross. We find these words in verse 42. When he said, Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

If this was the only gospel that we had, we would think that this thief that was saved was in some ways a better man than the other thief on the other side of Christ.

Because the thief on the other side of Christ was one who was mocking our Lord. But when we read in the book of Matthew, and in Matthew's account in chapter 27, we find something very different.

In verse 44 we read, And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. This isn't revealed to us in Luke's account.

[ 4 : 43 ] But what is happening here is that before this man, this penitent thief was saved, he was somebody who was filled with utter hatred for Jesus Christ.

And he was no different, as we have said, to the other thief. He was no different to all the other haters that were found gathered around the cross that day. He was in the exact same experience.

Hating Jesus Christ. Here are two men on the very brink of eternity. Here are two men that are dying. Here are two men that are being crucified.

And they are all caught up. They are both caught up in the awful sin of mocking and cursing our Saviour Jesus Christ. Whilst he is being crucified.

As I am sure you know already, when in these days three men were being put to death, it was the usual procedure. That men were crucified.

[ 5 : 47 ] People were crucified and they were either judged by the Romans to be slaves or rebels. And they were crucified in groups of three very often with the one in the middle being classified as the worst of all three.

And here is Christ with two thieves on either side of him. In the version that we have read here. In verse 38 we read.

One of the criminals who were hanged riled at him saying, Are you not the Christ? But in other versions, it is not, are you not the Christ?

It is the word if. And that makes it even worse. If you are the Christ. Here is a satanic if from the very put of hell.

And here it is coming from both sides of Christ on the cross. As he is dying on the cross. This satanic if.

[ 6 : 52 ] If you are the Christ, save yourself and us. This was not a prayer from these two thieves.

This was not something that they are saying with a desire to be saved from their sins. This is something that they are just wanting in order that they could be set free.

And so we ask the question. Why is it? Why would it appear when we think in our minds high? Why is it that these two men were such haters of our Lord?

What did they possibly have against him? When they were all being crucified. And put to death in the same way. Why did they hate him so much?

Well the only thing that I can think of with regard to that. Is that it would seem as we think of Christ being crucified that day. And as we think of the crowd that are cheering and shouting.

[ 8 : 02 ] And spitting on him. And hurling abuse at him. And mocking him. And celebrating and being overjoyed with the fact that this man, this imitator, this imposter has been put to death.

Here are two men who are feeling so left out of it. It must have been horrendous to have been crucified in such a way.

But these two men would no doubt have felt so irrelevant. Because it would appear and it does appear that Christ is the one who is getting all the attention.

And as the angry mob are spewing out their hatred from the very put of hell itself towards our saviour. It's as if nobody cares. One jot.

About the two thieves on either side. And this is what intensifies their hatred towards them. And so they join in. They join in with the angry mob.

[ 9 : 16 ] Despite the fact it was so difficult for them to speak. Despite the fact that it was so hard for them to breathe. Together in unison. One on either side of our saviour.

They join in. In the mockery. Of Jesus Christ. That is why it is so good for us to read all four accounts of the Gospels.

Because when you do that. You are able to see the full insight of what is actually taking place. It's hard to picture and it's hard to understand.

And it's hard to think to yourself. Was there ever a man in this world. Who was hated to such an intense degree. As Jesus Christ was in these hours at that time.

Where even those who are put to death with him. Are mocking him. But the wonder of the word of God.

[ 10 : 21 ] And the wonder of grace. Is that it wasn't by chance that Christ was placed in the centre. It wasn't by chance that Christ was one of the three.

That were being crucified that day. Little did Pilate know. That when he singled out Christ. To be portrayed as the worst of the three men.

Worse than either one of the two thieves. Little did he know that day. That what he was actually doing in his mockery of Christ. Was that he was fulfilling the words of the prophet Isaiah.

From many hundreds of years ago. Where he said in that wonderful chapter in 53. And he poured out his soul unto death.

And he was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he bore the sin of many. And he made intercession for our transgressors. For the transgressors.

[11:18] Every single part and aspect and step. That Christ takes on his way to the cross. And every single one of the seven sayings. They have all been prophesied in the Old Testament.

And there is nothing that is taking place here that is accidental. Or by chance. It is all something that is being fulfilled in scripture.

From many, many years ago. Oh, what a saviour we have. Those of us who love him in here today. And that's the question of do we love him? Do we trust him? Do we love this man who went and endured these depths of shame?

Do we love Christ? Do we love Christ? The one who was surrounded at his birth with animals? And surrounded at his death with thieves?

[12:18] What does Christ mean to you today? What is your relationship with him today? How much lower could he sink to provide salvation and hope for you and I?

Notice as you picture this scene in your mind's eye. That both these thieves have equal access to Christ. There is one on either side of them.

They are both in the exact same situation. They are both wicked people. They are both dying. They are both in need of salvation. They are both on their way to an endless eternity.

And they both urgently need forgiveness. And yet we will see that only one asks for that. Yet in that experience, only one is saved.

And one is lost. One goes to heaven. And one goes to hell. And they are both side by side.

[13:34] With our saviour being crucified. You know it's solemn. And as we look at the first steps of this man's repentance.

We see what he reads. We read what he says in verse 40. But he rebuked him saying, Do you not fear the Lord? It's as if the first thing he says is that he is showing concern for the other thief that is mocking him.

As we read this, it would appear that in a moment the penitent thief has gone from mocking the Lord to stopping to mock the Lord.

It's as if in an instant it stops. And what is it that makes the penitent thief say this? We're not sure. We can only assume that there are many different things. Perhaps it was that he had in time past heard Christ been preaching. Perhaps he had witnessed a miracle.

[14:44] Perhaps it was the words that were written that caught his eye on the cross of Christ, the King of the Jews. Perhaps it was simply he was struck with the way that Christ had spoken to Pilate.

Perhaps it was just the words of Christ when he said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. But all of a sudden, this man stops in his tracks.

He stops with the mockery. He stops and he challenges the other thief. And you know, it's not an easy thing to stop what you're doing when the Lord speaks to you.

I remember when the Lord spoke to me in 1991. And I told and I went to visit my friends and there was about 13 of us who would go out every weekend.

And I went to visit them and I went to phone some of them to say, Never again will I go out with you. Never again am I going to be caught. Never again am I going to be caught. Never again am I going to be caught.

[15:53] My life is changing and I'm going in a different direction. I was stopped in my tracks the same as this man. And it's not an easy thing to do to tell those that are nearest and dearest to you that you're going to change your ways.

But here this man has given the ability to do that. And he's given the grace to do that. Because the Holy Spirit is now in his life. The Holy Spirit is working in his heart.

The Lord is speaking to him. And he is challenged. And he knows that he is dying. And he knows that he is in need of forgiveness. And notice what he says.

He says, he doesn't say, Does thou not fear punishment? He doesn't say that at all. He says, Do you not fear God? And then he goes on to say that they are in the same condemnation.

And that he deserves what he is getting. Do you not fear God? Here's a man. And he knows exactly what the meaning of the proverb is.

[17:07] The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And the knowledge of the Holy One is in sight. Has that not been the starting point for many of us in here?

In our lives of grace? I can't remember the moment that the Lord... I don't know the moment that the Lord came into my life. I'm not one of those people who can take you to the seat and tell you the text.

But I know the moment that I knew I was on my way to hell. And the devil will always come and say to us, You can't be a Christian if you don't know the minute you were saved.

What are the rubbish? Here's a man who knew he was on his way to hell. Here's a man who knew he didn't have long to go. Here's a man who asks for forgiveness.

So he asks the thief a question and then he rebukes him. It's incredible what is taking place here. He's saying to him, We deserve what we're getting.

[18:20] We are in the same condemnation, you and me. We are getting our justice. But then he goes on and he says, But this man has done nothing wrong.

Here's a man who's acknowledging his guilt in the presence of the Lord. Here's a man who is broken.

Here's a man who is passing sentence upon himself. Here's a man who is no longer making excuses for himself. Here's a man who is broken.

Here's a man who is broken. And this is where even in this portion of scripture it becomes even more incredible. And the second confession he makes is the confession of Christ's innocence.

As we have said, But this man has done nothing wrong. And now this penitent thief, He joins the list of people in the lead up to Christ being crucified.

[19:47] Who have already said the same thing. Let's count them. You've got Pilate. You've got Herod.

You've got Pilate's wife. You've got Judas Iscariot. Four people instrumental in the crucifixion of Christ. And all four of them. Saying that Christ was an innocent.

And a just man. And yet they have all played their part. What courage this man has.

And it's remarkable. I don't know if you've ever thought about it. But it's incredible how Christ hears what he says.

And you've got to remember and recognize that these people were not whispering venom. These people were screaming venom.

[20:52] And Christ is quiet. And Christ doesn't retaliate. And Christ doesn't seek to bring their lives to an end.

Or to punish them in any way. He doesn't ask. He had the power to have them all killed there and then. If he wished to do so. But then he would have failed in his work.

As an interceder. He remains silent. In the midst of all this cursing. And in the midst of all this anger. And in the midst of all this hatred towards him.

But in the midst of all that shouting and yelling. He hears the whimper of a dying thief. Who says to him. Jesus remember me.

When you come into your kingdom. And it's remarkable. That Christ immediately. As soon as he hears that. Answers him back.

[21:51] With these words. Truly I say to you today. You will be with me. In paradise. What courage this thief has.

As he has stopped. With his hatred. And he is no longer taking part. In what everybody else is doing. And here is a man. And he defies the influence of the other thief.

And he defies. He defies the influence of the angry mob. And he stands alone. And he addresses Christ.

For who he is. The Messiah. And what an honor he bestows. Upon Jesus Christ. By doing that. And not just that.

But we read in verse 42. That he also recognizes Christ's kingship. He doesn't just recognize him. As one who can provide forgiveness.

[22:49] But he recognizes Christ as king. When you come into your kingdom. He recognizes Christ as king.

This man who has been deserted. By his disciples. This man who has been mocked. By his own nation. And this man who is now suffering.

As a pretender. And yet here. On Calvary. We have a thief being crucified. Making a public profession of faith. That Christ is indeed the Messiah.

It's just wonderful. When you read. This. Does it not give us hope? Does it not give us encouragement? And you look for a moment.

At this thief's. Hopelessness. Here's a man. And. He is not able to walk the paths of righteousness. [ 23 : 50 ] Because his feet are nailed to the cross. Here's a man. Who is not able. To give glory to the Lord with his hands. And to do things for the Lord's cause.

Because his hands are nailed to the cross. Here is a man. Who is not going to be able to perform good works. And is not going to be able to turn over a new leaf.

And to start again. Like many of us in here have. When Christ came into our life. Because he is dying. And it's in that state of helplessness.

That he comes to Christ. And asks for forgiveness. And you know my friends. We might.

We will. On all probability. Never experience. Our hands and feet being pierced. But if we are going to become Christians.

[ 24 : 51 ] And if we are going to get to heaven. That helpless state is the way. We enter in. Like this man was. It's not about being gooder.

Than other people. It's about coming to the cross broken. Helpless. Realizing. That there is absolutely nothing.

We can do. To save ourselves. It is all through Christ. This is a prayer of a dying sinner.

To a dying saviour. And does it not fill our. Hearts with joy today. This is the same kind of prayer.

This is the same kind of petition.

That we have in Genesis. In chapter 40. When that man of God. Joseph is imprisoned. And when he says. Only remember me.

[ 25 : 50 ] When it is well with you. And please do me the kindness. To mention me to Pharaoh. And get me out of this house. You see the similarity.

Lord remember me. Lord remember me in mercy. Lord remember me into. Thy hands I commit my spirit.

Those of us. Who love the Lord in here today. Know exactly. What it means to do that. God. But what about those of us.

Who have not yet fully. Trusted in the Lord. Where do we stand. On another Sabbath day. He declares that Christ has a kingdom.

But what he understands of that. We don't know. What he understands of the fact that. Christ is going to come into his own kingdom.

[ 26 : 54 ] We don't know. Highly and likely he has any understanding. Of this. That Christ is going to come again. At the second coming. All we know.

Is that this man. Desired. Desired. To be. In the kingdom. That Christ was going to establish. Well is that your desire today.

Do you know that at the end of life's journey. You are going to that kingdom. Here is a man.

Finally before we look at the words of Christ. Who is aware of certain things. That we are all aware of. Here is a man who knows.

That after death there is eternal life. Here is a man who knows. That there is an eternal reward. Available. When death comes.

[ 27 : 58 ] Here is a man that knows. That there is a kingdom. Yet unseen. And here is a man who knows. That Christ. Is the king of the kingdom.

And that Christ doesn't want to stay in the kingdom by himself. Here is a man who understands. That Christ wants others. To come. Into his kingdom.

And he desires as he is dying. To enter into that kingdom. At some point.

After he dies. I am sure every single one of us. Would want that. I was five years old.

When I first asked the Lord. To come into my heart. And I couldn't understand. Why. So many people. Were being converted like that.

[ 29 : 00 ] How could people. Become saved. Just in a moment. How could people. That. That. Didn't go to church. Become Christians. Because I was gooder.

Than they were. In my childhood ways. I was 19. When the Lord came into my life. And 14 years passed. Why.

Did it take 14 years. Well not only was it the Lord's timing. But it took me 14 years. To realize. That I have to come helpless.

That I have to come understanding. That I am not better than anybody else. That I have to come understanding. That coming to church is not enough.

And going to Sunday school is not enough. And I had to come understanding. That I could be coming to church.

[ 29 : 59 ] Every single week. And listening to the word of God. And still be lost. My friends. Is that how you find yourselves today?

Have you been troubled in the past. With the word of God? Has the spirit of the Lord. Been working in your hearts? And you have said. Not just now Lord. Have there been times.

When you were nearly persuaded. To become a Christian. But you have put it off. And it still hasn't happened. The devil will tell you. That you are too young.

Until the point. Where he tells you. That it is too late. And then the devil. Will constantly remind you. Of things you did in the past. That are unforgivable.

He will seek any way. At all. And put any thought. Into your head. To take you to hell. With you. So that you don't go to heaven. With the Lord. Let's look briefly.

[ 30 : 58 ] At the words of. The Lord. To the penitent thief. Truly I say to you. Today. You will be with me. In paradise. Christ. Christ hears these words.

And Christ does for this man. What he has done. For every single Christian. In here. Today. He hears. And he answers. Their prayer. Not only that.

But he pardons. Their guilty sins. Not only that. But he promises. A reward. In his kingdom.

At the end of life's journey. He offers a place in paradise. The resting place. For the Lord's redeemed people. My friends.

You've worshipped. With people. You've sat beside people. Who have gone home. To be with the Lord. In years. And months gone by. They were part of this congregation.

[ 32 : 07 ] And in glory. They're found now. Worshipping the Lord. And our saviour. Doesn't want any of you.

To be lost. As they worshipped. With you then. The Lord is longing. For every single person. Here today.

To place their trust. In him. Now. As you walk out. That door today. The thief's prayer.

Was great. But the Lord's answer. Was greater still. And who knows. How much of the kingdom.

That this thief understood. In the short time. He was with Christ. But he most certainly. Understood the words. With me. And there are many things.

[ 33 : 05 ] About glory. That you and I. Don't understand. But we understand. That we will be. With him. At the end. At the end. Of life's journey.

And that's. All that's important. It's not important. For us. Just now. To know how they worship. And what goes on there. It's beyond us. It's enough.

For us to understand. That we will be with him. When we leave this world. Here is a man.

Whose salvation. Is now secure. In the hour of Christ's. Greatest weakness. Isn't that remarkable.

When he has no strength.

Left in his body. When he is just about. Dying. When he is just about. Dead. And yet. He is able. To provide forgiveness.

[ 34 : 02 ] To the worst of the worst. Does that not give you. And me hope today. With regard to. How we have lived. Our lives. And not just that.

But he also mentions. The word today. And the word today. Is quite. Fascinating.

Because the fact. That Christ tells him. That he is going to be. Today. With him in paradise. Tells us. That.

The teaching of purgatory. Is a lie. There is no in between place. There is no in between state. There is no season.

Of unconsciousness. When we die. If we all died. Right here. Right now. In a moment. Our souls will go to heaven. Or hell.

[ 35 : 00 ] The fact. That is also. We read. That today. You will be with me.

In paradise. Tells us. That that. Penitent thief. We read. That is. That their legs were broken. In order that they would die quickly. And it is incredible.

To think. That. By the very act. That the soldiers do. In going. To hasten. The death. Of these two men.

Christ has already died. His soul is in glory. But these two men. Are still alive. Just one on either side.

Of Christ. On the cross. And these two men. We read. That the enemies of God. By breaking the legs. Of these people. Are actually fulfilling scripture.

[ 35 : 59 ] The scripture. That Christ said today. You will be with me. In paradise. And here is one or two.

Interesting. And hopefully things. That will encourage us. When we think of this man. That was saved. Does it not encourage us.

That heaven is available. To the worst of the worst. Is it not to encourage us. That there is. The possibility. That we can be saved.

At our last breath. But these things are few. These experiences. Are few and far between. Does it not encourage us. That we can be saved.

At our latter stages in life. Does it not encourage us. That this was a man. Who most likely. Was never baptized. This was a man.

[ 36 : 55 ] Who was not. A member of a church. This was a man. Who was not frequently. Found in the house of God. This was a man. Who perhaps.

A man who perhaps. A man who perhaps. A man who knew. Very little of scripture. The communions. Are starting in a few. Next week. And we will all be.

Longing for the Lord's blessing. To be with us. In every congregation. In every congregation. But my friends. It's not about. Being a member. Or not being a member.

The Lord. Asks us. To do this. In remembrance of him. But heaven is full of people. Who never sat at the Lord's table.

Godly people. Who for one reason or another. Didn't get the strength. To go there. Does that not encourage us today? And then finally.

[ 37 : 54 ] We have a warning. We have the thief. On the other side. Who witnessed it all. Who heard every single one. Of Christ's words.

Who witnessed the change. In this penitent thief's life. And remained. Unmoved. As I've said.

Very few people. Are saved. In the last breath of life. But if you are saying to yourself. I'm going to leave it till my deathbed.

Well here's all the proof. That you need. That you may. Get your wish. And you may receive a deathbed. However.

That doesn't mean to say. That you'll have any word of Christ. On your deathbed. Surely the best time. To seek the Lord. Is right here. Right now.

[ 38 : 50 ] When you're fit and healthy. I wonder. As Christ is looking down. In heaven. Just now. And looking down. Upon us.

Worshipping here. I wonder if he's saying. Of you and me. You will be with me. In paradise. You will be with me.

In paradise. Longing that all. Will be with him. In paradise. The thief.

Who died. His soul. Is in glory. Just now. My friends. He's worshipping. With the people. That you worshipped with. That were the Lord's people here.

And the soul of this penitent thief. Is in glory. Worshipping. In unison. Christ. And the Lord. At this moment in time. And the Lord.

[ 39 : 55 ] Is asking us. As our time is up. What now. Are we going to do? Are we going to place our trust in the Lord. Like this penitent thief did?

Two thieves. Crucified with Christ. Two representations. The temptations. Of the human race. Will you be like the thief.

Who left it till the last minute. And asked for forgiveness. And received forgiveness. And is in glory now. Worshipping the Lord.

Or will you remain unmoved. Unchanged. And end up going to hell. With the other thief.

Surely at the end of life's journey. There's nobody in here. Who has a desire. Who can put their hand on their heart. And say. I want to.

[ 41 : 00 ] Be with people. Like the lost thief. In hell. How can you possibly. Want to spend eternity. With people like that. When Christ is saying to us today.

That he will save. Even the worst of the worst. When it seems too late for them. My friends.

If the Lord. If a dying saviour. If the Lord. As our dying saviour. Is able. To save. A penitent thief.

How much more. Is our risen. Saviour. Who will never ever die again. Able to save you right now. If you ask him. Will you today be like. All the others in here. That love the Lord.  
[ 42 : 02 ] God. And will you walk out that door. Asking the Lord. To come into your hearts. Because there is one thing for sure.

The Lord is speaking to us all today. May this be the day. May this be the day. That every single one of us. Will know. That for us to live is Christ.

And to die is gain. Seek him my friends. Seek him. While he is to be found. Seek him today. Because man's chief end.

He is to glorify God. And to enjoy him forever. And he wants you to enjoy the rest of your life. As a son. Or a daughter. Of the living God.

May the Lord bless to us. These thoughts. Shall we turn in conclusion. And sing. Psalm 23. Psalm 23.

[ 43 : 07 ] Psalm 23. Psalm 23.

The question today is. Can we sing. And can we put our hands on our hearts. And say the Lord is my shepherd. I'll not want. He makes me down to lie. And past your screen.

He leadeth me. The quiet waters by. We'll read the whole psalm. Look at what he offers us. In verse 6. Goodness and mercy. All my life. Shall surely follow me.

And in God's house. Forevermore. My dwelling place shall be. We don't even know the name. Of the penitent thief. But in God's house.

Forevermore. His dwelling place. Shall be. Shall we sing these words together. To the Lord's praise. The Lord's my shepherd. The Lord's my shepherd.

[ 44 : 29 ] I'll not want. He makes me down to lie.

In pasture sweet. He leadeth me.

The quiet waters by. My soul's glory.

Changes. My soul undrafted By resource began.

And before he were made. Within the paths of righteousness If for His own name's sake Ye, though I walk in death's hour fill Yet will I fear the death For the world with me on Thy road That shall be come for still

[ 46 : 19 ] My table of us pervisheth In presence of Thy voice My hand loudest with oil anoint And my cup overflows Goodness and mercy of my life Shall surely follow me And in the earth forevermore

My dwelling place shall be Let us pray in conclusion O Lord, we give thanks for the privilege that we have had today In being able to gather around Your Word We give thanks, Lord That Your desire to save sinners It does not change As it was when You were crucified So it is as You are looking down In Heaven upon us at this time And Lord, we know that For the believer The best is yet to come But until then, Lord We give thanks that You have kept us on the way And that You have walked with us With each step that we have taken The good and the bad

The easy and the hard The joy and the sorrow You have walked with us You have walked with us And You have kept us And we pray, Lord That that would be the experience Of us all today Bring any that are seeking You in here Bring them this day, Lord Into that relationship with You Save their souls Oh, Lord Don't let them eat And don't let them sleep Don't let them Let another day go by In case it is too late May this be the day That they will be able to begin This experience of being kept by the Lord Knowing that the best is yet to come Bless our time together, we ask Bless the services, God willing, tonight With Mr. Macaulay and Reverend MacDonald And give them liberty, we ask Take us now to our homes and safety Grant travelling mercy, we pray And as we walk out of here this day, Lord Walk with us And stay by our side forevermore As long as we live in this world In Jesus' name we ask these things Amen Amen Amen Amen