

Living Waters

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- [0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the Gospel according to John.
- John chapter 7. And I'd like us to look at the whole passage which we read. But John chapter 7, if we read again at verse 37. John 7 at verse 37.
- For we're told there, On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.
- Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. And so on.
- Now, I've said to you before that whenever you watch an episode of your favorite weekly program, the episode usually begins with a recap of what's happened in the previous episode, where the new episode would begin with the statement on the bottom, previously on.
- [1 : 07] And then there will be this recap, this summary of what's been happening in the storyline so far, so that if you've missed anything, it'll bring you up to date with all that's going on in the narrative.
- You know, that's how I want us to begin this morning. I want to begin by just saying previously in the Gospel of John. And the reason I want to summarize what's been happening in the story so far, it's not just because if you've missed anything, you'll be able to catch up this morning, but also because chapters 7 and 8 in John's Gospel, they form one scene.
- And the scene, as you know, it's the Feast of Tabernacles. And as we said last Lord's Day, the Feast of Tabernacles is, it was and is, it's a family feast.
- It was an annual festival in the Jewish calendar. It's held each, around September, October time, each year. And out of all the feasts held in Jerusalem, the Feast of Tabernacles, it is the most popular.
- Families would come together from all over the nation, and then they would travel together and go up towards Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. But during that eight-day feast, all the families, as we mentioned last Lord's Day, they would all live outside the city of Jerusalem.
- [2 : 28] They would live in booths or tents or tabernacles, hence the name, the Feast of Tabernacles. And these tents, they're known to the Jews as Sukkatz.
- The purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles was to commemorate and celebrate the Lord's provision and the Lord's protection of the children of Israel whilst they were in the wilderness for 40 years.
- And the children of Israel, they lived in these Sukkatz, these tents, these tabernacles. They lived in temporary accommodation as they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years.
- And to this day, the Jews, they still commemorate and they celebrate the Lord's provision and the Lord's protection of the children of Israel as they wandered through the wilderness from slavery to salvation.

And so the Feast of Tabernacles was a family feast. It was a family festival. And that's the scene which is before us here in John 7. Families are going up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.

[3 : 30] But as we saw last week, not everyone went up to Jerusalem as a family. Because Jesus, we're told, he remained in Galilee while his family went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast.

Jesus, he remained in Galilee for a time. And then we read that he went up to Jerusalem privately. And then, in the middle of the feast, he appeared publicly preaching.

And this morning, I just want us to continue through the narrative. And I want us to see that what Jesus had to say to that congregation on that morning is the same message that Jesus has for us as a congregation this morning.

And the message that Jesus gave to them and to us is a message that the gospel, the gospel is not a savor of death unto death, but the gospel is a savor of life unto life.

And, you know, this is particularly relevant to us, especially in this past week, as you've heard, that the coronavirus death toll has now exceeded 100,000 souls.

[4 : 42] 100,000 souls. They have entered eternity since this pandemic began. And many more besides. But, you know, Jesus is coming to us this morning, and he's saying to us, the gospel is not a savor of death unto death.

The gospel is a savor of life unto life. The gospel is a living salvation from a living saviour. It's a living salvation from a living saviour.

And I'd like us to think about this under three headings. A living word, a living well, and a living witness. A living word, a living well, and a living witness.

So, first of all, a living word. A living word. Now, look at verse 25. We're told that some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?

And here he is speaking openly. And they say nothing to him. Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? Now, as we said before, John draws our attention to all these Jewish feasts in his gospel.

[5 : 55] Not only to give context to the chapter, but also to give us a countdown to the cross. Because by this point in John's gospel, we're only actually a third of the way through.

And by this point, Jesus is now two and a half years into a three-year ministry. Which means that Jesus, he only has six months to live.

Jesus is only six months away from being captured and convicted and then crucified. But as we can see from this passage, the tension between the Jews and between Jesus, it's mounting all the time.

Because in the eyes of the Jews, who were the religious leaders at the time, Jesus was becoming Israel's most wanted man. They thought that Jesus was guilty of religious extremism and political terrorism.

And that Jesus, he was moving around the country trying to gather support and incite the people to this religious revolution. To the point that the religious leaders, they now want to stop Jesus.

[6 : 59] They want to stop him in their tracks. And they think that if they don't stop him now, he's going to cause a revolution. If they don't take Jesus out and kill him, he's going to cause a revolution.

But what's remarkable is that about three or four days into this eight-day feast of tabernacles, Jesus, he went to the temple privately.

But then he appeared publicly. Jesus made this public appearance right in front of the Jewish leaders who wanted to kill him. And Jesus began to preach.

He began preaching by asserting and affirming that God's word is authoritative. And that sinners must surrender their life to the inspired, inerrant, and infallible word of God.

In fact, Jesus preached in the temple with such authority that he called the religious leaders out. He called them out for what they really were. He said that they were nothing but holy hypocrites.

[7 : 59] And Jesus said to them, he said, Why are you such hypocrites? Because by seeking to kill me, you're breaking the sixth commandment. As we said to the children, you cannot kill.

And yet at the same time, Jesus said, You're condemning me because you believe that a year ago I broke the fourth commandment. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And you remember when we looked at John chapter 5, which was a year earlier.

At the same feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. He had been lame for 38 years. And Jesus healed him at the pool of Bethesda.

And it caused an uproar among the Jewish religious leaders. They wanted to kill Jesus. And so for a whole year, from John 5 to John 7, they're waiting for Jesus to come back to the Feast of Tabernacles.

They're waiting for Jesus to come. They're holding this grudge against Jesus. For a whole year, they want to condemn Jesus to death. And the tension is building and building all the time.

[9 : 03] And now they have this opportunity to kill him. But as Jesus addresses these holy hypocrites head on, we see that they hold back. He addresses them head on, but they hold back.

Because what we read is that when Jesus spoke the living word, the religious leaders were silent. They didn't open their mouth.

They were afraid of Jesus. And my friend, that's because one man with God's word is always the majority. As Spurgeon said, you don't need to defend the Bible, just like you don't need to defend a lion.

You just let it roar. And when the living word, who is Jesus Christ, when he preached the living word of God, Jesus just let it roar.

He let it roar. And the religious leaders were told they were silent. They were speechless. They were silent and speechless. They didn't say a word to him. But the congregation who gathered in the temple, they weren't silent or speechless.

[10 : 14] Because they knew that there was tension between the Jews and Jesus. They knew that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus. Which is why they said about the religious leaders in verse 25, Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?

And here he is speaking openly. And they say nothing to him. The congregation, they can't believe that the religious leaders are allowing Jesus to publicly preach and proclaim and promote his own message when everyone knows that the religious leaders want to take Jesus out and kill him.

But instead of apprehending and even arresting Jesus, the religious leaders just stand there. They're silent and speechless statues.

And because of the religious leaders, because they do nothing about Jesus, the congregation, they begin to question if the religious leaders actually think that Jesus is the Christ.

Of course, like many congregations, this congregation thought that they knew better than the elders. Because they said, We know where this man comes from. We know that he comes from Galilee.

[11 : 24] We know that he's a Galilean. And when the Christ appears, they say, No one will know where he comes from. But the congregation was wrong. They were wrong in their understanding of Scripture.

Because the Jews did know where the Christ would come from. The Old Testament prophet Micah, He proclaimed and prophesied that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem.

Then we see in verse 30, So they were seeking to arrest him, But no one laid a hand on him, Because his hour had not yet come. The Jews may have been left silent and speechless, Standing like statues, But they still wanted to kill Jesus.

But as John repeatedly states throughout his gospel, This key verse, These key words, His hour had not yet come. His hour had not yet come.

And of course, the hour which John is referring to Is the appointed hour of Jesus' death. When Jesus would give his life as a sacrifice for sin, For your sin and for my sin, Where he would die upon the cross to take away our sin.

[12 : 38] But you know, in relation to this verse in verse 30, I love how the reformer John Calvin, I love how he applies the appointed hour of Jesus' death.

And he applies it in his commentary To our appointed hour of death. He applies it to us. And he says, Calvin says, Although we live from day to day, Still the time of every man's death Has been fixed by God.

It is difficult to believe that While we are subject to so many accidents, Exposed to so many attacks, And liable to so many diseases, He says, We are safe from all risk Until God is pleased to call us away.

Our death, says Calvin, Is an appointed hour, Just like it was an appointed hour For Jesus' death. But then look at verse 32.

We are told that the Pharisees heard the crowd Muttering these things about him. And the chief priests and Pharisees Sent officers to arrest him. Jesus then said, I will be with you a little longer.

[13 : 53] And then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me, And you will not find me. Where I am, You cannot come. So the tension between the Jews and Jesus, As the Pharisees and the chief priests Issued this warrant To arrest and apprehend Jesus.

And with time running out, Jesus gives this profound statement To the unconverted in the congregation. He says, You will seek me, And you will not find me.

Where I am, You cannot come. He's speaking to the unconverted friend. You will seek me, And you will not find me. Where I am, You cannot come.

Jesus emphasized to his unconverted friends About their need to come, Call, commit, And confess him as their Lord and Savior Before it's too late.

You know, my good friend J.C. Ryle. I love J.C. Ryle's commentaries. J.C. Ryle says about Jesus' solemn words here. He says, Let us take heed to ourselves.

[15 : 01] Lest we sin after the example Of the unbelieving Jews, And never seek the Lord Jesus as Savior Until it's too late.

The door of mercy is still open, He says. The throne of grace Is still waiting for us. Let us give diligence, Says Ryle, To make sure our interest Is in Christ.

For it would be better Never to have been born, He says, Than to hear the Son of God say On the last day, As he says here, Where I am, You cannot come.

Where I am, You cannot come. My friend, What Jesus is saying to us this morning Is that the gospel is not a savor of death unto death, It's a savor of life unto life.

The gospel is a living salvation, And it comes to us from a living Savior. And from Jesus, We've heard first of all, A living word. But then secondly, In Jesus, We see a living well.

[16 : 08] A living well. So a living word, And a living well. Look at verse 37. We're told, On the last day of the feast, The great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, Let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, As the scripture has said, Out of his heart Will flow rivers of living. Water. So after his public proclamation in the temple, Around the middle of the feast, The middle of the week, Jesus disappeared again.

But as we read here, In verse 37, Jesus reappeared on the last day of the feast. And John tells us that the last day of the feast Was known to the Jews as the great day.

It was the closing day of this great family feast. It was the closing day prior to everyone returning to their own homes. And what was unique about the last day, Or the great day of the feast, Was that on the morning of the great day, As the sun was rising over the city of Jerusalem, All the families, They would come out of their succas, And they would go towards the temple in Jerusalem.

They would all gather around the entrance of the temple in Jerusalem, And they would wait. And what they were waiting for is the daily procession of priests, Where they would be led by the high priest, And the high priest would be carrying a golden pitcher, That would be empty at the time.

[17 : 40] And there would be this procession of priests, That would come out of the temple entrance, And they would leave the temple each morning, During the feast of tabernacles. And they would descend the temple mount, And they would walk through the city of Jerusalem, And they would walk down to the lower part of the city, On the south side of the city, To this pool, Called the pool of Siloam.

And as we'll see when we come to chapter 9, The pool of Siloam is mentioned there, Because that's where Jesus sends the man, Who was born blind. He sends him there to go and wash, That he may see.

And as John explains to us in chapter 9, The pool of Siloam was called the scent pool. And it was called the scent pool, Because the pool of Siloam was actually an artificial pool.

It was a man-made pool. The pool of Siloam was built during the reign of King Hezekiah, Around 700 BC.

And Hezekiah, he built this pool of Siloam. It's fascinating when you look into it. He built it by creating a water duct, That would divert water from a spring outside the city, Called the Gihon Spring.

[18 : 54] Where there would be this fresh water, That it would come from the Gihon Spring, And it would be redirected, Sent under the city walls of Jerusalem, And it would gather in the pool of Siloam.

It was the scent pool. And the reason Hezekiah built this water duct, And the pool of Siloam, It was all because there might be an invasion.

And that if the city of Jerusalem was ever under attack, If it was ever surrounded by its enemies, The city could just close all their gates, And the city could go into lockdown.

But even in lockdown, There would still be this constant supply of fresh water, Flowing into the city, Gathering in the pool of Siloam. And you know, that's why we read and sang Psalm 46, Because it was, Because of the pool of Siloam, That the psalmist could declare in Psalm 46, He could say that, first of all, God is our refuge and our strength.

He's our mighty fortress. But he also says, A river is whose streams do glad, The city of our God, The holy place wherein the Lord, Most high hath his abode.

[20 : 07] And the river which made the people glad, In the city of God, Was this pool, The pool of Siloam. In fact, the Jews, They considered this pool, As a great provision from the Lord.

They said it, It was the life-giving water, That was being sent into the city. And they often referred to this water, That came out from the pool of Siloam.

They called it living water. And so on the last day, The great day of the feast, There was this procession of priests, Being led by the high priest, Carrying a golden pitcher, And together with all the worshippers, Who had come to the feast, They would walk from the temple, Down to the pool of Siloam, In the south of the city.

And the high priest, He would step down, He would take the golden pitcher, And fill his pitcher with water, This living water, From the pool of Siloam. And then there would be this procession, Great procession, Going back up to the temple, Where the people would be singing, And they would be chanting, The great Hallel Psalms, And they would be praising the Lord, For his provision of water, In the wilderness, For the children of Israel.

And they would all gather, In the temple on the last day, And there would be this, Great procession, Round the altar of sacrifice, And the priests would walk round, And round, And round again, And they would walk round it seven times, Singing, And chanting, And singing, And chanting, And there would be this great drama, Where all the priests would then, Watch the high priest, Pour this living water, Into the pool, Into the base of the altar, Around the sacrifice, And then after all the drama, Everybody would be silent.

[21 : 50] They would all wait, And they would all stand, And they would think, Where is the Messiah? Another year has passed, Another festival is over, And the Messiah has still not come.

And as you know, The Jews, They longed for the Messiah to appear, They longed for the Messiah to give them, That living water, Which will satisfy their thirst.

Then John tells us, On the last day of the feast, On the great day, Jesus stood up, And Jesus spoke, Into the silence, And said, If anyone thirsts, If anyone thirsts, Let him come unto me, And drink.

If anyone is spiritually thirsty, If anyone is looking for that lasting satisfaction, Come unto me, And drink.

And Jesus says, Let him come to me, And let him who believes in me, Drink from me. As the scriptures have said, Says Jesus, Out of his heart, Meaning the heart of Jesus, Out of his heart, Will flow rivers of living water.

[23 : 13] And you know, my friend, It's not incidental, That John tells us in chapter 19, That after the death of Jesus, A Roman spears the side of Jesus, And what flows out from him, What flows out from within the heart of Jesus, Was not only a river of blood, But we're also told, It was a river of living water.

My friend, It was from the wounded side of Jesus, That a living well, Flowed with living water. And as Isaiah proclaimed, And prophesied about Jesus, Long before this event took place, Isaiah said, Therefore, with joy, Shall you draw water, Out of the well of salvation.

And it was Isaiah who proclaimed, To the people in his day, And the people in their day, And the people in our day, Everyone who thirsts, Come. Come to the water.

Come to this living well. Come and drink from this living water. Come and receive a living salvation, From a living Savior. Do you know my unconverted friend, Jesus is issuing you this morning, An open and a free invitation.

If anyone, Without exception, If anyone, Any man, Any woman, Any boy, Or any girl, If anyone, Will come, Let him come unto me, And drink.

[24 : 43] If anyone, My friend, If anyone is disappointed, By the broken cisterns of this world, Let him come to me, And drink. If anyone is discontent, Or dissatisfied with life, Let him come to me, And drink.

If anyone is displeased, With themselves, And their sin, Let him come to me, And drink. Jesus says to you, My friend, Come to me.

Come to me, And drink. That's the invitation this morning. Come to me, And drink. Do you know, It was the 19th century, Free church minister, He was called Horatius Boner, And he's remembered, For his well-known hymn, I heard the voice of Jesus say, But it's based upon this text, In John's gospel, That Horatius Boner, He wrote, In his second verse, He wrote, I heard the voice of Jesus say, Behold, I freely give, The living water, Thirsty one, Stoop down, And drink, And live.

Then Boner writes, I came to Jesus, And I drank, Of that life-giving stream, My thirst was quenched, My soul revived, And now I live in him.

My friend, You have heard the voice of Jesus, This morning, And he invites you to come, To him, And drink. Come unto me.

[26 : 17] Can you say that, My friend? Can you say that, This morning, That the gospel of Jesus Christ, Is to you, Not a savor of death unto death, But a savor of life, Unto life.

Can you say, This morning, That the gospel is for you, A living salvation, From a living saviour, Can you say this morning, That the gospel is a living word, And a living well, Because as we see, Lastly and briefly, It produces, A living witness, A living witness, A living word, A living well, And a living witness, Look at verse 45, We're told that, The officers then came, To the chief priests, And Pharisees, And said to them, Why did you not bring him?

The officers answered, No one ever spoke like this man. The Pharisees answered them, Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities, Or the Pharisees, Believed in him? But this crowd does not know, The law is accursed.

Nicodemus, Who had gone to him before, And who was one of them, And said to them, Does our law judge a man, Without first giving him a hearing, And learning what he does? They replied, Are you from Galilee too?

Search and see that no prophet, Arises from Galilee. You know, When Jesus stood up, And spoke into the silence, Of the great day, Of the feast of tabernacles, John explained in verse 39, That when Jesus said, Out of his heart will flow rivers, Of living water, He said that Jesus was referring, To the Holy Spirit, Whom those who believed in him, Were to receive, For as yet the Spirit, Had not been given, Because Jesus was not yet glorified, But you know, Even though the Holy Spirit, Had not yet fully come in power, And wouldn't do so, Until the day of Pentecost, The thing is, The Holy Spirit was still working, The Holy Spirit was still working, In the heart and life, Of a sinner, Namely, Nicodemus, Because as we read, Those who had been appointed, To apprehend and arrest Jesus, They failed,

[28 : 38] And when they asked, Why did you not bind him, And why did you not bring him, They said about Jesus, Well nobody ever spoke like this man, And you know, If anyone knew, That to be true, It was Nicodemus, Do you remember that Nicodemus, He had listened to Jesus speak, Eighteen months earlier, In John chapter 3, When Nicodemus, This man of the Pharisees, This ruler of the Jews, You remember, He came to Jesus by night, He came under the shadow of darkness, And you remember, How during that night time meeting with Jesus, Jesus said to Nicodemus, Except a man be born again, You cannot enter the kingdom of God, And Nicodemus, He was confused, Because he asked Jesus, Well how can a man be born when he is old, Does he have to enter into his mother's womb, For a second time, And be born, And Jesus explained to him, Unless you're born of water,

And of the Holy Spirit, You cannot enter the kingdom of God, Jesus said, Nicodemus, You must be born again, You must be born again, And now eighteen months later, Here in John chapter 7, We see that the Holy Spirit, Has been graciously, And gradually working, In the heart and life of Nicodemus, Because Nicodemus, He has heard the living word, From Jesus, Nicodemus has come, To the living well, In Jesus, And now we see Nicodemus, Acting as a living witness, For Jesus, And although it's not much, We realize that it's better to say something, Than to say nothing at all, Because Nicodemus, He wants to say something, He wants to speak out for his Savior, Nicodemus, He desires to stand up, And speak out for his Savior, He wants to be a living witness for Jesus, And you know,

Even though we're only given a glimpse, Of the gracious and gradual, Work of the Holy Spirit, In the life of Nicodemus, It'll actually be another six months, After all of Jesus' disciples, Have forsaken him and fled, It'll be another six months, You'll see, As we come to the end of John's Gospel, That Nicodemus will finally nail his colors to the mast, And he'll be there helping Joseph of Arimathea, Removing Jesus' crucified body from the cross, And burying him in Joseph's tomb.

You know, my friend, It was my good friend, J.C. Ryle, You know, I always go back to him, He has such wonderful things to say, He says about Nicodemus at this point, He says the case of Nicodemus is full of useful instruction.

It teaches us that there are different ways In which the Holy Spirit operates. All undoubtedly lead to the same Savior, But all are not led precisely in the same way.

[31 : 45] It also teaches us that the work of the Spirit Does not always go forward with the same speed In the hearts of men and women. And what Ryle is reminding us is that More often than not, When the Holy Spirit is working in your heart and life, My unconverted friend, When the Holy Spirit is working in your heart and life, More often than not, He's working graciously and gradually.

He's working graciously and gradually. It's only on very rare occasions that we see in Scripture That the Holy Spirit works definitively and dramatically. But more often than not, He's working graciously and gradually In the heart and life of sinners.

The Holy Spirit works in our heart, Maybe over a period of months, Maybe even over a period of years. But He brings us to this point.

As He brought Nicodemus, He brings us to this point where we must Nail our colors to the mast And confess Jesus as our Lord and our Savior.

And you know, my friend, If the Holy Spirit is working in your life, Graciously and gradually, That's why reading the Bible is so important. That's why praying is so important.

[33 : 06] That's why listening to sermons is so important. That's why fellowship is so important. Because it's through these things That the Spirit continues to work Graciously and gradually.

He's working in your heart and life. And it's by listening to the living Word, As we've done this morning from Jesus. And it's by coming to the living well, As we've been invited this morning by Jesus.

It's through these things That we'll become a living witness for Jesus. My friend, what Jesus is saying to you this morning Is that this Gospel, this good news, It's not a savor of death unto death.

It's a savor of life unto life. This Gospel, it's a living salvation From a living Savior. It's a living Word. And it's a living well.

And when you come to the living well, It makes you into a living witness. And my friend, that's what Jesus wants you to be. He wants you to be His witnesses.

[34 : 13] He wants you to witness this good news in your life. So my friend, you come to Him. And you confess Him. You do as He's inviting you this morning.

If anyone thirsts, Let Him come unto me and drink. If anyone thirsts, Come to me and drink.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray together. O Lord, our gracious God, We give thanks to Thee for the free offer of the Gospel.

And Lord, help us to say, even like the hymn writer, That I heard the voice of Jesus say, Come unto me and rest. And Lord, that we would do as we have been invited.

That we would come to this Jesus. That we would come to Him as those who are not yet witnesses. And that we would come to Him as those who are witnesses. We would come to the same Jesus.

[35 : 18] Because He provides for us that living salvation. He is our living Savior. And as Thy Word assures us, It is therefore with joy That we shall draw water Out of the well of salvation.

O bless us, Lord, we pray. Keep us safe, we ask. And help us, even in our homes, In the privacy of our own home, To cry unto Thee, To come to Jesus, On bended knee, calling to Him, Knowing that when we do, That He is the one who will hear.

And He will answer. He will do in us and for us, Exceedingly abundantly above all, More than we could ask or even think. Cleanse us, we pray, For we ask it in Jesus' name, And for His sake.

Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning By singing the words again from Psalm 46. Psalm 46, again in the Sing Psalms version.

And we're singing the words of verses 10 and 11. Psalm 46 from verse 10. Where it says, Be still and know that I am God.

[36 : 30] And those words, Be still and know that I am God, They're words that are not only causing us, Or calling us to stop, They're actually calling us to surrender. To submit our life to God.

Because, as we read, He is the one who is exalted high. Be still and know that I am God, On earth exalted high, And all the nations of the world, My name will glorify.

The Lord Almighty is with us, To strengthen and sustain, For Jacob's God, Our strong defense and fortress, Will remain. These verses, To God's praise.

Be still and know that I am God, On earth exalted high, And all the nations of the world, My name will glorify.

The Lord Almighty is with us, To strengthen and sustain, For Jacob's love, Our strong defense, And fortress will remain.

[38 : 11] We'll conclude with the benediction. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all, Now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.