## A Biblical Boxing Day

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[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. Colossians chapter 4.

Colossians chapter 4. If we read again at verse 6. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Tuchikos will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage you in your hearts.

And with him, Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you, they will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

And so on. And so it's all over. It's all over.

[1:19] All the build-up. All the excitement. All the hype. And the countdown. The trees and the tinsel. The lights and the loud music. The presents and the partials.

The cards and the carols. The food and the family games, if you had family games. And in a moment or in a day, Christmas is all over.

And as many children rejoice in what they received, and as we heard all about it, there are many adults this morning who are waking up with heartburn and some with hangovers. And yet Christmas is over once again until next year.

But as you know, the day after Christmas is called Boxing Day. And while Boxing Day is often thought of as a day for sales and seconds, a day for Boxing Day sales and eating leftovers, the origin of Boxing Day, it dates back right to the Victorian age.

In fact, many of our Christmas traditions, such as the Advent calendar, which we were looking at last Lord's Day with the family service, or even Christmas trees and tinsel, they all originated in Britain, or they were all introduced in Britain during the Victorian era.

[2:32] Because as you know, Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, he was German. And many of these Christmas traditions, they originated in Germany, and then they were introduced in Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria.

And Boxing Day was one of these things that were introduced. In many European countries, it was actually celebrated as a second Christmas Day. Imagine that, boys and girls, a second Christmas Day.

I think the parents would panic. But in Britain and in Canada and in other Commonwealth countries, the day after Christmas became known as Boxing Day, which, strangely enough, has nothing to do with the sport of boxing.

Rather, are you listening, boys and girls? Rather, Boxing Day was a day off. It was a day off for servants and staff. And it was the day on which the servants and the staff that worked tirelessly in these big homes, they were recognized for their hard work throughout the year.

Servants and staff, they worked hard on Christmas Day, and they worked hard throughout the year. And in return, the rich aristocracy, they would distribute Christmas boxes to their servants and staff on Boxing Day.

[ 3:49 ] And these Christmas boxes, they would be filled with things like small gifts, they would have money, and they would also put in leftovers from Christmas dinner. They were gifts of acknowledgement.

They were a thank you gift, just like we were saying to the children. They were a thank you. They were an acknowledgement and an appreciation of all the hard work of these servants and staff throughout the year.

And in many ways, that's what Paul is doing here in this chapter, in Colossians chapter 4. He's acknowledging and appreciating the servants and staff in the church of Jesus Christ.

He's acknowledging and appreciating the unsung heroes in the congregation. Paul is recognizing and rewarding those in the background who faithfully and quietly get on with the task in hand.

And so what we have here in Colossians 4 is what we'll call a biblical Boxing Day. It's a biblical Boxing Day. It's a day in which the servants and staff in Colossae were acknowledged and appreciated for their commitment to the church of Jesus Christ.

[5:01] And I want us to note this morning that on this biblical Boxing Day, Paul acknowledges and appreciates the dedicated disciples, the diligent disciples, and the devoted disciples.

On this biblical Boxing Day, Paul acknowledges and appreciates the dedicated disciples, the diligent disciples, and the devoted disciples.

And there are three headings this morning. The dedicated, the diligent, and the devoted disciples. So first of all, the dedicated disciples. The dedicated disciples.

Look at verse 7. It says, When you read through Paul's letters, and he's written many letters in the New Testament, you'll always notice that he mentions people by name.

And yet for the most part, we know little or nothing about these names. We know people like Paul. We know people like Timothy. We know John. We know Peter.

[6:25] We know these names. We know these men because everyone knew these men. They were the leading figures in the church. They were in the front. They were first and foremost. They were the men who were to the fore in a congregation.

They were seen and heard by everyone. But these people that Paul often mentions by name, we know little or nothing about them. And in many ways, that's the whole point.

Because we don't really need to know all about these disciples who served in the church of Jesus Christ. We don't really need to know everything they did. Because they didn't do it for praise.

They didn't do it for popularity. They didn't do it for payment. They didn't do it for recognition or respect or even reward. They did it because they loved the Lord.

They did it because they loved Christ and His church. They did it because they realized and they recognized what the Lord had done in their life and for them. They realized and recognized that the Lord loved them and gave Himself for them.

[7:33] They realized and recognized that the Lord had redeemed them and rescued them from the darkness of sin and brought them into the marvelous light of the gospel. And so as Paul comes to the conclusion of this letter to the Colossians, he wants to acknowledge people.

He wants to appreciate those who are committed in their crucial role and responsibilities within the church of Jesus Christ. Because without them, without them, the church couldn't function and it couldn't fulfill its great commission.

And Paul mentions these disciples who have been silently working and witnessing and worshiping in the shadows. And he mentions them by name.

Now, I'm not going to mention anyone by name this morning. You'll be thankful to know that. I think if I did, you probably wouldn't speak to me again. But you know, Paul highlights, what Paul highlights for us here is that it's good to acknowledge people.

It's good to appreciate people. As we're saying to the children, it's good to say thank you to people. Because your contribution and your commitment in this congregation, it helps towards the work, witness, and worship of this congregation.

Whether it's our presenters who lead in the worship week by week, or our Sunday school teachers who teach our covenant children, or our leaders at Little Rainbows who witness to parents, or those who provide care in the creche, those who clean the church, those who clean the toilets, those who keep the church warm, those who clerk church meetings, the treasurer, the church officer, these jobs, those who repair and replace things that are broken, those who count money, those who deposit money into the bank, all these things that go on that we don't know anything about, those who collect envelopes, those who distribute magazines, those who visit the sick, the suffering, or the sorrowing, those who encourage disciples who are downcast, or drifting, or in despair, those who give generously to the Lord's cause, those who prayerfully plead at the throne of grace, those who do things that no one else knows about, and last but by no means least, those who faithfully help with the live stream.

I know that it has been a great blessing to the church, those who can't get to church, those who don't even have a church, the live stream, has been a great blessing.

And on, I'm not going to name you, but you know, on a day like today, on Boxing Day, I think it's good to acknowledge and appreciate you.

Because your commitment and your role and responsibility, it plays a crucial part within our congregation. your dedicated disciples, who have been silently working, witnessing, and worshipping in the shadows.

And without you, the church couldn't function or fulfill its great commission. And you know, as Paul often emphasizes and explains throughout his letters, the church is a body.

[10:58] The church is a body made up of different parts with different forms and different functions. Now, as you know, not all the parts of a body do the same thing.

The hand does not hear. The eye does not speak. All these things. And Paul talks about this time and time again in his letters. And what Paul emphasizes is that on their own, the parts of the body are useless.

But when they all function together, they all fulfill their role and responsibility as a body. And Paul says, that's what the church is. The church is a body made up of different parts with different forms and functions.

But together, everyone achieves more. In fact, that's what the acronym TEAM stands for. TEAM, T-E-A-M.

Together, everyone achieves more. And you know, my friend, you might not like it, but it's good to acknowledge and appreciate the dedicated disciples who use and utilize their time and their gifts for the Lord.

Because you know, if we don't acknowledge people and appreciate them, we will only take them for granted. And when people are taken for granted, that's when people get grumpy. But as we said, no one seeks to serve the Lord by looking for praise or popularity or even payment.

if you do, if you do and you get the praise and the popularity and the payment of men, then Jesus says, well, you have your reward.

You have your reward. You have the praise, the popularity and payment of men. But of course, most of us aren't looking for recognition or respect or a reward because you know that your reward is from Jesus.

He's the one who gives to his people the well done and the crown. As my good friend J.C. Ryle said, of one thing we may be very sure, if we will not carry the cross, we will never wear the crown.

If we will not carry the cross, we will never wear the crown. And it's Jesus. Our reward is from Jesus. He's the one who gives to his people the well done and the crown.

[13:19] But you know, it's also Jesus who acknowledges and appreciates what we do in his church and in his name. Because you know, was it not Jesus who said, whoever gives a cup of cold water in my name is one of my disciples.

And as you did it to one of the least of these, says Jesus, you did it to me. And your heavenly Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.

And so on this biblical boxing day, Paul, we see he acknowledges and he appreciates these dedicated disciples in the church of Jesus Christ. But then secondly, Paul, he notes and he names some of the devoted disciples.

So there's dedicated disciples and then he describes the devoted disciples. We'll read again in verse 7. To Hikos, he says, will tell you all about my activities.

He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts with him, Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother who is one of you.

[14:40] They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. As we said, when Paul notes and names people in his letters, he does so in order to acknowledge and appreciate them.

But for the most part, we know little or nothing about them. More than that, their names are actually a problem to pronounce. Because Paul, he mentions, as we read, he mentions two men here who are devoted disciples in the church of Jesus Christ.

There's Tuchikos and Onesimus. Now, you tried saying that. Tuchikos and Onesimus. And what we ought to notice about these devoted disciples is that Paul acknowledges and appreciates their faithfulness and their fellowship.

Because he refers to them in these verses, he calls them faithful ministers, beloved brothers and fellow servants. They're faithful ministers, beloved brothers and fellow servants.

Now, the first devoted disciple Paul mentions is Tuchikos. And Paul acknowledges and appreciates this man, Tuchikos, because he was someone who was dedicated and devoted to the spread of the gospel.

[15:52] In fact, Tuchikos supported and strengthened Paul's ministry because he personally delivered Paul's letters. Tuchikos personally delivered Paul's letters.

He delivered this letter to the church in Colossae. But Tuchikos, he also delivered Paul's letter to Philemon, who was a member of the church in Colossae.

He also delivered, Tuchikos also delivered Paul's letter to Timothy. So there was two letters that went to Timothy. And also Paul's letter to Titus on the Greek island of Crete.

Paul, as you know, he was in prison in Rome. He was miles away from all these congregations. And yet he had Tuchikos here who was willing and wanting to be sent or to serve the Lord wherever necessary.

You know, Tuchikos was like a first century Isaiah. He was someone who always said, here am I, send me. Here am I, send me.

[16:57] And that's all we know about this devoted disciple Tuchikos. But that's all we need to know. Because Tuchikos was someone Paul could rely upon. He was someone Paul sent to different places and to different people to strengthen and support them, to encourage and enable them in the work of the gospel.

And Paul acknowledges this man. He appreciates Tuchikos because he was a devoted disciple. He was someone who was willing to be sent or serve the church in whatever capacity he could.

You know, Tuchikos was the devoted disciple who would often ask, is there anything I can do to help? That's all he would say.

Is there anything I can do to help? You know, my friend, every congregation needs a Tuchikos. Every congregation needs a Tuchikos.

But they also need someone like Onesimus because Onesimus is described in the Bible as someone who was once a slave of this world but now a servant of Jesus Christ.

[18:08] He's described there in, he's described as once a slave but now a servant in the letter to Philemon. And what's interesting about Onesimus is that he was someone who needed to be discipled.

Onesimus was someone who needed to grow down in order to grow up. In fact, the church in Colossae was the home congregation of Onesimus.

That's why Paul says that Onesimus is one of you. Onesimus was from Colossae. And it was when he was part of the congregation in Colossae that he first heard the gospel and he came to faith in Jesus Christ.

So like you, my unconverted friend here this morning, it was when Onesimus was in church, attending church, part of the congregation, that he heard the gospel and he became a Christian.

He committed his life to Jesus Christ. And that's our longing for you. That's our longing for each and every one of you that you'll be like Onesimus, this man who came to church and he heard the gospel because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

[19:21] And like every new Christian or new disciple, Onesimus was a beginner. That's what we're told in the letter to Philemon. Philemon, who was also a member in this church in Colossae, Paul highlights that Onesimus is a beginner.

He's just a learner. He's a young disciple. He's a child in the faith who needs to be discipled. He needs to be directed. He needs to grow in grace. He needs to learn about the Lord and about his cause.

And you know, Onesimus is someone who should remind us of how important it is to encourage and enable and strengthen and support those who are younger in the faith to get alongside them and to encourage them, that they will deepen and develop in their faith, that they will become dedicated and devoted disciples.

And that's actually what Onesimus became. He became a faithful minister, a beloved servant, a beloved brother and a faithful servant.

He worked alongside this man, Tuchikos. In fact, Onesimus and Tuchikos were companions. They traveled to Rome together.

[20:42] They traveled to Rome to receive Paul's letters. They received Paul's letters from prison and they sought to deliver them personally to all these different congregations.

They sought to deliver this letter to the church at Colossae. So together, Tuchikos and Onesimus, they're devoted disciples who are willing and wanting to strengthen and support the church of Jesus Christ.

And Paul sends them, he sends these two men, Tuchikos on Onesimus, he sends them to Colossae with this important letter. And we know this because if you're reading from the authorized version, it will say at the end of the chapter that it was written from Rome to the Colossians by Tuchikos and Onesimus.

And you know, that's why Paul describes these devoted disciples as faithful ministers, beloved brothers and fellow servants. He describes him like that because as a leader in the church, as someone at the front, as someone to the fore, Paul depended upon these men.

Paul depended upon these dedicated and devoted disciples. Paul, he was in prison, he couldn't move. And as an apostle of Jesus Christ, as a servant of Christ, as a minister of the gospel, Paul knew that he couldn't serve the church without these people, Paul knew that he couldn't do it on his own.

[22:16] Because Paul learned very early on that no man is an island. And the same is true, you know, in our congregation and in every congregation.

The minister is just one man. He's the man at the front that everybody sees. But as J.C. Ryle, my good friend J.C. Ryle, often says, the best of men are only men at best.

That's why Paul here, he acknowledges and he appreciates those who serve in the background. He acknowledges and appreciates these dedicated and devoted disciples.

Because the truth is, if it wasn't for them, if it wasn't for them, if it wasn't for the Tuchikos and the Onesimus, you know, we wouldn't actually have half of the New Testament.

We wouldn't have Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, two letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. If it wasn't for these two devoted disciples, we wouldn't have all these practical and pastoral letters in the New Testament.

[23:21] So they're important. And Paul is here, he's acknowledging and he's appreciating these people who work in the background, Tuchikos and Onesimus.

But as we see lastly, Paul also acknowledges and appreciates the diligent disciples. So there's the dedicated disciples, he calls them dedicated disciples, he calls others devoted disciples, and then there's the diligent disciples.

The diligent disciples. Look at verse 10. Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions.

If he comes to you, welcome him, and Jesus, who is called Justice. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in the will of God, for I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

[24:33] Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as does Demas. Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea and to Nympha and the church in her house.

You know, out of all these names here that are listed, there are two immediately that stand out, Mark and Luke. Mark, as you know, he's the author of the gospel of Mark.

And Luke, as he's told there, he's the beloved physician, he's Dr. Luke, he's the author of the gospel of Luke and also the author of the book of Acts.

And from their written work, we know that these two men are diligent disciples, because they've written and they've recorded the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, that they have shared the message and the mission of the gospel.

And of course, Mark and Luke, they wrote and recorded their message so that our unconverted friends and so that our Christian friends will read the gospel, that we will all repent and believe in the gospel and follow Jesus.

[ 25:39 ] But you know, Paul here, he also mentions another man called Justice, or Jesus. He was called Justice, but he was a diligent disciple, but he didn't hold an office in the church, which is very interesting.

If you remember, Justice was one of the men put forward to replace Judas, but it was Matthias who was chosen as an apostle, instead of this man, Justice.

But you know, that didn't mean that Justice, well, I wasn't chosen, so I just take the huff and sit back and relax. No, Justice was a valued member of the church. And he got involved in the congregation.

And it's a reminder to us that you don't need to hold an office in the church in order to be a diligent disciple. You don't need to hold an office in the church in order to be a diligent disciple.

Then Paul mentions another man, Epaphras. Epaphras was actually the minister in Colossae. He was also the interim moderator for the neighboring congregations of Laodicea and Hierapolis.

[ 26 : 48 ] Epaphras was looking after these other congregations as well as his own home congregation. And like Tuchikos and Onesimus, Paul here, he acknowledges and he appreciates Epaphras because he too is a faithful minister.

He too is a beloved brother. He too is a fellow servant in the gospel. But more than that, Paul acknowledges and appreciates Epaphras because we're told he's a prayerful pastor.

He's a prayerful pastor. We read there that Paul says that Epaphras is always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in the will of God.

You know, my friend, Epaphras was a prayerful pastor because that was his calling. He dedicated and he devoted himself to prayer and the ministry of the word.

In fact, that's why the church appointed deacons. We see that in the book of Acts. The church appointed deacons so that its elders, the spiritual leaders, the pastors in the congregation could dedicate and devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

[28:05] God. And you know, it was actually Peter's good friend, John Owen, he made a very challenging statement. He said, a minister may fill his pews, he may fill his communion role, he may fill the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before Almighty God, that he is and nothing more.

What he is in secret before God, that he is and nothing more. My friend, Epaphras was a prayerful pastor.

But you know, we not only need a prayerful pastor, we need a prayerful people. We need prayerful people to be prayerful for their pastor and for their people.

We need a prayerful people to be prayerful for their pastor and for their people. But then, in conclusion, Paul draws attention to two more men. One was a diligent disciple, boys and girls.

One was a diligent disciple, the other was a defected disciple. The diligent disciple was Aristarchus. The diligent disciple was Aristarchus.

[ 29:21 ] And what made Aristarchus a diligent disciple was that he was always present. He was always present. Aristarchus was someone Paul could count on, always being present in church and being part of the work, witness, and worship of the congregation.

And you know, Paul here, he acknowledges and he appreciates Aristarchus for his presence. He thanks him for his presence. And he thanks him for his diligence in the means of grace.

And you know, there are many of you here, whether Christian friend or unconverted friend, and you know, I want to thank you.

I want to appreciate you and to acknowledge you. I see you, Lord's day by Lord's day, morning, and sometimes morning and evening. Now, I know that there are those who cannot genuinely come to church, but at the same time, there are those who should.

Maybe you're watching at home this morning. You should and you could be here more often. And you know, as we approach a new year, maybe this should be your new year's resolution.

[30:39] Be an Aristarchus. Be an Aristarchus. Be diligent and devoted in your church attendance. You know, we looked at this on Wednesday evening.

We read Hebrews chapter 10. And how it talks about, do not neglect the meeting together of the Lord's people. And it's so important.

Be an Aristarchus. Be diligent and devoted in your church attendance. Be an Aristarchus. But don't be a Demas. Don't be a Demas, because Demas was someone who at one time was always present in church.

He used to be dedicated. He used to be devoted. He used to be a diligent disciple. He used to be involved in the heart and life of the congregation. But sadly, Demas is remembered in the Bible, not as a diligent disciple, but as a defected disciple.

Because in some of the last words Paul wrote to Timothy, he said, having loved this present world, Demas has forsaken me. having loved this present world, Demas has forsaken me.

[31:54] Demas was once dedicated, devoted, and diligent in his discipleship. But he was a disciple who drifted from the congregation. He was a disciple who deserted the church.

He was a disciple who defected to the world. Having loved this present world, Demas has forsaken me. And you know, my friend, Demas is a sad story.

A really sad story, but he's a common story. He's a common story in many congregations. And he's a word of warning to all of us, myself included.

He's a word of warning to us, whether we're a Christian friend or an unconverted friend. Because you know the truth is, and we know it to be true, the world has a powerful grip on our lives.

And the God of this world, who has blinded the minds of many, he will do anything and everything to take our heart and mind away from Christ.

[33:00] And you know, that's why Paul acknowledges, that's why he appreciates these dedicated and devoted and diligent disciples in this passage, because Paul knows that these people are precious.

They're precious, precious to him, and precious to Jesus. And you know, without them, he knows that the church couldn't function, and it couldn't fulfill its great commission.

And so, on a biblical boxing day, Paul acknowledges and appreciates the unsung heroes of the congregation, those who are committed in their crucial roles and responsibilities within the church of Jesus Christ.

They might not be in the forefront, they might not be seen, but heard, but they're silently working, witnessing, and worshipping in the shadows.

And you know, my friend, I want to remind you and reassure you this morning that you are acknowledged. You're acknowledged for what you do. You're appreciated for what you do.

[34:06] It might not be seen, it might not be known, it might not be heard, but you are precious to this congregation. And more importantly, you are precious to Jesus.

You are precious to Jesus. Therefore, as we go into a new year, I encourage you to continue to be the dedicated, diligent, and devoted disciples that the gospel calls you to be.

Lord, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our heavenly Father, we give thanks to thee for thy goodness to us.

We thank thee, Lord, for our congregation, and we thank thee for every one of them, everyone who works in the background, those who are seen and those who are silent, those who are in the shadows.

we thank thee, Lord, that we are able to work together as a body, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, knowing then, as thy promise is, that all other things will be added unto us.

[ 35:19 ] Lord, that is our prayer, that we would work together in unity, that we would seek the glory of thy name, that we would seek that Christ would be honoured, that God would be glorified, and that we as thy people would know blessing.

Encourage us, Lord, we pray. Help us to love one another. Help us to bear one another's burdens. Help us to serve one another. Help us to realise that we are all one in Christ, and that we need to work together for the glory of thy name and the furtherance of thy kingdom.

Bless us, Lord, and we pray. Watch over us in our homes and in our families, and even in the week that lies ahead, as we draw near to the end of another year in life's journey. O Lord, we do ask that thou wouldst be the one who keeps us.

As the psalmist says, that the Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall preserve thee from all ill, henceforth thy going out and in. God keep forever will.

May that be our portion as we go forward together. Keep us, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing in Psalm 40.

[36:37] Psalm 40 in the Scottish Psalter. We're singing from verse 9 down to the verse marked 11.

So we said all our psalms this morning focus upon the theme of congregation. Psalm 40, page 260 in the blue psalm book and verse 9.

Within the congregation great I righteousness did preach. Lo thou dost know, Lord, that I refrain not my speech. I never did within my heart conceal thy righteousness.

I thy salvation have declared and shown thy faithfulness. And we'll sing down to the verse marked 11 of Psalm 40 to God's praise. Amen. Amen.

Sing down to me. Into the cortical state understand pouvoir not my love and what we know, but I never did within my heart flood because I do to see

[38:57] Up in thy merity. Thy tender mercies, Lord, from thee, O dear Lord, O Lord, we pray.

Thy loving kindness unbinded, Let them be self-maintained.

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.

Well, boys and girls, before we leave, I have three questions. Do you have three answers for me? You better. Question one, why is Boxing Day called Boxing Day?

Sorry? For people who work hard through the whole year. What did they receive? Boxes. And what was inside the boxes? Do you remember?

[40:18] Gifts. Food. Food. And? Money. Yeah. So that's why they were Christmas boxes that they received on Boxing Day. Okay. What kind of disciple was Tuchikos?

Do you remember? Was he? What was he? Helpful. There was three Ds. There was dedicated, diligent, or devoted.

Oh, well done. So Tuchikos, we called him, I don't know if we called him a devoted, or dedicated, or diligent one. He was all three, we'll say. Will we? I think he was devoted.

What kind of disciple was Aristarchus? He was, which one? Dedicated, devoted, or diligent? Diligent.

He was diligent, wasn't he? Aristarchus was always in church. Isn't that so important? Good to be an Aristarchus, isn't it? Yeah. Right, we'll see you at the door.