

Say Unto the Wind, Come

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Dear congregation, the world has never ever seen a more awful day, no death toll could ever compare to the day I'm speaking about just now, no battle this world has ever seen, not even Gettysburg or the invasion of Normandy. The death toll that happened from this particular day involved billions and billions of souls. I'm speaking of the day when Adam transgressed the commandment of God and fell away from God, and in that moment, not only he but all his posterity, all his children and their children's children down through all the ages, scores of billions of people whom he represented, they plunged into spiritual death. Everyone who comes into this world comes, because of Adam's sin, dead in sins and trespasses and they live physically while being dead spiritually.

Samuel Davies, an author you may have heard of, he says it like this, "Ever since sin entered into the world and death by sin, this world has been a vast graveyard or burying-place for her children. Imagine this vast army: children that just light upon our globe and wing their flight into an unknown world, the gray-headed that have had a long journey through life, the blooming youth, the middle-aged, let them all pass in the review before you from all countries and from all ages, what has become of them all? Alas! they are turned into earth, their original element. They are all imprisoned in the grave, except the present generation, and we are dropping one after another in quick succession into that place appointed for all the living."

Dear friends, this is the reality that everyone can see if they but soberly look at the world around them, and what is worse even than spiritual death, and in a certain sense, is what awaits a soul that lives out its days on the earth spiritually dead and reaches eternity and will pass from this day of grace into what will never end, and to do so eternally dead is most awful, most solemn. And how many people will this not affect? Rich, poor. Literate, illiterate. Celebrities the world knew, and ordinary people like yourselves and myself. Oh, what a solemn reality from which none of us should turn away not even for a moment without hearing what the word of God has to say to us as we hope to hear from this solemn passage which is yet filled with hope if we will but hear it and heed it with the blessing of the Lord.

Our text passage is the passage that was read in your hearing in Ezekiel 37:1-14. Allow me to read at this time only verse 9.

9 Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

Thus far our text.

Our theme with God's help is simply these words, "Say to the wind, come." Say to the wind, come. We'll see, first of all, a desperate plight; secondly, a stunning process; and thirdly, a resurrection promise. Say to the wind, come: a desperate plight; a stunning process; a resurrection promise.

Ezekiel was a man of visions. The Lord gave this priest-prophet during the time of the exile an amazing series of visions. We shouldn't think of Ezekiel as simply a man who is given to graphic kinds of thinking. No, the Lord put his hand upon Ezekiel and made his divine will known to this priest-prophet, and that's what he does here in this text passage as well. The Lord set him in the midst of the valley that was full of bones. The Lord took him and brought him in a vision into this place where as far as the eye could see, there was evidence of death. We might call this the great Death Valley. And Ezekiel doesn't just see it, but the Lord makes him take it in. Look at verse 2, "And caused me to pass by them round about." The Lord makes him go throughout this valley and put his feet here and there and realize that wherever he goes, there is death, there is the evidence, there is the effect of death. He sees nothing here with his physical eyes but what can, he sees nothing that can give him hope with the physical eyes. There's no one here who of himself is coming together. No, it is all dry, in fact, it is very dry.

Now Ezekiel, he had seen this, when he saw this he must have thought of a battlefield. I mean, scores and scores of skeletons, and this is what would happen in these days if you had a war, and many people would fall in battle and there would be so many and there wouldn't be people to bury them and they'd just be left out there in this place, and the hot desert sun would shine on these corpses and this is what would happen over time. And the Lord makes this enter into Ezekiel's mind. He wants him to see how things really are, how desperate the plight is of our world apart from God. Yes, the Lord is speaking here about the nation of Israel but is the Jewish segment of our world any different? No. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:1 and 4, that we all, Jew and Gentile, by nature are dead in trespasses and sins. And when did it all go wrong? Well, it went wrong, as I said at the beginning, in the day that Adam fell into sin. "As by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." As a result, congregation, you might as well see your bones, your death right there in this vision. A mass grave of all the souls that ever lived.

And the Lord makes Ezekiel to see two specific things in verses 11 and following. "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel," and Ezekiel sees, first of all, how many there are. As I already said, as far as the eye could see, there was death and there were many in this open valley. But secondly, you notice that they were very dry. That means they had been there a long time, as long as one could imagine and, indeed, from the very beginning we've all been dead in sins and trespasses. And as the Lord lets this

reality sink into the mind and heart of Ezekiel, the Lord asks him a remarkable question, "Son of man, can these bones live? Can someone come and make these bones live? Can something put immortality on mortality? Can some group of people do this? Can some ritual do this? Can some kind of ceremony do this? Can some self-help mechanism do this? Can some political institution do this? Can these bones live?" The Lord here is entering into Ezekiel's mind and giving this probing question, "What would you say? Can these bones live? Can they live? Can they live? Can something, can someone make them live?" Well, think about our world. As you go through our world with all the calamity that is going on just now, not just medically and physically with people's health, but now also in recent days in our cities with the riots and the unrest and the tumult. Is there anything that can bring true life where evidently and obviously death reigns?

I find Ezekiel's answer quite amazing. If I had been asked that question, I think without the Scriptures and without the light of the Scriptures I would have said, "No. No, they can't live. There's no way that they can live." But Ezekiel puts it back on the Lord and he says there in language that gives it all into the Lord's hand, a language of surrender and submission that ought to characterize all of us, he says, "Lord, thou knowest." Here's a man who's instructed, been instructed by the Lord. He's a prophet of the Lord and he's learned to put it all back before the Lord. All the hard questions. All the impossibilities of life, of his own soul and of those around him and his nation and everything else, he's learned the lesson we all need to learn and that is to carry it back to the Lord in prayer and say, "Lord, thou knowest." Indeed, from man's perspective there is no hope and from man's side there is nothing and no one that can make these bones live. No politician. No science. Nothing. We could explore anything and everything from man's side and it won't make a single bone, bring it back to life, but Ezekiel is not limited to our world and to man. He puts it back into the Lord's hands.

Do you do that? Do you do that when it concerns the salvation of your own soul, and the salvation of your family, or your children, of your neighbors, of those around you, of those near and dear to you, of our nation and of our world? We look out over our world and we shake our head and we've lost hope. When we're honest, we've lost hope that from man's side and, indeed, from man's side nothing good can and will happen, but have you learned the lesson of submission, of surrender, of taking it to the Lord in prayer as Ezekiel does here? "Lord, thou knowest. Thou art the fountain of knowledge. Thou art knowledge itself. Thou art wisdom entirely. Before the mountains were brought forth, thou art God and thou dost know the future. Thou dost know everything. Lord, thou knowest all things. Lord, thou knowest." May the Lord bring us to that point and place when we learn to give it into God's hands in prayer, not just once, but again and again.

You know, part of the human problem, and we all have it in the church and outside, is we try to solve it. We try to think it through. We try to make it happen. We try to pool our resources, and doing so, we do all the calculations and we do all the controlling, and that's what we're used to doing spiritually as well, and it needs to come to the point where we say, "Lord, thou knowest. It lies with thee. Nothing is impossible with thee. Thou knowest." That means that we learn to despair also from ourselves and from man accomplishing anything, and we give it all into the Lord's hands, into the hands of the one

who specializes in impossibilities, in the Lord who raises the dead; that our hope, our trust would be in nothing and no one save in God who raises the dead. Then, indeed, we can say our bones are dried and our hope is lost, we are cut off from our parts, as long as we also bring that to the Lord and say, "But Lord, thou knowest."

You see, congregation, that's where it must come to also in our lives, and faced with all the impossibilities from our side, that we do not discount the possibility that there is from the Lord's side. Do you remember, children, Simon Peter when the Lord said to him, "Let down thy net for a draught." And Peter answers characteristically, to the Lord he says, "We have toiled all the night and caught nothing. Lord, from our side it's impossible. We've already tested it, we've already tried it, we've attempted it, and the result is nothing: nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net." And what Peter does there is he gives it all over to the Lord. He relinquishes his hold, his control on everything and it's no longer, "We have toiled, we have done, we have produced nothing," it's, "At thy word, at thy word, speak the word only." It isn't even, "Nevertheless at thy action, but thy word. Thou hast but to speak and it is done." Congregation, is that the language of your soul, of your heart by grace, that like that centurion you'd be able to say, "Lord, at thy word. Speak the word only and thy servant shall be healed. Thou art not limited by anything that is in us whatsoever. Lord, thou knowest. Lord, thou knowest."

Dear friends, when we come to that place, then our own knowledge fails, our own knowledge is insufficient but that's alright because the Lord more than makes up for that, because with the Lord there is infinite knowledge, there's complete knowledge, there's everything that is needed for time and for eternity. What a good place to be brought to when the Lord brings you to an end of yourself and your own machinations and you learn to simply submit and surrender to his word, to his knowledge, to him as God who has revealed himself in his word. And that is not fatalism, and that is not passivism because that is unbelief, but faith gives it all into his hands and faith says it's with the Lord, let him do what seems right unto him.

A desperate plight but then, secondly, we come here to a remarkable process, a remarkable, a stunning process. The Lord having heard these words from Ezekiel, "Lord, thou knowest," does not give a lengthy theorizing, strategizing or anything like that to Ezekiel. He gives two simple directions which Ezekiel must follow even if they make no sense whatsoever. And they don't, humanly speaking.

The first is verse 4, "Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." Now that is a most remarkable command. This would test anyone's faith, not just preachers but anyone. Imagine if you had passed on your way to church, myself or someone else in one of the cemeteries there that you pass, and speaking to these graves, speaking to the dead who are buried there in these cemeteries, and addressing them, speaking to them. Who does that? And that's what Ezekiel must do. That's what the Lord tells him to do. "Speak to these bones and call them what they are. O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD."

Sometimes we say in our everyday language, we say, "Well," parents have this, "Whatever I'm saying here is falling on deaf ears." We know what that's like but when the Lord speaks to the deaf, his power is such that he can give the deaf the ears to hear. When he speaks to the dead, the power of his word is such that deadness is no hindrance to the almighty power of God. He quickens what he will and he does it by his word, and he does that by his Spirit. The Lord Jesus says in John 5, he says, "The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live." In other words, "The time is coming and already is now when those who are spiritually dead, who have no spiritual capacity to hear my voice and to heed it, when they will hear because my word gives life from the dead."

And that's what the Lord did in all his miracles. He did that when he told a man to raise up his hand, his withered hand, and stretch it out, and as he obeyed the Lord's command, the Lord's word gave the energy, the power, the life unto this man's body and mind and soul for him to do exactly what the Lord commanded him to do. And when the Lord stood there at the grave of Lazarus and said to Lazarus who was truly dead, not pretending to be dead, not half-dead, he was truly dead, but when the voice of the Son of God went through that rock at the opening of that grave and into that grave and there up to the corpse of Lazarus, it was the voice of the Son of God which gave life unto Lazarus so that in an instant he came forth and lived. That's the power of the word of the Son of God and when Ezekiel casting aside his own knowledge, considering his own knowledge but foolishness, and taking God at his word, believing what God has said and heeding God's command, that when he does that something starts to happen. There is a shaking. There is a rattling noise. The bones start to move bone to bone and so on. There is power not just in the voice of the Son of God but in the prophetic word which God gives his servants to speak. His word will not return unto him void. And you can read of this first stage that takes place, this valley is all full of movement, bone finds bone and so on, the Lord's powerful word does its work. But despite this show of power, we read at the end of verse 8, "there was no breath in them."

Now, no doubt Ezekiel was encouraged that something that he could never have done in and of himself, that no man could have ever done, had happened here. The Lord is not done. The Lord continues his work until it is accomplished. He will perfect that which concerneth you. He will not do a half-work. He will not forsake the work of his hands. And yet he gives here Ezekiel another test of faith. He says in verse 9 in our text, "prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come ye from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." The Lord here is picturing the work of the Holy Spirit as that of wind, as we heard a little bit about this morning. He's not talking about the natural wind, the forces that make wind happen in our creation because the wind here is addressed as, "O breath, come from the four winds and breathe upon these slain that they may live." Now wind itself, just the phenomenon in nature, does not do that but the Spirit, "Thy Spirit, O Lord, makes life to abound."

And the Lord here is calling on a mortal man, Ezekiel, to prophesy to the wind, to tell. What does it mean to prophesy? It means to preach. What does it mean to preach? To preach is to tell people the will of God on behalf of God. "We, as ambassadors," Paul

says, "beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." That's what preaching at its center is, standing in the place of Christ and declaring the word of God to sinners like you and like me. But do we do that to the Spirit? It's one thing for me to tell you the will of God concerning you, concerning sinners, that I must declare to you, indeed, and you must hear that, you must heed it, you must give attention to it. That's prophesying, but do we do that to the Spirit? Do we tell the Spirit reverently the will of God? This is, indeed, what the Lord is saying here to Ezekiel, "Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

Do you see what condescension the Lord has, that he allows himself, that he allows the Holy Spirit to be told the will of God, and he allows a mortal man like Ezekiel, people like myself, people like you, people of God? As the Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "Wait for the promise that I shall give to you. You shall be endowed with power from on high. But be there, united in prayer." And those early disciples, they knew what to do. They came together and it all started there at a prayer meeting when these men and women, with the women it says, they besought the Lord, "Rend the heavens and come down." And when you think about it, what is prayer but taking God's word back to him? The Lord delights to hear his own promise, his own word, his own will brought back to him, and what is prayer at its bottom? It is the Lord's word taken back to him. "God, be merciful to me a sinner." The Lord puts that word upon our own lips in the word of God in Psalm 51:1, "Have mercy upon me, O God." The Lord puts it right there for sinners to plea, people like you and like me, and to bring it before the Lord. That's what prayer is, taking the Lord's word back to him.

"Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe." Do you see, congregation, if nothing else do you see how much the Lord delights to be inquired of to do it for the house of Israel and so many more? "Command ye," the Lord says, what condescension, "Command ye concerning my sons. Bring my will back to me. Take hold of mine own word and bring it before me." Do you do that, congregation? Do you pray with an open Bible? With your finger next to the word of God, next to the promises of God, pleading God's own word? He delights to hear his own word brought back to him.

Let me give you a small example. Remember the Syrophenician woman? That woman was pleading with the Lord for her daughter vexed by a devil, that the Lord would heal her, and it seemed like the Lord would not answer her. First, he kept silent. Then he turned away verbally even and said, "It is not meet to give the bread of the children and to give it to dogs." And this woman by faith, she heard in that in which none of us of ourselves would hear an invitation, she heard an invitation and she took that invitation and she said, "Lord, dogs, yes, truth, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table." She was taking the Lord's own word and bringing it back before him, and what did the Lord say? The Lord said, "I have not seen such great faith. No, not in Israel." The Lord delighted to give her her heart's request. He was testing her. He was trying her. She took his word and turned it into a petition and took hold of the hem of

Almighty God, as it were, in prayer, would not let the Lord go until he had fulfilled his own word.

And do you see, congregation, what the Lord is saying to you and me in the times in which we live, in which there is such death everywhere throughout our world, and also increasingly in our nation, coming so close that even local government is putting curfews on us? What is the Lord saying in all this but, "Take hold of me and of what I have given in my word. Bring it back to me. Prophecy, children of men, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." In other words, "Ezekiel, do you remember what happened in Genesis 2 when there was made by my own hands, there was this body formed from the dust of the earth but there was no breath in it. Adam, at the first in the day that God made him, what did I do in that day? Have I changed? Can I not do the same?" The Lord is the same. He does not change and therefore, therefore there is hope for even dead sinners. The Spirit of God makes life to abound, and just like the Lord stooped down and breathed into Adam at the first the breath of life and he became a living soul, the Lord still from heaven does that through his word and by his Holy Spirit. He breathes upon the slain and they do live.

"Say to the wind, Come. Say to the wind, Come." Is that your life? Is that your daily prayer for your own soul? "Grant life unto my soul, I pray. Lord, without thy word, without thy power, without thy life, O Creator of souls, I am lost, I am hell-bound, I am undone forever and ever. But come, O north wind, and blow thou south wind. Come, O Holy Spirit. Come, breathe upon my slain soul. Breathe upon my children. Breathe upon this world. Breathe upon our churches. Lord, come and revive us and we shall be saved when once thou dost revive us."

And that is, indeed, what happens in verse 10, "and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Oh, what power there is in the Lord's word. It calls the things that are not as though they were. This is reason for hope. This is reason for expectation. Even when things seem darkest, even when things seem so quiet in the valley of dry bones, speak unto the bones that they may live and say to the wind, grant life unto my soul, I pray.

The Lord delights to hear such a petition for his own name's sake, for his Son's sake, as we hope to see after we sing 428, verse 10. "Grant life unto my soul, O Lord, I pray." 428, verse 10.

"Say unto the wind, Come." Congregation, there is a promise in our passage tonight for those who have lost all hope. For those who say, "There is no more hope for me, I am past all hope," congregation, look if you will with me at verse 11.

11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. 12 Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

13 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

Do you see how Scripture has a promise for each and every one, even for those who have no more hope, who are beyond hope, who say, "Our hope is lost"? Oh, my dear friend, if that is you, then hear the word of God. He's speaking to you. When your hope is gone, when all hope is lost, hear his divine, "I," he says, "I am the Lord. When I have opened your graves and brought you up out of your graves." You see, it's not with you, it's not with anything from our side, it's not with any human being whatsoever. There is this great "I" of the Lord that takes care of everything because he is the faithful one, he does not change. Even though we've sinned against him times without number, we have committed sin and ruined everything from our side, and indeed we can be past hope from our side, nevertheless there is that divine "I. I will open. I will bring."

Do you see how the Lord does it all? He opens the grave. He brings out those who are there. He takes those who have nothing, not even any hope, and he, the hope of Israel, can do everything himself. "I will do it." And to prove it, in the fullness of time this Lord came in the person of the Son of God in our nature, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. And there he was and he moved over this very land, he moved among the dry bones of those who were there at the time. And like Ezekiel, as the greater than Ezekiel, he placed his feet there in this valley of dry bones. They were all dead, every one of themselves was dead, and he took it all in, but he preached unto them and he spoke to them, he spoke words of life and people were quickened, all sorts of people, common people, many of them fishermen, and men and women, Mary Magdalene, all sorts of them. They were all quickened. They received life from above.

"You hath he quickened which were dead in sins and trespasses. Lo, I will open your graves." And to signify that he did that, at the grave of Lazarus lest anyone might think that he could not do that, he proved, "I am the resurrection and the life." He has but to speak and it is done. And he not only speaks to sinners and calls them to hear the voice of God in the preaching, but he also called for the wind. He prayed for the wind not only, he attained in his dying the just for the unjust, he obtained a life-giving Spirit, so much so that on the day of resurrection when the 11 were gathered in the Upper Room, what do we read of in John 20? "And he breathed on them and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit."

Oh congregation, how can you go on without such an one? Without a God who says, "There is hope for the hopeless. There is a way to be saved. There is a way to live because I have come and I have opened your grave." Oh, but Lord, if thou wouldst but open my grave, what a horrendous stench would come forth from it. Yeah, that's part of it. The Lord makes us to know something of our sin. Like Martha said about Lazarus, "He's been in the grave four days. Behold, he stinks." But dear congregation, when souls come to life, we don't mind that smell because we smell the smell of life and that's everything.

And notice that the Lord doesn't just say there that he will open the graves so as to stand outside of it, to stand apart from it all, but he says, "I will bring you out of your graves," meaning the Lord goes himself into the grave, he goes into my grave, and there I lie dead in sins and trespasses. And why shouldst thou, Lord, come into my place of death? The Lord comes and he puts his almighty arms of love and he says, "Sinner, I will bring you out of your grave and you will live." But Lord, I'm such a vile sinner. I'm such an unclean sinner, such a polluted sinner. He who touches the body of the dead shall be made unclean, the Lord himself says. The Lord says, "I will do it. I will be made unclean for the likes of you." And the Lord comes and in his love he bears up his people, he carries them, he carries them all their lifelong and he says, congregation, "Because I live, you will live also."

Congregation, as we close tonight, is there a happier people than a people that has been made alive by the Lord? If you have been made alive by the Lord, oh, how happy you should be, quickened from death and from sin by the Lord himself, by his condescending power and love. He's not only opened your grave but he has come and he's lifted you and his life is your life, and you can say with the apostle, "Because I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." Oh, child of God, you are the happiest person this world has ever seen. You might not feel it, you might not know it, though I pray that at times something of that joy of the Lord would be in your soul, unto him that loved us and washed us and made us alive. Oh, it's the happiest thing, congregation, young people and children, to be quickened from death to life; to look into the face of your Redeemer and your Lord, your life-giver, the one who's taken your place, and to be living for him, to dedicate your life to him. "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

Oh, first of all, then, how happy the people of the Lord are. My friend, if you're still dead in sins and trespasses, I may on the authority of God's own word, I'm speaking to you tonight, I have a word for you. I cannot and will not pass you over. You are but dry bones but there's a word from God, from the everlasting God for you. Did you ever think of that, that as dead as you are, the God of heaven has a word for you? And you may be in your own mind past hope but the Lord is the hope of Israel and he says, "Hear ye, dry bones, the word of the Lord." And we prophesy to you and we tell you, indeed from your side there's nothing to expect but from the Lord's side there is every reason to expect life from the dead. The Lord delights to give life unto souls dead until now. "I will cause breath to enter into you and you shall live." And the Lord's name is tied up with this, he'll do it for his own name's sake, for the glory of his name.

And then, congregation, thirdly and lastly, should we not be a mighty army of those who take the Lord at his word and beseech him to rend the heavens and come down? And ought not we, indeed not for any reason from our side but on the basis of the Lord's own command when he says, "Say to the wind, Come. Come breath on these slain and they shall live." Is there a praying people here? Is there a people here that take the Lord's own word back to him and will not let him go until his salvation is known in the earth? Yes, that's boldness but the Lord says, "Come boldly to the throne of grace." The Lord loves to have mercy upon sinners.

Well, dear friends, as we close, what an awful day that day in paradise was when all of us fell in the first Adam, but what a day when the second Adam rose from the dark domain of death, when the shackles of death just broke like grass, like nothing at his power and he says, "I am the resurrection and the life. I have the keys of death and of hell." Oh, my dear friends, look, look unto him and be saved all the ends of the earth, for there is no God like this. For Christ's sake. Amen.

Glorious second Adam, Lord Jesus Christ, come and breathe with thy Holy Spirit upon the slain here and elsewhere that they may live. Fulfill thine own promise. Magnify thy word. Glorify thy great name as the life-giver. And may we as one man take hold of thee, the living Savior, and thy Spirit, and may we see yet a heaven-sent revival where not only bone would come to bone on the basis of thy word, but in which the heavens would be opened, the Spirit would come to dwell among those who of themselves have no hope. O Lord, do it then for thine own name's sake, for Jesus' sake, in the remission of all of our sins. Take us to our homes in safety. Be with this, our city here. Lord, grant that destruction would not come but rather healing and life from the dead. For Christ's sake alone. Amen.

Shall we sing in conclusion 187, all the stanzas in the doxology. 187 and the doxology which is 315.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.