

He Walks On Water (Matthew 14:22-36)

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[0 : 00] For today, we have an amazing Bible passage about Jesus walking on the water. So please turn to Matthew 14, verse 22 to 36, and follow along.

I'll be reading from NIV. Immediately, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

After he had dismissed them, he went up on the mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone. And the boat was already a considerable distance from land, favelled by the waves, because the wind was against it.

Shortly before dawn, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a ghost, they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them, Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid. Lord, if it's you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water.

[1 : 03] Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me.

Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. You of little faith, he said. Why did you doubt? And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God. When they had crossed over, they landed in Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country.

People brought all their sick to him, and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed. Cool. Thank you, William. How's that?

Good afternoon, everyone. While you've got your Bibles open on that amazing passage, why don't you turn to the person next to you, and tell the person next to you which verse is your favorite, and why. Have a look.

[2 : 24] One minute. One minute. All right.

How are we going? Anyone picked Lord Save Me? Verse 30. Anyone pick that one? It's a beautiful moment. Anyone pick Gennesaret?

No one wants to pick that one. It's hard to pronounce. Any takers? Feel free to call it out. Favorite verse? 29.

He calls us to come. Isn't that beautiful? 31. Okay. Okay. Immediately reaching out and catching him. What a picture. And 35. Yep.

Okay. Wow. Famous Jesus, right? Okay. From all around the countryside coming to him. We are in the thick of this series called Action Jesus.

[3 : 38] We're really just walking in the footsteps of the first people who lived with him, saw him at work. They were the first eyewitnesses. Okay. If they were journalists, they would have had 24-hour access to him.

And so with that in mind, let's pray. Let's hear what God has to say to us from this passage. Father, we thank you that even though this year has just started, you have great things in store for us.

As we see some of the miracles described here. Help us see deeper. See the Lord Jesus as the Son of God with power. Power not just to trample the waves, but to save all of his followers, storm-tossed.

Save them from our fears, our sicknesses, our death. We thank you for this wonderful passage. Help us to hear what you have for us today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Touch her like Jesus. Touch her gown. These were the words that a woman cried around this time last year as a crush of people surrounded the former prime minister.

[4 : 45] It was her last day on the job. Some of you are about to start your first day on the job. She had just resigned. And so her last day on the job was this little meeting in a town called Ratana. And so under a cloudless blue sky, the village of Ratana farewelled our previous prime minister.

Now all things were said, all kinds of things were actually said that day. It was like a full day of speeches. But for some reason, the journalists decided to focus on this one line spoken by a random woman.

Touch her like Jesus. What's going on here? Of course, depending on your politics and your beliefs, you might have different takes on this piece of New Zealand history. Reports might vary.

Some of you might think she's a superhero. Some of you might think she's the opposite. Yet in the news report, this is the focus. This is actually basically a reference to our passage.

Someone is making this reference to this moment where here's Jesus. In Gennesaret, Matthew capturing a far more powerful moment in history.

[5 : 46] People from near and far all coming to him, bringing their sick, begging him to let them touch his gown even. And all who touched him were made well.

And so let me ask you this question. What do you beg for? What do you cry out for? Maybe in that prayer time, what were you begging for, crying out for to the Lord?

Or maybe in your most unguarded moments, right? What would you beg for? What would you plead for in this life? Our passage is giving us a hint, right?

In life, what you and I cry out under pressure matters a lot, right? And mad enough to enter Matthew's gospel, what these people cried out for. What you and I cry out under pressure could make a headline.

It could expose our fears. It can change your life. So keep that in mind. What do we cry out for? And listen in to this passage because what people cry out for is important.

[6 : 48] Right? Actually three times we hear the word cried out or begged. And as we think through this scene more deeply together, we want to ask, what do you and I cry out for? Should we be crying out for those things?

New Year's Eve, we were encouraged to go and tell Jesus, right? What would you cry out to him? Is it, Lord, save me like Peter? Is it, Lord, give me this? Is it something else entirely?

Whatever your heart might cry out for, what this passage wants us to see is that Jesus is the best person to cry out to.

Jesus is the best person to cry out to because only he has the power and authority to be the son of God, to be the king of kings.

Right? We see he has power to step on the waves. He has power to save you, to deliver the sick from death. So this is who we can cry out to.

[7 : 48] Last week's passage, Pastor Albert showed us, right, not only the power of Jesus, but he reminded us of his compassion too, didn't he? Right? Picture that scene.

Jesus is there, right? Thousands of people hungry. It's getting close to dinner time. He reminds us of his compassion. He sees them and he sees sheep without a shepherd.

That's Jesus' heart to us, even into this passage and beyond. Right? And we go this week from feasting to following.

Right? We're seated on the grass last week and now we are getting into a boat and we are sailing off. Right? So verses 22 to 24, that's what we see. Right? First up, we see a bit of sailing off onto the water.

Now, before we dive into this passage again more deeply, let me mention one or two things worth thinking about as we encounter from God's word what we call biblical narrative.

[8 : 46] Okay? So, storytelling from the Bible. Matthew is one of the books of the Bible. There's 66. And in this kind of book, we are looking at biblical narrative.

This is the same God-breathed word, but on a human level, there is a style and convention when you tell a story. Isn't there? Right? Matthew's gospel is different in style to, say, one of Paul's letters or a prophecy from Hosea or a shopping receipt, right, from Roman times.

So, we want to make sure we understand this is a story and we want to think through what are things to look out for when there is biblical storytelling. Our first thing we want to look out for is we want to look out for what it shows rather than what it tells as well.

What I mean is this. Okay, where, like, let's say 1 Corinthians 6 will say a flee from sexual immorality, right? It's a command. It's an order. A narrative like 2 Samuel 10 will describe the story

of David and Bathsheba and show you the folly of sexual immorality.

You see what I mean? Right? One is telling you. One is showing you. So, we are in biblical narrative. As we go deeper into action, Jesus, we are looking for demonstrations of faith. Demonstrations of people who need a savior.

[10:05] And we are going to listen in and see faith shown to us. Salvation shown to us. These are displays of God's truth all the same in a different way.

The second feature you want to keep in mind when you look into a story, right, is that when the storyteller repeats something, it's important. Right? And sometimes the details matter. Right? He's a biblical storyteller, Matthew. If he's going to use a word or phrase that is repeated, that is significant, that he highlights, we want to pay attention. Right? I've already highlighted one. Right? There's definitely more than one time that people cry out in that narrative. So, it's important. It's important. So, what does Matthew show us? Firstly, let's look at this verse again. Keep your Bibles open.

Verse 22 to 24. Immediately, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd. Notice the word immediately.

[11:03] All right? Actually, immediately is said three times in our passage. If Matthew had a GoPro camera on him as he was doing his journalistic work, he'd be using it right now. Okay? This is action Jesus as he follows him, as he's on the move.

Let's put up the map. This is Pastor Albert's map from last week. Last week, we were kind of in that top corner around about where the feeding of the 5,000 men and plus women and children and families happened.

And then here, though, verse 22, what does the text say? Jesus literally actually shoos, right? Like, gets them into the boat. He made the disciples get into the boat. He sends them to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, right?

Towards the west. But surely he needed help, right? There's a crowd still there. All right? And then he sends all of his helpers away. What's going on?

All right? Surely he could have used the extra pair of hands to say, hey, you know, it's time to go. It's time to go. But no, he says, go on. Start paddling. Head west. Here, we get a hint.

[12:05] Jesus is orchestrating everything that is about to happen. Jesus is planning things out by the detail. He intends to stay put. He intends for the disciples to leave, get on that boat, and whatever is happening is going to happen.

And he's going to still be in control over all these things. Remember when Lazarus died, he waited three or four days, and then he went over. He is in control, even in these difficult moments, even in these confusing moments.

What? You're staying here while we get on the boat? What are you doing, Jesus? Relax. The Lord is in control. And when the crowd finally disperses, right, what does it say here?

He went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. All right? Best way to disperse a crowd is to say, let's pray together. He's just there.

Alone. Again, this is on purpose. He's going to wait there. He plans to, yes, use a different kind of public transport. He's going to wait there.

[13:08] This is all part of his plan. But spare a thought. Okay, let's switch back to the disciples. They're on the boat. What's going on? All right? In Mark's parallel account, it actually recalls they were rowing.

So you want to imagine, okay, all these men, right? Some of them are fishermen. They know the wind and the waves well, but it seems like they've gotten into trouble. All right? And here they are rowing, and it's not a good evening to be rowing, because it seems like the wave gets crazy. All right? There's no rowing past this kind of storm where, right, the wind was against it. Right? The wind was against the boat. These Jewish men, perhaps, might have caught to mind some of the Old Testament songs.

Psalms 107, 25. For he spoke, the Lord, and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths.

And in their peril, their courage of the sailors melted away. You want to imagine the boat here almost having a life of its own. Okay?

[14:15] Think of how when Jonah was on the boat, Jonah 1, 4, the ship was in such a great storm that it threatened to break up into pieces. Imagine the Apostle Paul as well.

He was on a boat too, right? And that boat was not doing well. Caught in a violent storm. You see, what we take for granted, we travel here very safely.

Maybe one or two of you took the bus, and the bus got here on time. Didn't get caught in a storm.

Our family had been staying at a friend's house, and we've been borrowing their EV.

So it's got a really bad range, so that's why it's plugged in right now. Look, we take for granted how easy it is to travel. And yet here, here, we are showing that it is not a given.

The disciples are experiencing firsthand the opposite of safe, convenient travel. And actually, Matthew, in these verses, doesn't really describe the storm in much more great detail.

[15:20] But what he does spend time on, right, a whole verse or two, is where Jesus is. Have you ever felt like you're in the biggest distress of your life?

And you're asking, where is Jesus? Where is Jesus? Why does our Lord wait? Why intentionally wait while his disciples are tossed and turned for hours after hour?

If you're a Christian here, I think there's encouragement even in something like this, if we're willing to see it. You and I may not know how long the storm you're in will last.

But please know that Jesus is completely in control. Yes, he may be sitting on the other bank. But he has been orchestrating this the whole time.

Nothing is outside his control. And we're going to see even more evidence of that, right? But see that first. He's not left you there in the storm without planning something at the appointed hour.

[16:23] The anointed one, Jesus, he's displaying a kind of mysterious providence, isn't he? Right? He's controlling all things, but not in ways that we fully understand at times.

And yet, in the goodness of Jesus, we see the perfect timing and will of our sovereign God. His hand may be hidden at times, but please remember that even in a storm like this, Jesus is at work. And he's about to be on the move. Let's keep going. Let's have a look. He's going from waiting. And now, verse 25, he starts to step out.

And we start to see people step out, right? So, stepping out from verse 25 to 33. Have a look at verse 25 again. During the fourth watch of the night, that's about 3 a.m., Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. It's a spirit, they said. And they cried out in fear. You want to imagine that scene?

[17:30] Of course, if you're here and you're persuaded by a secular view of this world, right? Nothing supernatural could possibly happen. You might object to even reading this account.

To walk on water might seem to you a physical impossibility. And yes, I'll admit it to our poor and weak minds. Perhaps this scene seems a little bit surreal.

And yet, Matthew is working as a journalist. He's giving us details because they matter. We want to trust his account so far. With all its supernatural occurrences. This actually isn't the first one, is it? Right? Even when Jesus was baptized, we have seen supernatural things at work. Things that authenticate, that prove that Jesus is no mere human. Matthew wants to convince us, persuade us, this is the Son of God.

We'll see that soon. He's telling us here enough to say this really happened. He doesn't explain to you how he defied the laws of gravity. Right? Or how he managed to suddenly become more buoyant than the sea around him.

[18:34] There's none of that. He is here to say that the one who created the seas has every right and power to walk over the ways when he pleases.

Matthew is not presenting a slam dunk proof for the atheist or the agnostic. He knows that some will doubt. In fact, in the last chapter of Matthew's gospel, Jesus has risen.

Hundreds of eyewitnesses see him. And it says, some doubted. The biggest clue, though, that Matthew has far more important things in mind to do, is that he uses this interesting phrase here. I'll read it out again. During the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. This is the NIV old school version. This is, some of you might have, walking upon the sea or something like that.

You notice, though, it's mentioned twice, right? And then, verse 26, we hear that phrase again. Again, repetition. Details matter in a narrative. Here we, I think, have a declaration of Jesus' divinity.

[19:44] I'll explain to you what I mean, right? Here is a mighty act, right? Something only God could do. Only an all-powerful God could do. Walk on the water. And here, I think Matthew is making a very specific connection to just one line in the Old Testament book of Job.

In Job 9, verse 8, Job is answering his friends, right? They're having a bit of an argument. It's kind of like when you argue with your atheist or Christian friends.

There's something like that going on there. And Job rightly says that God alone marches forth on the waves of the sea. The Greek translation for that is exactly what we see here in the book of Matthew.

What Matthew quotes. Matthew is making a very direct connection here, I think. He's saying, the Lord, the one who tramples on the sea, in the Hebrew, literally it says, marches forth like a soldier, like a warrior, like a king, like a general.

Matthew is saying, that's who you're seeing, walking to you right now. It's not just a party trick. This is the Lord in human flesh.

[20 : 59] He is marching forth on the water he created. He is declaring, not just to the disciples, but to you and me, that Jesus is God. He's the Lord.

No wonder they're troubled. No wonder they cried out in fear. But immediately, Jesus, what does he say to them? Verse 27, he says, take courage.

It is I. Don't be afraid. Do not make the misunderstanding or do not assume that the Lord is some kind of angry monster.

Right? Furious judge out to get you. Because Jesus corrects that false assumption. Take heart. It is I.

Don't fear. Isn't that marvelous? Jesus, the one who created the way, is walking upon it right now. And yet his first words to terrify people is, take heart.

[22 : 00] It's me. Only the King of Kings, who is also with you, could do that. If you're a wise reader, you will see here another proof of Jesus' power and authority.

An invitation to trust him. The one who rules over the waves, the storms, the sea. And actually, the deeper meaning from what happens next, right?

Who steps out? We see that Peter has a go at stepping out. Verse 28, Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water. And Jesus says, come. There's a deeper meaning in this step of faith, right, from Peter.

Dom referenced it in our worship leading. The Lord can make you do things that you could never thought possible. When you step out in faith, when you trust him.

Think about my own life. I would have laughed at you if you had told me, at 16 years of age, that I would one day be the pastor of a church. I probably would have stood in disbelief if you had said, look, one day you're going to be here at PCBC, sharing from this passage.

[23 : 12] I don't know what things you never thought you would be doing in the Christian life. Serving as a deacon. Becoming a member of this church with all its faults.

Jumping on the music team. Greeting a friend. Bringing someone to church. These are all things that are impossible when we don't step out in faith.

And trust the Lord is doing something. The Lord is empowering us. And yes, so often, the Lord empowers us to take these miraculous steps of faith, doesn't he?

After we see his example. After we behold his glory. We see how good he is. Once we understand his majesty, his splendor. Then we want to honor his lordship over every part of our life.

What we do with our time, our money, our bodies. If you want to do impossible things, start with imitating the Son of God. And the power of the Holy Spirit this year.

[24 : 15] If you want to see a miracle in your life, jump into what Jesus is doing. Follow him. See what he's up to. That's what Peter tries to do, right?

And yet, what happens next? He gets down on the boat. He walks on the water. Comes to us, Jesus. All well and good. But then, he starts to sink, right?

Now, Cheryl's drawn this picture, and some of you are coloring it in right now. Look, he starts to sink. Because he's fixing his eyes on the wind and the waves instead.

His flesh, you see, gets the better of his spirit. Peter is now further down in the water. His eyes have stopped looking at the Lord Jesus. And now, he has to cry out because his focus has been lost.

Yes, his faith gave way. And he has to cry, Lord, save me. Again, here is Matthew showing us what faith looks like and all its ups and downs, right?

[25 : 22] Paul will tell you, you are saved by grace through faith, and life will still be hard. Walk in the manner you're called. Here is Matthew showing us the life of faith. Yes, we step out in faith.

And yet, our eyes, don't they just wander all the time? To the wind and the waves around us rather than our Lord Jesus? This is the experience of the Christian life, is it not?

Faith to begin the journey, and then, a few years later, you're struggling. Can I carry on? Jesus tells it in this way, right? In Matthew 13, right? The chapter before.

Some seeds that were scattered, they grew up first, but then they withered away. Others, they started fine, and then the thorns of life choked them out. This is real life.

Many of you will profess faith, yes. And you will feel good at first. And yet, our eyes will wander. Our vision will be moved away from our Lord, and we will start to sink.

[26 : 24] But as this drowning disciple is dredged from the water, we see another truth, right? It is Jesus who saves us. It is Jesus who saves us.

We contribute nothing to our salvation. We just heard John Yates explain that. Jesus saves us. We contribute our sinfulness, our wanderings, our failures, and Jesus reaches out into our mess and saves us.

This is the Lord we are to fix our eyes upon. Jesus, the master of the ways, he saves Peter. He flounders, and yet Jesus saves him. And then what do we see after that?

You have little faith, he said. Why did you doubt? And amazingly, the wind dies down, and those who were in the boats, they worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God.

When you read these last few verses, it is incredible, isn't it? And you want to make sure you don't miss this moment. This is the first time, verse 33, in the whole of Matthew's gospel, that his disciples say something like this.

[27 : 34] Truly, you are the Son of God. We'll see later on that they have still got a lot to learn, but this is a big moment. Why do you think they worshipped Jesus at this point, after a storm?

Why not worship Jesus when he was teaching so well in the Sermon on the Mount? Or when he was doing all kinds of wonderful things? Or when he was baptized and Father, Son, Holy Spirit were there?

I feel like it's at this moment, when their faith has been tested, that they truly realize who they're dealing with. It's incredible, isn't it?

Don't discount your sufferings. Don't discount your storms. It might be in those moments that you truly behold the Son of God for who he is. And this narrative is persuading you and I, if you have not confessed Jesus as the Son of God, these people are doing it.

Matthew is also saying to us as listeners, what will you do with the Son of God? I'll see you and I'll see you and I'll see you and I'll see you in the first place.

[28 : 50] Yep, time speeds up. We kind of zoom to the end of the cruise. And we're now in Gennesaret. This is an area of Galilee west of Capernaum.

It's along the northwestern edge of the Sea of Galilee. Not far from Tiberias where actually Herod Antipas, we heard about King Herod, was ruling.

Here in this territory. Far from his hometown. We see in Jesus' healing ministry finally, a crowd of people who are miraculously saved from death.

Saved from death. Have a listen again. When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.

And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country.

And people brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak and all who touched him were healed. You want to beware the healing ministry that promises much but delivers little.

[29 : 54] This is one that really can change lives, right? Just a touch of a cloak. And instant healing. Here, again, we are seeing Jesus' power and authority at display.

Sometimes when we step out in faith, we may see some of these things happen. But all in God's control. And always to point back to our Lord Jesus, who can do far more than we can ask or imagine.

I hope we can understand that. But here is the greater detail to watch for, I think. Jesus has compassion. He's now showing more of that compassion to the sickly that he's attending to.

But verse 36, very end, it says, all who touched him were healed. Very vanilla translation that I've got here. Literally, it says, all who touched him escaped death or were delivered or were saved through this.

Actually, in the King James Version, it says, made perfectly whole. I think these are some of the different ways that we're trying to grasp something deeper is going on. They're not just being, you

know, they've not just seen a good doctor here.

[31 : 08] It's far more than that. They have been delivered from death. That's a big claim. And again, it ties back to what happened with Peter just before, doesn't it?

Delivered from death. And again, now, with crowds of people delivered from death. Can you see, the gospel is this. You are going to be delivered from death when you trust in Jesus. When you just grasp at him by faith.

When he comes to you by faith and saves you. You'll be delivered from death. You'll be delivered from death. You'll be delivered from death. The gospel reminds us we are unable to save ourselves. We are sickly. We are drowning in life. We have no anchor. We are like an electric car that is running out and cannot survive without being plugged to a life-giving source.

And the gospel tells us, though we are unable to save ourselves, God can save you through Jesus Christ.

[32 : 14] And this is my appeal to you, right? Here is Jesus. He is healing and saving in this description and these miracles. But remember that Jesus will soon, at the end of this story, he will hurl himself into the greatest storm.

On the cross, he will take God's righteous anger for all of our sins. Past, present, future. And he will trample all that sin to death.

Just like he did with the waves. He will trample sin and death. He will crush the serpent's head. But how? He will die. And three days later, he rises again. Hundreds see it.

Millions will give their lives for it. Do you believe this good news? Do you believe that God has power to save, as we have seen and as has been told in the gospel?

If so, will you be encouraged by this? Will you take heart like Jesus asked you to when you were discouraged? If this is true, will you cry out to him?

[33 : 20] Like you will no one else? If this is true, will you just trust that he can trample over the waves in your life? Lean on him.

Go to him. Cry to him. Beg from him. We sang the song, Oceans, before. So rich. Such a beautiful expression of trust.

One small weakness, I think, is that obviously the words are inspired from our passage today, right? The story today. One small weakness is that in the bridge, the lyrics miss out on the most important person of the Godhead, Jesus.

I think this passage is reminding us, actually, it is Jesus who will lead me where my trust is without borders, right?

Yes, it's the spirit of Christ, and yet Jesus is calling you. Walk upon the waters where you call me. Strengthen my faith in the presence of my Savior.

[34 : 21] So crucial that we don't misunderstand that Jesus takes center stage in this account. Does he not?

And does Jesus take center stage in your life? If he does. And when you call out to him like Peter, you can.

You can face and do impossible things. It may not be walking on water, but it can be far more deep things. It could be to face fires in this life and be unharmed.

It can be to stand firm in some of the deepest trials that you have faced, that you might be facing this year. Where Jesus is crucified, perhaps one day you will be crucified, in a sense, with him.

As Paul says in Galatians 2. Maybe like the disciples. Today you are crying out under pressure about something. How will I face the year ahead?

[35 : 21] What will my child's future look like? Who will help me right now in my desperate situation and need? I can't give you all the answers today for that. But I can tell you from this passage, the secret to facing all of life's challenges, all of the storms in life, according to this account, is to fix our eyes on Jesus.

The one who tramples over the waves. Who's in control at every moment. Who reaches out. When you call out, save me. When you call to him, help me.

He has the power not just to heal the sick. He has the power to forgive your sins. To save you. He walks on water, yes, and that means we can weather all of life's storms.

He dies for sinners, and that means we are saved from fear, eternal death, forevermore. He rose again three days later. It's a fact. And in him too, that means we can rise and be made perfectly whole.

You may feel like someone with little faith here. But I want to encourage you. Far more important than how big or small your faith feels, is who is the object of your faith?

[36 : 36] Who are you fixing your eyes on in the storm? Is it Jesus? Let it be Jesus. Let it be in the Son of God. Slain for your sins.

Your rescue. He is the life jacket, perhaps. That demands your whole life. And yet, you can cry to him at any moment, save me, and he will. And you can cry out to him to be delivered from death, and he can do it.

And your path may be stormy, but take heart. In Jesus, you're always safe in his everlasting arms. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, we come with weary hearts.

And so thank you for Jesus. Lord, we come with anxious souls today. And so we see you, Jesus, high and lifted up.

[37 : 42] Thank you for your perfect love. Thank you for every comfort you give us, even in the storms of our life. Help us look to you. Lift our eyes to you again and again and again.

We thank you. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.