

Created for Relationship

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Date: 17 November 2024

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- [0 : 0 0] All right, we're gonna read together from the Old Testament, from Genesis chapter two, verses 18 to 25. And this is God's holy word to us this morning.
- Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone. "I will make him a helper fit for him." "Now out of the ground, the Lord God had formed "every beast to the field and every bird of the heavens "and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.
- "And whatever the man called every living creature, "that was its name. "The man gave names to all livestock "and to the birds of the heavens "and to every beast of the field, but for Adam.
- "There was not found a helper fit for him.' So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.
- And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. And then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.
- [1 : 0 4] "She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother "and hold fast to his wife, "and they shall become one flesh.
- "And the man and his wife were both naked "and were not ashamed." This is God's holy word. We are working our way through a series on Genesis one and two, and we're at the very end today of Genesis chapter two.
- And when we came to Genesis two, we started looking at it through the lens of Genesis one, 26 to 28, where it says that every single human was made in God's image.
- And so we were all made in the image of God, and we have dignity. We bear dignity being made in God's image. No matter what you believe in, no matter your socioeconomic background, your race, your cultural background, no matter what you've done in this life, you are made in God's image.
- You have dignity and value because of that. And in chapter two, really chapter two in some sense, just explains what it means to be made in God's image.
- [2 : 0 9] And so to be made in God's image first means that we were made for deep, abiding relationship with God. And so the very first part of Genesis two is that we were made to enter into God's Sabbath rest.
- Deep relationship, that's the first thing. The second thing is that we're also made by God in his image to work, to take dominion, the text tells us over land and sea and sky and the other creatures to make things.
- We talked about last week being culture makers that were made to make things like God's subcreators as Tolkien put it. And we can lack fulfillment in that by either underworking or overworking in either direction, depending on self, not looking to God as the ultimate boss in our lives.

And then this week, the final piece, what does it mean to be made in God's image? It means that you're created for relationships. And so right there in the heart of Genesis one, 26 to 28, one of the very first things we're told is that as soon as we're told God made us in his image, it then says, comma, male and female, he created them.

So the image of God is upon every person, male and female, men and women, boys and girls, from the very beginning as soon as we're told image of God we're immediately told people collectively, not just one, but community, that the image of God is a collective image, that not a single one of us can ever bear the weight of being the fullness of God's image.

[3 : 39] Of course not, no. Instead, we need everybody to do that together, men and women, both genders, we are collectively made in God's image and that means that we're made for community.

We see that right out of the gate. And that's what we're gonna think about today. Ultimately Genesis two is indeed about marriage, absolutely couldn't be clearer. But I want to, we, if you've been around Sancti's for a while in the spring on Mark chapter 10, we looked at marriage pretty closely.

So you can go back and have a look at that if you want. And I think probably in the near future we will do a series on marriage. And so what I wanna do today is talk about marriage to a degree but also broaden out and look at the fact that Genesis two also simply teaches us that we're made for relationships in general.

Jean-Paul Sartre, a French philosopher from the mid 20th century, he wrote a play in 1944 titled No Exit and he's become famous for one quote from that play.

He said, he writes in the play, hell is other people. And in it, since then Sartre has been labeled as a pessimist towards human relationships.

[4 : 55] What did he mean by hell is other people? People said well surely Sartre thought that human relationships are the worst part of life. And Sartre commented on that. He said, you know, most of our relationships are conflict and tension most of the time.

And interviewed later after the fact that people were saying well Sartre is just a pessimist about relationships he came in, he writes this, this is a paraphrase, he says, if I situate myself if I situate myself in total dependence on other people my relationships will be bad.

If I situate myself and make myself dependent on the judgment of other people, finding my identity and what everybody else says about me my relationships will always be bad.

And he said I'm not negative about relationships but I'm trying to highlight the capital importance of getting them right. And this is what he writes, the difference in a bad relationship and a good relationship is the difference in enslavement and liberation.

And now if you turn on the news this week, probably some of you did, you will have read stories about murder, you will have read stories about farmers protesting taxes on farmers, you will have read stories about 58 year old boxers fighting 27 year old YouTube stars.

[6 : 17] And that's all stuff that's happening around the world but you will have, you will not, you will definitely not have read the stories of the real stuff of life. And the stories of the real stuff of life are the stories of relationships.

And you won't have read any stories that say, you know, John and Sally had a broken marriage and after two years of working through counseling together and a lot of tears, they are healing.

And you won't have read any stories in the news about Rebecca and Louise, a strange sisters, haven't spoken in 10 years. And Louise called Rebecca and asked forgiveness for that one thing she said that one time and they're having Christmas together for the first time in a decade.

Now these are made up stories and names, okay? So don't, you know, I see some of you kind of looking around wondering who is this in here that he's talking about. No, these are all completely fictional. Though very real.

You won't hear a story about Noah, the coolest kid at the high school, who befriended Leon, a kid who had no friends, whereby Leon, who was pulled out of depression, his whole life trajectory changed and Noah didn't even know about it.

[7 : 23] He was just kind to him. What we're being told here, what Sartre was pointing out, what Genesis one and two get out is that relationships are the real stuff of life. These are the real stories.

They're the most important thing. And here in this passage, we've got this grand juxtaposition before us and that's, well, I'm sure for you, like for me, the best parts of life, when you think about the best parts of life, the deepest joys you have, it is in your relationships with particular people.

And when you think about the most vulnerable you feel, the biggest wounds that you may carry, it is because of your relationships with particular people and often that's the same person that carries the power of both.

And so let me point out to you three lines, three phrases in this passage, Genesis two, that I think open up for us the deeper meaning of relationships and here they are.

The first one is God says it is not good. Secondly, Adam says at last, bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. And then finally, they were naked and not ashamed.

[8 : 30] Those three elements, let's think about it. First, what were we made for? God says at the beginning of this passage in chapter two, verse 18, that there is something not good.

What is not good? If you've been with us through this Genesis series, chapter one and two, in Genesis one, six times, God says, let there be. And then he looks at what he made and it says, and it was good.

And then the seventh time after he makes human beings, he looked at the whole of creation and he says, and it is very good. And then you come down to chapter two, verse 18, and realize there is one moment in an age of perfection, in an age without sin, in an age where there was no rebellion against God at all, God looks and says, but there's something not good here.

And he says it is not good that a man, that a person should be alone. Wow, before anything was ever wrong with the world, there was one thing that was not okay.

And that was that humans would be by themselves, that a man should be alone. There had to be more people. And it's astounding to note it's not just that Adam said, thank you Lord for all the things you've made, I really like Eden, it's pretty great.

[9 : 49] But I'm pretty lonely. And that's not what the text says. Instead it says that God looked at creation. And God said it is not good that man should be alone.

Far before Adam ever even realized it. And that means something pretty astounding. It means that God is saying, God is saying, look, what does it mean to be met in the image of God?

You cannot have a fulfilling life. Not truly, not ultimately, without pursuing the very thing you were made for. And that is a deep and lasting relationship with the living God.

And the living God who made you for his eternal rest comes and says, and you need more. And you need something else. You need other humans, you need community.

You need to find your ultimate rest in God and you need human community. You need deep, abiding, living, relational community in your life. You need both. And so we talked about a few weeks ago that in Genesis 1, 26 to 28, God says, let us make man in our image.

[10 : 54] And it's a reference to God's ultimate relationality. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, relationship. God is relational from eternity. And then he makes us in his image and we turn and now he says to us, and you are relational.

Everlasting, well, you have to be. You need community. He's made us to be like him. Now, let me give you three things, applications, and they're very fast. One, that means our relationships with other people are far more important than we act like.

Far more important than we treat them. Secondly, it means that we probably are more isolationist than we think, than is good for us.

We probably tend to isolate more than God made us to. And that means that you can be married and still be an isolationist, still be alone.

Just like you can be single and be alone. And the way that happens is that isolationism is a product of our treating this life in self-sufficiency, self-rule.

[12 : 04] I can do it myself. Self-righteousness, I think you might subtly think in the bottom of your heart that you're better than other people. And so you've always kept your relationships at a distance. Any turn towards self is a turn towards isolationism.

And in the modern culture that we live in, we all are probably a bit more isolationist than we think we are. You can be in what seems like a very healthy marriage, but still be distant.

Not actually walking in deep community, not actually letting somebody else in your life truly know you. And so third, finally, that means that we are, in some sense, products of our culture.

And we've gotta be aware of that. And in a city like Edinburgh, one of the great cities of the world, a place that has some of the highest educational standards in all the world, there are lots of people that come to this city, a lot of people in this room, and you move here because you want to earn, you want to gain marketable skills so that you can go out and get a great job.

And if you go to university at a place like University of Edinburgh or anywhere else, for example, you know what they're gonna tell you? They're gonna tell you, listen, I know that calculus is important on day one of calculus, but they're gonna say, but the most important thing to remember no matter what your grade is in this calculus course is that your relationships are far more serious than calculus in your career.

[13 : 26] Right? No, no, that was a joke. No, no, no, you will never hear that in the classroom at the University of Edinburgh, right? You will never hear that in the city.

Nobody will ever tell you in a city like Edinburgh, hey, the most important thing for you to have a healthy life is to focus on your relationships more than your career. But the Bible says in human experience proves that that is exactly what's true.

Relationships are the real stuff of life. Secondly, what were we made for? God said it's not good that we should be alone. Secondly, we read here the second phrase is, at last, bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.

Now, really the heartbeat of this passage is the focus on the creation of Eve. And we see that first it tells us that, we looked at this last week, but that all these animals were brought to Adam and he named them, he had a particular culture-making power in that, and yet none of them were found a helper fit for him.

Now, one of the things we learned first, let's get straight to the application, pets are not enough, okay? You can love your pet, but humans are, you need real human community, pets are not enough, all right?

[14 : 45] That's the silly application, but it's true. God created Eve, and we read about that here. And in verse 19, it says that, out of the ground, every creature was formed.

Now, God raised up in the beginning, creatures from material stuff, including Adam, Adam was made from the ground, we looked at that a couple weeks ago.

But when it comes to the final moment of the creation act, Eve is not made from the ground. So Adam was made from the ground, all the creatures were made from the ground, we're told that very explicitly, but there was one creature that was not made from the ground but was made from something different, something greater.

And we read about that here in verse 19 and 20. So Adam was looking for a helper fit for him. And this language of helper is a relational term.

I really like a couple of the commentators, the scholars that talk about this, they say that another way to translate the word helper here is Adam could not find one that was quote, suitable for the task of companionship.

[15 : 51] Or another way to say it is Adam could not find one that was a corresponding companion that could truly offer to him a relationship that would make him whole, that would fulfill him.

So there is not a single sense in Hebrew of this word being, anything like subordinate or anything else that's not what the word refers to. It's here used to say, Adam could not find one that was fit for him, another human being.

And that's what the word means. And the word helper actually most often in the Old Testament is used of God. That's the one who helper is most often ascribed to. And so in Psalm 33 we read, God my helper, or we often translate it, God my help, same word, my help and my shield.

The one who I am most suitable for and is most suitable to me, the one whose relationship I need the most. That's the concept of helper here. And so in verse 21, to find the helper, the one who would fulfill Adam and whom Adam could fulfill, a true companion, God put Adam to sleep.

And then the text says that he took one of his ribs. The Hebrew word there just means side, often translated as rib, but it is often used this word for a building.

[17 : 09] It's an architectural term. So it's used in other places in the Old Testament to talk about the side of a building. In other words, took part of him. God took part of Adam and formed Eve.

And that means that we're being told here a couple of things that are really important. One is that Adam came from the dust. He came from the ground, like all the other creatures, but Eve, she was formed from the greater substance.

She came from a human being. And that means that we're reading here about the climactic moment of creation. The climax of creation is the creation of Eve, pinnacle creature in the creation story.

This is the biggest point, the most climactic moment. This would be the most teary and wonderful part of any movie that you might be watching. And that's why when God the Father brings her to Adam down that first aisle of marriage in the Garden of Eden, he says, at last, at last.

Not only has he found a companion fit for him, but also this is the climactic moment of the creation story, seeing Eve, the greatest moment in the story.

[18 : 20] And then that means, secondly, that this is telling us that relationship, human relationship is the most climactic event in the creation story, that God says now, now that you can abide in deep community together, you are finally filled, made for who you were made for.

Now, this is certainly about marriage, of course. Marriage, a covenantal relationship between a man and a woman. God instituted prior to all civil governments and anything they might say about it.

But I wanna broaden out and just say that this also teaches us about relationships in general, beyond just marriage. What do we see here? Very quickly.

When Eve was made from him, and that means that in Ephesians 5, when Paul talks about what a great marriage looks like, he says a great marriage is to treat somebody so much so that, like they are a part of you, that Paul says you love them more than you love your own body.

And we see in the beginning that she actually came from him. And deep abiding relationships expressed most pinnically in marriage, but also in friendship, to a degree, are when you treat somebody, you are so for them, it's as if you love them more than you love yourself.

[19 : 49] Like they are, like you love them more than you love your own body, as Paul puts it, in Ephesians chapter 5. The other thing we see here is in order for her to be created, for him to find a true companion, Adam had to lose something.

So before there was ever anything wrong with the world, what happened? Adam went down. He went to sleep, this metaphor. This metaphor of almost death.

He didn't die, no, but in a world before Sinnevere was even there, Adam went down in sort of an act of sacrifice. He, something was taken from him for the sake of another, and we see that even from the beginning, before there was anything wrong in this world, before there was even death, there's still this statement that sacrifice is at the heart of deep and abiding relationship.

That giving something away is what it means to be in a true and final and ultimate covenant relationship. Giving away is not just costly, it's joyful.

That's what we see here from the very beginning. And that means that what we're being told is that a covenant relationship is to give yourself away to somebody else for the sake of another to the point of loss.

[21 : 09] That you're willing to go even all the way, and so Ephesians 5 picks up on that, it says ultimately express a marriage, but even in any covenantal relationship, like a friendship, true love is to covenant to somebody to the degree that you are willing to give yourself away to them to the point of loss, of sacrifice.

Philippians 2 picks up on this, think of others as more important than yourselves. Boy, Jonathan David, what a friendship, in 1 Samuel 18, Jonathan pledged to give his own life to protect David's life.

Covenant friendship, pinnically expressed in marriage, but not exclusively not at all. You can be married, you can be single, and you can still pursue the depth of relationship that's being talked about here, because the best marriage is also a friendship.

And the pinnacle relationship in some sense across the Bible is expressed whenever friendship enters the room. And Paul was single, and Christianity revolutionized the status of singleness in all of world history.

Married or single, you can have relationships like this in your life, that's what we're being told. And so we need, and let's move on to the final thing, we need two things. We need a deep and abiding relationship with the living God, that's what we were made for.

[22 : 26] And you need a deep and abiding relationship with another human being, that's friendship. And that's available to anyone, married or single.

We get this wrong in a couple ways. Let me ask you, let me do this first. What is your relational reality today? What are your relationships like right now in your life?

There is, every single one of us in this room knows that there are multiple ways to wound relationships. And so nobody comes into church today with the same exact situation of the joys and the wounds that you may have through your relationships with one another, we're all different.

But Christianity I think shows us, the Bible shows us that most importantly, to seek healthy relationships, healthy relationships in your life, you need to first have a deep and abiding relationship with the living God, and then out of that have a covenant relationship with somebody else in your life, a covenant, not a contract.

Here's the formula for something like that. Do you, do you treat the people in your life in your life that God has given you that are most important as covenantal relationships, not contractual relationships?

[23 : 52] A contractual relationship is one where you go to boots, let's say, and you pick up at the counter the pack of gum, extra gum, the little pack, 16 pieces.

I know it very well. Coolment, experiment, whatever you like, and you take it to the counter and the cashier says, that'll be 25 pounds.

And you say, for this pack of gum, 25 pounds. Now immediately what's happened is you've entered into a contractual relationship with that person. They're saying to you, if you will give me 25 pounds, I will let you have this pack of 16 pieces of extra gum.

And of course, what do you say? You say, no chance, 25 pounds for this little pack of gum, there's not a chance in the world that I'm gonna buy this. And you say, the contract has ended.

I am leaving now. This was a this for that relationship. And if you cannot meet your end of the bargain, I don't want any part of this. You see the difference in contractual and covenantal relationships, or in a contractual relationship, which we have all around us all the time, it is entirely a this for that exchange.

[25 : 08] In other words, I come to this relationship to receive a benefit and value added from you. And if you cannot give that to me, I'm walking.

If the price is too high, I will leave. If I don't get from this what I need from this, then I'm leaving. That's contract. God says, friend, do you have in your life a covenant relationship?

And a covenant relationship is one where you look out and say, even to the point of great loss, I will give myself away to make that person great. A covenant relationship is where you get so outside of yourself, where you say, I exist to make this person great in my life.

To bring them closer to the Lord. To walk with them until they shine in the effulgence of the image of the sun. And I know that's gonna cost me. I know that there's gonna be wins on the way.

That's covenant. You see, covenant relationships are where you forget about yourself because you're so for the sake of the other person and they're so for the sake of you that you have this mutual thing going where you're just serving one another.

[26 : 19] It's covenant, not contract all the way to the bottom. And so you might come to a marriage, let's say, and say something like this. All I ever wanted was for my spouse to make me happy.

And if you're saying that in your heart, what you've done is subtly leaned in to thinking of the marriage as a contract. What I'm really here for is for this person to add the value of happiness to me.

Or you might come and say, boy, if I could just find a boyfriend or girlfriend or a husband or wife, then I could be happy. And you've slowly in the bottom of your heart transferred what a covenant relationship is meant to be in a contractual mindset.

That if I could get that one person, then finally I could be fulfilled. And what's happened in that is you've put a weight upon that person that they can never bear.

You've made them in your mind, in the eyes of your heart, like God to you. Trying to be something that they can never be. I love what C.S. Lewis writes about this.

[27 : 29] He says when he was writing about after he got married to his wife, Joy Davidman, he says, when I have learned to love God, here's the key, here's the secret. When I've learned to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now.

Insofar as I learned to love my earthly dearest at the expense of God and instead of God, I shall be moving towards the state in which I shall not love my earthly dearest at all.

When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed, they're elevated. Love God and then love people. Love God, pursue the Lord, seek the covenant relationship you were made for with the Lord and like the rising tide lifts all ships, so your human relationships will be elevated.

Let me ask you this question and we'll move to the final thing. Here's a measure of real health in your relationships in your life. Will you ask this question today of your own relationships? Do you have one great relationship in your life right now where you can have spiritual conversations about your faith, about your lack and struggle with faith, about your relationship to God, with someone else regularly that you're either married to or great friends with?

Do you have somebody in your life that you can go have a real spiritual conversation regularly where they can come and they have permission to tell you the truth about who you really are and where you can tell them the truth about your prayer life, for example?

[29 : 12] Do you have a relationship like that? That's the measure of health. If you don't, you're not yet entering into the fullness of Christian community. So finally, what kind of relationships do we really need?

And let's close with this. The last thing we're told in this passage is they were naked and not ashamed. So chapter two, verse 25, the man and his wife were naked and not ashamed.

Now, certainly in context, this first refers to what we're told here is one flesh union between a man and a woman in covenant marriage. This certainly refers to the act and reality of sex and marriage, but it's also more than that.

And when we broaden out, you can think about this to the lens of Genesis three. There's physical nakedness here, but there's also something more than that. There's something like spiritual nakedness.

And we know that because in Genesis chapter three, after Adam and Eve's sin, God comes into the Garden of Eden and it says Adam and Eve before the Lord were naked and ashamed.

[30 : 15] And so this broadens out beyond just a relationship between covenant marriage partners. This is about something else as well, not just physical nakedness, but spiritual nakedness. It's a metaphor as well for the soul.

And it tells us exactly what we need in our relationships in life. It's saying to us that every single one of us in ideal conditions are able to have spiritual, soul nakedness without shame with somebody else.

Meaning, what does that mean? It means that we all need a relationship in our lives where we are truly known all the way to the bottom of our soul and loved anyway.

Naked and not ashamed, known and deeply loved simultaneously. Every single one of us needs that in our lives. That's a covenant relationship to the bottom.

Somebody that actually knows you, somebody that knows what's going on in the life of your soul and somebody that you're not ashamed to talk to about what's really going on in your life.

[31 : 15] Isolationism comes out in all sorts of forms. You can be married, but not have a soul, not be known, and therefore not be truly loved.

You can have a friendship. How many of us, do we have friendships where there is no space within that friendship to actually know one another and therefore truly be loved?

Do you have a friendship that's gone pretty stale over the years or a friendship where you do try to at times intentionally get together, but the conversation seems to go absolutely nowhere?

No depth to it at all. Are you letting somebody else know you in order to love you, to really open up the soul before you? We need this because also we hide from ourselves.

I've heard one pastor talk about this recently. He pointed out that every time you hear your own voice recorded, what do you do?

[32 : 15] Have you had this experience? You hear your own voice recorded, and then you turn to your friend and you say, that does not sound like me. And your friend says, that is exactly what you sound like.

And you say, no, no, no, no way. That's not, as a preacher, I have to have this experience more often than most of you. You say, that sounds so bad. Is that what I sound like every week? And you say, your friend that is your spouse says, yeah, that is what you sound like.

Look, the point, we don't know ourselves. You can be in a friend group where all of you know the most obvious vice of your one friend.

And you just think, how can they not see it? How can they not see that they steer every conversation back to themselves? How can they not see my friend? How can they not see that they never actually listen?

And what you realize when you say that about your friend is you are the friend. That is you, that is me. There are things about ourselves we can never know. And if we're gonna truly grow in this life, if we're gonna truly heal, we've got to have somebody else in our lives where we can be spiritually naked and not ashamed, or we can bear our soul and be told the truth about who we really are.

[33 : 29] Do you have a friend like that? Is your marriage like that? Are you stepping towards somebody? It can't be many people. It's not for the whole everybody in this room. It's one or two people in your life that are like that.

What's stopping you? What are you afraid of? And I think it's this, all of us are afraid that if we allow somebody to truly know us, the depths of our soul, the secret things, the misdeeds dark, then we couldn't be loved.

Now in John chapter 19 verse 23, Jesus Christ, we are told as he went to the cross, he was stripped despite what the paintings in the middle ages offer us, Jesus Christ went to the cross naked.

They stripped him of his clothes. And when he went to the cross naked, he hung there and that was, of course, public humiliation. Roman crucifixion brought such shame and public humiliation.

But just like in Genesis chapter two and three, it is not just physical, it is also spiritual. Jesus Christ went to the cross naked because he bore in that moment the guilt and shame of our exposed souls.

[34 : 48] What did Adam and Eve need most at the beginning of history? They needed a relationship where they could be exposed, known and loved. And because, boy, we broke our relationship with God, we break our relationships with everybody else, Jesus Christ came in the middle of history and he was naked.

He was exposed in his nakedness to the shame and guilt of our souls. He was exposed to the wrath and judgment of God the Father so that we would never have to be.

You see, what are you afraid of when it comes to deep relationships in this life? Boy, if you can know today, listen, I pray that you can know today that the God of heaven and earth who made you, who sees you from top to bottom, knows everything about you.

And so Jesus Christ came to hang on the cross in nakedness for your sake. He knows your soul and he loved you all the way to the point of death. That means that you don't have to hide.

God knows you and God loves you anyway. God knows you and so Jesus was murdered for you so that you could be healed. Your relationships could be restored first with God and then with other people.

[36 : 04] Boy, will you come and have a renewed, restored, reconciled relationship with the living God today and with the people around you by pursuing them and self-sacrificial love like you've been pursued.

What's stopping you? If you know God sees you and loves you to the bottom, he sees you to the bottom, he loves you to the sky, then you don't have to be afraid to have real relationships.

Let us pray. Father, we come today as a people who are in desperate need to be known and loved and so we thank you, oh Christ, that you experienced the shame and the guilt of our exposed souls at the cross so that we may be covered, that we may be clothed, that we may be hidden forever in you and so we thank you for such great love as that and today we ask that we could through that love turn and show it to people in marriage, in friendship, in family life, in the church family, Lord, that we would seek covenant bonds and so we ask, Lord, today, help us get out of ourselves in some way, help us to seek healing in some small way and we pray for that heart in Christ's name.

Amen.