

Why Would I Love My Enemies?

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[0 : 00] Yeah? Really? Okay, let's see after we read this. Anybody read this passage before today?

Think about this passage? Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to Luke chapter 6. We are looking at Jesus' sermon on the plain.

Not the flying plain, but the plain, you know, it's down low. This is different than what Matthew records, Jesus' sermon on the mount. There are similarities with the sermon on the mount, but there are much more differences between Matthew's record and Luke's record.

These are, I'm convinced, totally different sermons preached on different occasions, which accounts for the differences. One is on a mountain, one's on a plane. That's your first clue.

So, we want to, we, last week looked at verses 20, Luke chapter 6, verses 20 to 26, looked at the introduction of his sermon, where he talked about who is blessed and who are warned with the woes.

[1 : 24] And so, this morning we come, we will focus on verses 27 through 36, which is the heart of this message. This is his main point. And next week, Lord willing, we will be looking at verses 37 of Paul, which is kind of his application.

So, he actually preached the sermon that had an introduction, had a main point, and then had an application to it. And that's what he often did. So, we want to first read the text, and then we'll pray, and then we'll dig in.

So, if you're able, please stand as I read from Luke, Gospel of Luke chapter 6, beginning at verse 20.

This is after he came down from the mountain. He lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

[2 : 38] Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven, for so their fathers did to the prophets.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did, to the false prophets. But I say to you who are listening, love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. For the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also.

[3 : 57] And from one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who demands from you, and from one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back.

And as you wish that others would treat, excuse me, as you wish that others would do to you, do the same to them.

If you love those who love you, what grace is that of you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what grace is that from you?

For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what grace is it from you?

Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend expecting nothing in return.

[5 : 06] Father, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. So it reads, let us pray. Father, these words expose us.

These words are hard words. These words are impossible words. Help us, as Jesus says, he speaks to those who are listening.

Help us to be those who are listening. Receiving what he has to say, listening, hearing him out. Help us to hear it honestly, and help us to hear it humbly.

Amen. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Okay.

[6 : 28] This is one of those weeks where I would rather not be an expositor. You know, where you walk through the text and you have to deal with each verse, and you can't just skip around and do what you want.

It's going to be nice to skip around and do something else. This is not a passage I would pick. But that's the benefit of expository because it causes, it forces us to deal with everything that is written and take it within its context.

So there's a couple of important things to define here. What is love? What does he mean by love? And the other key definition is who's my enemy?

Who is that? What do we mean by that? So I looked up in some dictionaries online, you know, Webster's and, you know, whatever those dictionaries.

You don't even have to have one anymore. Just look it up. It defined an enemy as one who hates you, seeks to injure you, or oppose your interests. I would add, by Jesus' definition, they are certainly those who hate you.

[7 : 40] They are those who curse you and abuse you and strike you and take from you and demand from you and, you know, bullies.

And particularly in this sermon and in this context, he's talking about enemy, your enemies because of Christ.

It is on account of Christ because notice the echo from verse 22, blessed are you when people hate you. Well, that's what an enemy does.

Blessed are you when people hate you and exclude you and revile you and spurned your name as evil. Why? On account of the Son of Man. Because you are connected to Jesus.

Because you take a stand for Christ. Because they know who you are. And they oppose you. They hate you. And they flip your words.

[8 : 49] You thought I was going to say something else, didn't you? No. Sorry. So these are the people Jesus wants us to love.

And Jesus is very clear about what that looks like. He explains how we do it. He explains when we do it. And these words had to have come as a shock to his listeners.

Because no one, no one had given such a radical call. And so our question today, my question is why would I ever love my enemy?

Why? Yeah, I know the first answer because Jesus says it. Okay, great. Thanks. Got it. Got the teacher.

Not that simple. So, as I said, Jesus is in the middle of his sermon. He's done the blessings and the woes. Now he gets to his main point.

[10 : 02] And notice, he starts in verse 27 by saying, but I say to you who are eerie. Right? So he talks about blessings and woes, but now he says, now I'm speaking to you.

And I'm speaking to those who are listening. By which he means those who are willing to pay attention. Those who are willing to carefully think through what I say that you might understand it.

Here's the problem. I don't want to listen to this sermon. who wants to love their enemy. I mean, what Jesus asks of us in these verses is considered by a non-Christian as absolutely ridiculous.

Ridiculous. I mean, it gives up every right. It, it, it, it, it, flies in the face of justice. And for that matter, it flies in the face of the justice of the old covenant.

Jesus is speaking outside and beyond the old covenant. Because the old covenant was about justice. Eye for an eye.

[11 : 24] Yes, you love your neighbor as yourself, but you also sue him if he's taken from you. And Jesus is saying, no, you don't. So, here's the question.

So, this is impossible love. It goes against every instinct that we have. It is not normal. It is unfair. And where's the justice?

Right? So, did Jesus really mean this? I mean, I mean, maybe, maybe it's just hyperbole.

You know, sometimes he uses hyperbole. He exaggerates. I had to look that word up. It exaggerates. Right? Like, like, you know, if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Did he really mean that?

Or is that hyperbole? So, maybe this is hyperbole just to shock us. You know, to nudge us over to be a little kinder to our enemy, but not really do all this.

[12 : 27] So, let's look at what he said. What is this call about loving our enemies? Jesus is calling his followers to an extremely uncommon walk.

And he explains it in two parts. So, we see in verses 27 to 31 where he explains what this looks like. How does it look to love my enemy? He gives, he gives several examples and references what it looks like.

And then, beginning of verse 32 to 36, he's going to give the reason. why should I do it? What difference does it make? Why do I do that?

Why would I ever do that? So, we get to that second. So, let's, so what's his directive? What does he call us to do? He calls us to treat our enemy, for me to treat my enemy the same way I want him to treat me.

That's the summary. Verse 31, the golden rule, right? Treat others as you wish they would treat you. He clarifies that with four imperatives.

[13 : 42] So, verse 27 to 28. Four imperatives. Four commands. Right? So, love your enemy, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who abuse you.

So, in other words, to love my enemy, what does that look like? Well, it means doing good to them. And who's my enemy? The one that hates me and curses me. Right?

So, I love them by doing good to them, to the one who hates me, the one who detests me. And then I bless those who curse me. I bless them by seeking their good.

I seek their good. I call good upon them. They who seek evil on me, I seek good on them. And then pray for those who abuse you, who will treat you badly.

Okay? He doesn't define how to pray them, so, how to pray. So, maybe I could pray like David did in the Old Testament. You know, pray that camels will, you know, drag them across the dry desert or something like that.

[14 : 40] I don't know. One of those imprecatory psalms. Yeah, I said imprecatory. Look at that. Amen. You know, they're the psalms that, you know, it seems like, wow, I can't believe you said that.

Not a lot of love for the enemy there. They're praying for those like Jesus prayed on the cross. Forgive them. Like Stephen prayed for those who were stoning him.

Right? Lord, don't hold this against them. And then we see some examples. So, verse 29, 30 gives four illustrations. It, scenario.

So, if, verse 29, if they strike you on the cheek, offer the other. Turn the other cheek. Right? And from the one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

It's, it's kind of the, like, like the, remember Jesus told the parable about the man traveling and he fell among thieves. Thieves that took stuff while he was traveling.

[15 : 51] It's, it's probably a traveling kind of scenario where that was common. You're traveling and, and you're stuck out there and thieves come and they take your, your cut. They take something from you.

It's petty theft. Um, and he's saying don't withhold what else they want. Um, don't fight back.

And then, verse 30, um, then, verse 30, give to the one who begs from you.

Now, our translation, ESV has begs from you. The word is, it's usually translated asks the one who asks, asks from you. So we take this little verse out of its context.

Does, does it mean give to everyone who begs from you? Does that mean every time I come to the guy with the sign, every time I come outside the grocery store and they're, you know, they're begging me, every time, you know, I come to that corner where they sit and they're, and they're begging, you know, does that mean I have to do that every single time?

[16 : 56] Is that what Jesus means? And, and I say it's not beg, I say the word is translated demand and that is, that is absolutely, it, this word is actually translated demand several times in the New Testament and I believe it's, it, the context is all about enemies.

Context is not about somebody, some random person asking you for help. This context is about somebody comes demanding from you because they're your enemy, because you believe in Jesus, because you stand for Christ.

They are going to demand things from you and he's saying when they do that, give, just give it up. And the one who takes away your goods, so, so the earlier one, verse, verse 29, if they take your cloak, give the, you know, don't withhold your tunic either, that's petty theft.

Now we get to the bigger thing in verse 30, you know, they take away your goods. In other words, they come and confiscate your property. don't legally require them back.

Wow. Don't go to court. What happened to, you know, Jesus read the law, Jesus read the Old Testament.

- [18 : 20] What happened to I for an eye? Where's that? Well, we see in the sermon that Jesus recorded, excuse me, Matthew recorded, the other sermon in Matthew 5 where he says, you know, you've heard that it was said, I for an eye, but I say to you what?
- Turn the other cheek, give it away. So Jesus is changing, he's going beyond what the Old Covenant is. Remember, Jesus is bringing a new covenant.
- That means new stuff, new wine, new clothes. This is different. It's higher. Hard. So we say, what about justice?
- Yeah. So verse 31, he gives the summary, he applies it in one ideology, one idea, one principle, one golden rule.
- As you desire others to treat you, so treat them. In other words, do good to them and do, show mercy and kindness and compassion. And the idea here, verse 31, as you wish others would do to you, parenthesis, when you have hated them and cursed them and hurt them and been their enemy and then they catch you and then you wish they would be kind.
- [19 : 43] It's like little Jimmy on the bus. Remember I told you the bus story? Remember Jimmy's acting up? Hey, Mr. Bill, I was a bus driver. Hey, Mr. Bill, you know, Bobby's, you know, hitting me.
- You know, you need to get him. And I said, well, do you want justice? Because I knew Jimmy was also a rascal. I said, do you want justice?
- He thought about, this is a seventh grader, he thought about for a seventh grader. Yeah, so when the break starts. No. He says, nah.
- You know, we want others to be merciful to us when we've been bad, when we've acted bad.
- And so Jesus is saying, treat others the same as you would wish to be treated. In Matthew 7, where Matthew records a different sermon, Jesus said the same golden rule a little bit differently, but then Jesus said, this, this desiring others to treat you as you would, Jesus said, this is the law and the prophets.
- [21 : 14] So, he said, that's interesting. This is, the desire to treat others as you would, excuse me, treat others as you would desire them to treat you.
- Jesus said, this is rooted in the law and the prophets. So, if you go back to the law, you have that command, love your neighbor as yourself. That's where that's coming from. It's the only place that could be coming from.
- In the Old Testament. Love your neighbor as yourself. Then the question becomes, who's my neighbor? Who's my neighbor? Who is the neighbor under Jewish law?
- Who is their neighbor? Hell of Jews. Hell of Jews. There could be a stranger sojourning among them as well. It would never be as we see in the New Testament when Jesus tells, you know, when he gets asked, who's my neighbor?
- And Jesus talks about a Samaritan. It would never be that. No, a Samaritan is my enemy. Yeah, so Jesus redefined that, right?
- [22 : 23] But that was not how they thought it. So, who's my neighbor? Well, let's see what David thought. Psalm 139, that's a well-known psalm, isn't it? It's the same one where he prays, you know, search me and try me, see if I've done anything.
- You know, he's got an open heart there. Yeah, that same psalm, David said, Psalm 139, verse 21 and 22, he said, do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?
- Wait, he's supposed to say love, David. He said, hey, do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

I hate them with a complete hatred. I count them my enemies. That sounds different than what Jesus is saying.

Doesn't it? And I think that was entirely legitimate and right feeling of an Old Testament believer. That was what they knew.

[23 : 28] Those who hate you, I hate. Those are enemies. Enemy of God is my enemy. Right? Right? Now, so, so, where does this go?

Where do we go with this? Um, did Jesus really mean this? Love my enemies. You're good to those who hate me and bless those who curse me.

Sinner. Did Jesus really mean this? Because this is beyond what the Old Testament describes. Well, let's look at another text in the New Testament.

What did the apostles teach? Did, did they take what Jesus taught and repeat it? Well, let's see what Paul does in Romans 12. Romans 12 is, is, is, uh, kind of like, Romans 12, one is like the mountaintop, you know?

He kind of, he kind of, first 11 chapters of Romans, he's, look at all that God did, look at all God's mercies, all these mercies God did. So, 12, one becomes, therefore, this is how you live, this is how you live.

[24 : 39] Right? So, 12 is kind of very, very important about how Christians live. So, what does he say? Romans 12, 9. Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil.

Okay, I like that. Abhor what is evil. Hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. I'm good so far, aren't you? I kind of like it. I think I can do this.

Outdo one another in showing honor. Oh, okay. I don't know about that one. Can I just show honor? Do not be slothful and zeal, okay? Be fervent in spirit.

Serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Skip that part. Patient in tribulation thing. Be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Okay? Bless those who persecute you. Bless them. Do not curse them. Okay, where did he get that? Right in the middle of all this kind of loving one another thing, also he's got this.

[25 : 42] Bless those who persecute you. Bless them. Do not curse them. Same thing Jesus said. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the low.

Never be wise in your own spirit. That's good advice. Repay no one evil for evil. Well, here he goes again. But get thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. I can't live peaceably with all, but as far as it depends on me. Beloved, never avenge yourselves.

Man, man, he keeps bringing this stuff back in. Never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. For it is written, vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.

To the contrary, if your enemy, your enemy is hungry, feed him. Be as thirsty, give him something to drink. Why? For by doing so, or by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.

[26 : 50] Ow. That doesn't, what is that? Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. In other words, Paul's conclusion, Paul's basic focus of Christianity, both within the church and outside of the church, is pretty much the same thing Jesus said, especially regarding enemies.

So, Jesus was not exaggerating. He meant what he said. The apostles repeat this same call to this impossible kind of love. Peter, Peter's whole letter is about this.

So, the question is, how do we do this? Why would we love our enemy? So, we come to verses 32 to 36 where he gives now some reasoning.

He's given us this impossible catch. Now comes his reason. His reason, basically, just summarizes pretty much what Dan's saying.

Pretty much is, we can love our enemies because it's how God loves us. Period. Summary. We can love our enemies.

[28 : 11] Why? Because it's exactly how God has loved us. It's not simply that I can love my enemies because God has given me an example of how to do it.

That's not good enough for me. I can love my enemies not simply because he's given me an example, but because I've experienced that love.

I've experienced that love as a former enemy of God. so I know how to do that. In fact, because I've experienced it, I now am enabled and changed to do this kind of impossible love.

So why would I love my enemy? Because God, that's how God loves us. We see in verses 32 to 35 he gives some reasons. One, because it's rare.

In other words, it distinguishes a Christian from everyone else in the world. two, there is a reward and three, it is a reflection of God himself. So, look at verse 32.

[29 : 18] He talks about how rare this kind of love is. Verse 32, if you love those who love you, what grace is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

In other words, everyone loves the one they love. Everyone loves, anyone can love conditionally. I love you because you love me. I love you if you love me. It's a limited love.

I love, but there's terms. And so, now I know our text reads in verse 32, it probably reads, if you love those who love you, what benefit is that?

And I said grace, right? I said grace because that's the Greek word grace. grace. Now, it can mean benefit. It can mean benefit, depending on the context.

And in Matthew's translation, in Matthew's record of Jesus' other sermon, he uses the word reward. And so, I believe translators are influenced by Matthew's version and then imposing that on Luke's.

[30 : 29] But you've got to let Luke speak for himself. And partly because it's not the same sermon. So, in other words, it reads like this.

What does grace mean? So, what does charis mean? Charis, grace, means free gift. We've been saved by grace alone, right?

It's a free gift. Grace alone. Free, free, free. Not benefit. Free! Same word.

So, in other words, if you love those who love you, where's the grace? Where's the free gift? If you're doing it conditionally, you're doing it as reciprocal love, where's the grace?

See, a free grace kind of love would be loving those who don't love you. that's his point. And then, take, do good, verse 33.

[31 : 32] If you do good to those who do good to you, what grace? Where's the grace in that? Even sinners do that. If you lend, here's a great example, verse 34. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, where's the, and here they change it to credit.

I don't get that. Where's the grace in that? Where's the free grace, free gift in that? If you're lending just to get it back, there's no free grace in that. That's Old Testament love.

By the way, in the Old Testament, if you lend, there is an absolute expectation to get it back. It's the law.

Now, if you lend to your brother, you lend to a fellow Israelite, you better not, and you cannot charge interest. It's an interest-free loan.

But you get it back. Now, if you loan to a stranger or a sojourner, you can charge all the interest you want. It's okay. They're just strangers and old sojourners. That's Old Testament love.

[32 : 41] What Jesus is saying is beyond that. Okay. Okay. So, this whole question, it's, if you love those who love, do you give to those who do you lend, to those who are going to give back, where's the grace?

How does that make you distinct from the world? If you're a follower of Jesus, how are you distinct? How are you light in the darkness? How does your uncommon love stand out?

that's a reason why we love our enemies? There's a second reason we see in verse 35, a future reason. Now, he repeats again.

This is why we know there's kind of, you know, there's bookends here. Verse 27, love your enemy. Verse 35, love your enemies. So, there's bookends. Everything in the middle is about how we do that, what that looks like.

So, love your enemies, do good. Verse 35, love your enemies, do good. So, he's repeating, he's summing up. So, love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return, your reward will be great.

[33 : 56] So, there you have a great reward. Expecting nothing in return and your reward is great. When is my reward? Oh, it says, will be great.

So, you wait for that. Right now, we give and expect nothing, in return, but there will be a return. In fact, it will be a great return. Big dividends.

Big interest. Anybody try to save money doing CDs and that answer and get a little bit of interest? It's kind of like, yeah, it's a little bit.

It's better than what was four years ago. God, this is big time. Your reward is great. See, God is not asking us to give up everything and never be rewarded.

there's a day. God will make everything right and he will give us a reward that is so great that it is far exceeding all that we have suffered.

[35 : 06] That's our perspective. That's our goal. And then there's the main reason at the end of verse 35. Your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

And you will be, does that mean I earn that? If you do this, then you'll be the son that I'll be. No, when you do this, you prove that you are.

When you do this, you're a son. You're proving to be what you are. You become a son of the Most High. You show who you really are.

You are acting like God. Well, how does God act? How did God treat his enemies? Well, what does he say at the end of verse 35?

He's kind to whom? The ungrateful and the evil. Who are the ungrateful? It's when we don't say thank you.

[36 : 15] In another context, Paul's talking about this, how God has been good to the evil, to the just and the unjust.

He sends rain on the just and the unjust. He lets the sun shine on the just and the unjust. Do they deserve it? He gives them fruitful seasons so that their hearts are glad.

Do they deserve that? And do they ever say thanks? Do they recognize him as the creator and the giver of good, of the ability to live life with gladness?

where's the thanks? Thanks. So, why would we love our enemies?

Because it's how God has loved us. Notice how Paul describes it in Romans 5. Romans 5, Paul says, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[37 : 34] Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace, this free gift in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

if it's just in it right there, it'd be great. Right? I mean, we have so much to look for. We have so much, we have this, this gift of justification which means I'm, my guilt has been removed.

He's taken my guilt and given me his righteousness. We just sang about that and just, and can it be, I love that song. Love that song. He's done that.

And then he's given us peace and he's, and he's given us this gift of free access to him. I don't have to go through the temple. I don't have to go through sacrifice. I don't have to go through priests.

I go right to him. Who am I? And I don't come in my name. I come in Jesus name. That's why I can go. Then he says, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[38 : 44] Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings. All things different than normal people. We rejoice in our sufferings. Why? There's a reason we rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering is productive.

It produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope. A kind of hope that does not put us to shame.

Does not disappoint us? Why? Because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

How in the world did that happen? When did it happen? Well, for while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

for one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps a good person for a good person one would even dare to die, a mother for a child kind of thing.

[39 : 50] But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. In other words, it wasn't he showed his love because we showed our love back.

It was he showed his love when we should care less. Why did you do that? Since therefore, Paul goes on, since therefore we have been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Why? For while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son.

much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life. See, the question before was why would I love an enemy?

The question after reading that is how do I ever deserve that kind of love? We can love our enemies.

[41 : 04] love our enemies. I am not using the word should. That doesn't motivate me one day. Does it motivate you? Makes me feel like but I will say with scripture we can't.

We are enabled. We are enabled and motivated to love our enemies. Why? Because that's how God has loved us. He loved us while we were enemies. He loved us when we hated him, when we cursed him, when we dishonored him, when we rejected him and ignored him and took from him without ever saying thanks.

And he gave more. Why? When he loved us, he removed our guilt and he gave us peace.

He gave us access to him by grace. He poured his love into us by the gift of the Holy Spirit so that by that gift of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to walk like Jesus walked and turn the other cheek and let them take how many times did people, did Jesus heal people and they never said thanks?

I wonder. How many times did Jesus allow himself to be used? Isn't that foolish? See we kind of like think oh yeah but you know why would I give to somebody they don't appreciate it or they don't say thanks?

[42 : 50] well Jesus did it all the time. Remember the ten lepers? He healed ten lepers? Only one came back and said thanks? What kind of average is that? Anybody statistics here?

Through our suffering we bear he produces we bear the fruit of endurance character and hope why would we love our enemies?

Because it's how God loved us and if you've experienced that love you can love you. Let's pray. Father we thank you for your word it's a hard hard word as we hear it with human ears we hear it Lord with those rebellious hearts that we still have we hear that word that that that no that's too hard but you soften our hearts when you remind us of how you treated us you soften that hardness and that rebelliousness by your grace and you don't you don't you don't tell us this with lightning from the mountain you tell us this with grace on the plane you come down to our level and you show us and you call us to the same kind of love that only you can do and so you give us the Holy

Spirit you give us you so we can do it and you remind us why and when we remember why then we say why wouldn't I love my enemy so tenderize our hearts oh God change what's hard in us change what's rebellious in us change Lord what's what's what's unwilling in us we pray in Christ's name Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen