The Sermon on the Mount Your Will Be Done Matthew 6:10 March 3, 2013, AM

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Years ago I read, and perhaps you have heard or read the amazing story of John and Betty Stam. In 1934, they went to war-rayaged China to serve as missionaries there. But within two weeks of their arrival in China, they were placed under house arrest and under heavy guard by communist soldiers. John Stam wrote in response to that, his missions headquarters, and relayed to them the demand of his captors. It was for a twenty thousand dollar ransom. He closed his letter with these words: "The Lord bless you and guide you. And as for us, may God be glorified whether by life or by death." It wasn't too long after that, one morning Betty was bathing their little daughter there in their home where they were under house arrest. Suddenly, soldiers burst into their home. John and Betty were stripped to their undergarments. They were paraded down the street and of course, as you can imagine, a crowd began to gather. And once the crowd had come together, a soldier read the death sentence that had been passed against the Stams. Betty watched as John was beheaded, and then she was beheaded herself. Years before that, Betty Stam had written these words in her journal. She said: "Lord, I give up all my own plans and purposes, all my own desires and hopes, and accept Your will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all utterly to You to be Yours forever. Use me as You will. Send me where You will. And work out Your whole will in my life at any cost, now and forever."

That's what Christ meant when He taught us to pray, "Your will be done." It's that third petition that we come to in our study today. I invite you to turn with me to Matthew 6 as we continue our journey through the Lord's Prayer. Matthew 6, and let's read together the words we just sang. Verse 9:

Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

We are in the middle of a careful study of the six petitions that make up this model prayer we call the Lord's Prayer. We have seen that each of the petitions really gives us a separate category of prayer. We've noted that the first three petitions remind us that even prayer is not primarily

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about us. In fact, the first three categories we're told, here, into which our prayers should fall, have nothing to do with our needs or our desires. They are, instead, all about God. We are to pray for the glory of God: "Hallowed be Your name." That word *hallowed* simply means: God, may Your name be set apart, may it be treated as holy. God, may You glorify Your person and everything by which You have made Yourself known. That's what we're praying.

Secondly, we're to pray for the kingdom of God: "Your kingdom come." As we learned last week, when we pray that – "Your kingdom come" – we are praying both for the present aspect of God's kingdom, the spiritual kingdom over which Christ rules, as well as the future kingdom of Christ. So we are praying - when we say, "Your kingdom come," we are praying that heart by heart, the spiritual reign of Christ would be extended, that He would save other sinners and transfer them from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Your kingdom advance. We're also praying that for those of us who already know Jesus Christ, over whom He already reigns, that His reign at a practical level would be extended in our own hearts, that He would, as it were, ransack the darkest corners of our souls and that every part of our hearts would come under His sovereign reign, under His rule, under His authority. Lord, let Your kingdom advance in my own heart. When we say, "Your kingdom come," we're also praying about the future, literal, physical reign of Jesus Christ. We're saying, God, may You allow quickly the literal reign of Christ on this earth to come. "May the day soon come when Jesus shall reign where're the sun doth its successive journeys run."

This morning, we come to the third petition that our Lord teaches us to pray. It's there in verse 10. Look at it with me: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Now let me first of all note for you that Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer, the only other place in the New Testament where the Lord's Prayer is recorded, does not include this third petition. And I think the reason for that is because, in a sense, this third petition is contained in the previous petition. Because when the kingdom of God comes, when it is literally established on the earth, then the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven. But the fact that when He preached the Sermon on the Mount several months before Luke's version He included this third petition means that it does in fact stand alone on its own, and it does summarize a crucial part of our prayers. We are not only to pray for the glory of God and for the kingdom of God. We are also to pray for the will of God.

Now when we pray this request, when we say, God, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we are in fact praying that God would effect or produce three great spiritual results. When you say, "Your will be done," you're saying, God, I want You to produce these three spiritual results. First of all, the first spiritual result for which we pray in this request is for deliberate rejection of all other wills. Now before we go any further, let me make sure you know what the will is. The will is that faculty of the soul that makes choices. I agree with Jonathan Edwards. Although there's been a lot of debate about this, I agree with Edwards who defined the will as simply the mind choosing. In other words, there's not a separate compartment of your soul that, if you could

somehow dissect your true being there would be this separate compartment called your will. The will is simply the mind in action, making choices and decisions. What this means practically is that every intelligent being has a will. That is because they have a mind and they make decisions with that mind. To pray, God, Your will be done, means we want Your mind to choose and not our own, and not others. In other words, to say Your will be done, means that we must deliberately reject what every other intelligent being in the universe wills, and want instead, only what God wills.

Now I'm not sure if you're even aware of this, but there are in fact several different wills seeking to control your life. First of all, there's the will of Satan. Listen to 2 Timothy 2:26 because, there, Paul says that there are some people who are "held captive by Satan to do his will." Now maybe you've never thought about this before, but Satan has a will for your life. Satan has a will for your life, and it's the same for each of us. What does Satan want for you? What is his will for your life? Well, his will for your life is that you would reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. He's made that very clear that that's his purpose, that's his will. That's why in 2 Corinthians 4, we're told he blinds the minds of unbelievers so that the glory of the gospel won't be clear and shine unto them. When Jesus tells the parable of the soils, you remember, representing human hearts, He said when there's a hard heart and that hard heart hears the gospel, the seed of the gospel falls on that heart and Satan comes and snatches it away, because he doesn't want you to accept the gospel. So maybe you've heard the gospel many times before. You know the truth, but you've had a hard heart. Each time Satan has come and snatched that seed away from your heart before it takes root. Something distracts you, something in the service, something else that's going on in your life – you leave and you forget everything you heard. That's the work of Satan, because he wants you to reject the gospel. He raises up false teachers and even false Christians in the church. He's the one who sows the tares according to Jesus' parable. Why, because he wants you to reject the gospel, and he wants every one of us to reject the gospel.

But for those of us who have already accepted the gospel, those of us who are already followers of Jesus Christ, he still has a will for your life. And that will is to get you to sin as frequently as he possibly can, to reject the rule of God as he has rejected the rule of God. Over and over again, the Scripture tells us that Satan is behind temptation. Now don't misunderstand. Our own hearts, our flesh have fallen desires, James 1 says. But what happens is, Satan puts an external temptation in our way that causes our internal desires to respond. You've experienced this. You're minding your own business, doing your work, doing something, and suddenly an external temptation comes and your own sinful heart is drawn out to that temptation. That's the work of Satan. Satan has created a world system according to 1 John 2:15-16, a world system intended to get you to sin as often as possible. That system is characterized by the lust of the flesh (the cravings of your body), the lust of the eyes (that is, the desire to have and possess) and the boastful pride of life (to be known as somebody important and to be known for what you've accomplished). This is the system Satan's put in place and he desperately has a will that you would follow that. He wants you to embrace bad theology and false ideas. That's why Paul said

to the Corinthians that Satan transforms himself into an angel of (what?) light. He's behind all the bad theology that's out there, because if he can't get you to reject the gospel, he wants to do everything he can to get you to stumble and fall. Ultimately, he wants to destroy your faith. You remember what Jesus said to Peter? He said, "Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not..." Satan wanted to destroy Peter's faith, and he wants to destroy your faith as well and mine.

That's Satan's will for your life, but Satan isn't the only one with a will for our lives. There's also the will of others, people around us. The people around us often have a will for our lives. Sometimes their will for us is that we would do what's evil. They have a desire that we would do what they do, to salve their own consciences, to make themselves feel better, to bring us down. This comes through pressure that we call peer pressure. What is peer pressure? It's simply the people around you exerting their influence to try to get you to want what they want, and to do what they want you to do. And sometimes that's evil. Most of the time, that's the pressure that we feel. But sometimes, the pressure that we feel comes from people who are fellow believers and who care about us and mean well. Their will comes to bear on our lives, whether it's the will of parents or spouses or children or coworkers or family, because even people who love us and who love Christ can distract us from the will of God. Jesus encountered this problem. In fact, look at Matthew 16:21. Jesus predicts His death and His resurrection. And Peter, (verse 22) now remember, Peter is a true believer. Peter is a follower of Jesus Christ. And yet Peter, in response to what God's will for Jesus clearly is:

Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' And He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'

Listen. True, well-meaning believers can draw you off from the will of God by exerting their own will on you.

By the way, this also happens through unbelieving family members. Turn over to Mark 3:20.

Jesus came home, (to Capernaum, to the house, there, where He had established His ministry headquarters) and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. (The demands of ministry keep Jesus from actually eating) When His own people (that is, His own kinsmen, His own relations) heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses.'"

Now what's happening here is, Jesus had four brothers, and those four brothers that are named for us in Mark 6 didn't believe in Him during His earthly life and ministry - only after the resurrection. And here they are genuinely concerned about Jesus. They think He's lost His mind:

He's not taking care of Himself. He's neglecting the needs of the body. He's taking Himself way too seriously. We need to go and bring Him back to Nazareth. Look at verse 31. And Mary came along. I don't think that was Mary's motive; hers was genuine concern for her son, but:

Mary and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. . .the crowd said, 'Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You. (*Verse 33*). . . He said, 'Who are My mother and My brothers?' And looking at His disciples around Him, (*His followers*) He said, 'Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."'

But here you have Jesus' unsaved, unbelieving family members trying to redirect Him from God's will to their will for His life. Listen. When you pray, "Your will be done," you are deliberately rejecting Satan's will for your life, and you are also denying the will of others when what they want conflicts with the clear revealed will of God in Scripture.

But the greatest antagonist that we have to doing the will of God is not the will of Satan and it's not even the will of others. It's our own will. Frankly, I think many Christians have creatively reconstructed their own version of this third petition. Can we be honest and say that all too often our prayer is: God, my will be done on earth as Your will is done in heaven. But when we came to Christ, it meant the death of ourselves and it meant the death of our will for our lives. Do you realize, when you came to Christ you gave up your choosing what you want to do? Look at Luke 9. Here's the call to discipleship. Here's the call to follow Christ. Luke 9:23. "Jesus was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, (this is a call to be His disciple, to become His follower, to become a Christian, if you will) he must deny himself (that word deny means to repudiate, to disown. It means to repudiate all your own rights to self-rule and instead you have to die and be willing to die. Notice) he must take up his cross daily and follow Me." Jesus here is calling for an utter rejection of our own will and our own way, and a total commitment to obey and follow Christ, even if it means physical death, which of course, is what the cross ultimately pictures. But notice the denial of our own will is not something that happens once. Notice what He says in verse 23: "you must take up your cross (what?) daily..." Daily we have to remind ourselves that in Christ our will for our own life has died, and we have to follow Him, whatever it brings. To be able to pray "Your will be done" means that we must pray for a deliberate rejection of every will but God's.

But there's a second reality that we're praying for when we pray this prayer. Not only are we praying for a deliberate rejection of every other will, but we are praying for an unconditional acceptance of God's sovereign will. Now when Scripture speaks of God's will, and there are a couple of different words that are used but when it speaks of God's will, it is primarily referring to one of two biblical concepts. First of all, there is God's revealed will. That is what is in this book. That's God's revealed will. Theologians call it God's will of precept, or His will of

command. It refers to God's will as it is laid out in the Bible in God's commands and laws. Now understand, (this is very important) God's will of precept or command can be disobeyed and frankly, usually is. This is His will. This is what you ought to do. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. Love your neighbor as yourself. But it can be disregarded and disobeyed even though it is His will. Now we'll talk more about this first aspect of God's will in just a few minutes.

But let me give you the second concept that Scripture refers to when it speaks of God's will - not only God's revealed will, but secondly God's sovereign will. Theologians call this God's will of decree, what He has decreed will actually happen. This is God's eternal, unchangeable, immutable plan. God's sovereign will cannot be disobeyed. It cannot be disregarded. It cannot be thwarted by any of His creatures in any way. This is the will of God that Paul refers to in the passage we read this morning in Ephesians 1:11. "God works all things after the counsel of His will..." In defining this eternal decree of God, the Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it this way: "The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby for His own glory, He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." Wayne Grudem in his Systematic Theology defines the eternal decree of God this way: "It is the eternal plans of God whereby, before the creation of the world, God determined to bring about everything that happens." Now both of those works go on to describe the fact that that doesn't mean that you don't really make decisions and choices. You do. But God works in and through those decisions and choices. Nor does it mean God doesn't use secondary causes. He does. He doesn't violate either of those, but He weaves all of that together in a miracle of His providence so that in the end what He decided in eternity past would happen, is exactly what happens in every detail. The sovereign will of God. Notice what those definitions have in common: God decides, God decides before the foundation of the world, and God decides everything that will happen. That's God's sovereign will. Now here's the problem. You can't know God's sovereign will until it happens. By the way, this is what frustrates so many Christians. They spin their wheels trying to discern God's sovereign will: Who does God sovereignly want me to marry? Well, you can't discern God's sovereign will. You are called to make a wise, biblical choice, and only when that is done can you look back and say that was God's sovereign will.

Now understand that God's sovereign will, His eternal plan, will be done and is being done on earth as it is in heaven. So why would we pray anything about God's sovereign will? We're praying that we will unconditionally accept that sovereign will, that we will embrace God's sovereign will instead of complaining about it. In fact, in Acts 21:14 when the disciples learn that Paul is going to go ahead with his plan to go to Jerusalem in spite of the fact that he may be arrested and even face death, they say what? "The will of the Lord be done!" They are embracing God's sovereign will. What's the alternative to embracing God's sovereign will for your life? It's going to happen so it's not like you can thwart it. So what's the opposite of embracing it? It's whining, complaining, disputing with God about what He brings. That's why, in Philippians 2:14 (I wish we had time to turn there) right after he said, Live your life working out your own

salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it's God that works in you to accomplish His purposes, he says: "Do all things without grumbling (that is, against God) and disputing (with God)..." That's the other way you can respond to God's sovereign will in your life. You look at the circumstances He brings. You can either embrace it and accept it, or you can whine and complain and tell God how unfairly you have been treated. But we are called to accept God's will. It's the spirit of John Newton, the one who wrote Amazing Grace, when as his wife lay dying, wrote these words in his journal: "What Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, how Thou wilt." To pray "Your will be done" means that you are accepting God's sovereign will without qualification, without argumentation, and without complaining and disputing. It means to pray this: God, I wholeheartedly accept what You have brought into my life and whatever You choose to bring into my life.

It's obviously a prayer that God's will be done everywhere in the universe, but it's really more personal than that. It's a prayer that really encompasses our individual lives. We pray that God's will would be done in the big decisions of our lives: God, may Your will be done in where I decide to go to school, and in who I choose to marry, and in the city where I live, in the church I attend, in the career I choose, in the job I accept. Lord, may Your sovereign will be accomplished. Give me wisdom to make wise choices, but in the end may Your sovereign will be played out in my life. May I accept it and embrace it. It's also accepting God's will in our individual circumstances. Praying, Lord, Your will be done means: God, Your will be done whether it brings outward success for me or failure. Your will be done whether it brings riches or poverty. Your will be done whether it means health or a life of sickness. Your will be done whether it means marriage or singleness. Your will be done whether it means joy or sorrow, whether it means ease and comfort or troubles and trials, whether it means life or death. Let Your will be done. But it also means let Your will be done in the individual issues and circumstances of daily life. And this is harder, isn't it? It means saying: God, I accept without arguing or whining whatever circumstances You providentially bring into my life today. Whatever interruptions, whatever distractions, whatever trials, whatever problems, whatever people, I want Your sovereign will to be done in my life today. Let me ask you – is that how you think? Is that how you pray? It's tough.

So how do we come to the place in our own lives where we can from our hearts, completely unconditionally accept and embrace God's sovereign will? It comes from trusting God and who He is. That kind of trust grows out of a true knowledge of the character of God. That's why the psalmist says: "Those who know Your name (that is, those who understand Your character, Psalm 9:10) will put their trust in You..." The reason you might struggle accepting God's sovereign will for you and the circumstances He brings, is because you don't really know who God is. You don't know that He's perfectly powerful. There's nothing He can't do in your life. There's no circumstance He can't change by willing it to be so – that He's good, that He's only doing what's good for you, and that He is all-wise, that not only are the ends He has in mind

the best ends, but the means He chooses to get you there are the best means. If you don't understand that about God, you're not going to trust Him.

Habakkuk, the Old Testament prophet, struggled with this. It's interesting because he had a very rare opportunity. He got to know what God's sovereign will was before it happened, because God said, Here's what's going to happen. You and your people and your nation and your city are all going to be destroyed by the Babylonians. How would you like to know that's God's sovereign will for your life before it happens? He struggled with that. He says, God, are You really going to do this? Habakkuk 1:13 – "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?" God, you can't do this. But ultimately, he comes back to faith. How does he get to faith? It's not because the circumstances change. It's because he reminds himself of who God is. Look at the last chapter, Habakkuk 3. (He said in chapter 2 the just shall live by faith; that is, their understanding of God and who He is and His promises.) Verse 17, the end of verse 16, he says, I'm just waiting for what You've said to happen to happen. People are going to arise who will invade us. And then here's what he says, verse 17: "Though the fig tree should not blossom and though there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no fruit, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls (stop there)..." You know what he's saying? Remember, this is an agrarian, agricultural society in which he lives. He has just said, God, if the world I live in essentially ceases to exist, if my life is turned completely on its head, as it's going to be. . . Verse 18: "Yet I will exult in Yahweh, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength..." Where did Habakkuk find confidence to accept God's sovereign will as hard as it was? In God, in his confidence in who God is. That's where we find it as well. Listen. Are you willing to pray, "Your will be done"? If so, it means that you must deny every other will and it means you must unconditionally accept God's sovereign will for each day and for your entire life. And oh, by the way, this isn't just a prayer for us. It's a prayer for the people that we know and love as well: God, let Your will be done in their lives as well, and help me to embrace it without grumbling and without complaint.

There's a third result that we're asking God to produce when we pray "Your will be done." It means that we're also praying for willing obedience to God's revealed will. Remember I said to you that when Scripture speaks of the will of God, it's referring either to His sovereign will (which we've just talked about) or His revealed will, His will of precept, or His will of command, what's in this book that you hold in your hand, That's His will of precept, His will of command, His revealed will. Now which of those, His sovereign will or His revealed will, did Jesus have primarily in mind when He taught us to pray in Matthew 6:10, "Your will be done"? Well, I think we get a clue from the phrase He adds. Look again at Matthew 6:10: "Your will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." Now I think as I've just explained to you, that accepting God's sovereign will, embracing God's sovereign will, is part of this petition, but His sovereign will is

already done on earth as it is in heaven. But God's will of command, His preceptive will, His revealed will that's recorded for us in His Word is only perfectly obeyed (where?) in heaven. In fact, turn to Psalm 103. A favorite psalm for many of us, but he ends this way. Psalm 103:19

The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all. (there's His sovereign will, but then you run, in verse 20 and 21 into His will of command, His will of precept, His revealed will) Bless the Lord, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word! Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, (that is, all the heavenly hosts) you who serve Him, doing His will.

Remember, there were some angels who didn't obey God's will of command. We now call them the demons because they rebelled against God and left heaven. But here in heaven at this point in time, God's will is completely and perfectly obeyed. But we can't say that here on earth, can we? I mean, God said, "Have no other gods before me," and yet our planet is filled with billions of people who have other gods before Him. He said, Worship Me only in the way I prescribed, and yet the planet is filled with people who worship Him in ways other than He prescribed. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart," and yet the planet is packed with a population of people who refuse to love Him.

So the primary meaning of this third petition is that God's commands, His revealed will contained within the covers of this book – that it would be obeyed by all mankind here on earth in the same way that it's obeyed by the angels and the saints in heaven. This by the way was Jesus' concern while He was on the earth. In John 6:38, He says: "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." His whole life was obeying the Word of God. God has expressed His will for us right here in His Word. You don't have to go looking for it. You don't have to pray for God's will. It's right here. So you say, How do we, how do we put our arms around that? What is God's will for us? Well, God's will for you is everything that's within the covers of this book, but let me tell you six things the Bible specifically says are God's will for you in those terms. Here's God's will for you. First of all, God's will for you is to be saved. 1 Timothy 2:3 – "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." This is His will of command to you. Repent and believe the gospel. 2 Peter 3:9 – "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." It's His will of command that all mankind respond to the gospel.

Secondly, His will for you is to be Word-saturated . In Ephesians 5:17, he says: ". . .understand what the will of the Lord is" and "be filled by the Spirit with the word" according to Colossians in the parallel passage. Let the Spirit fill you with the Word of God. He wants you to be Word-saturated.

Thirdly, He wants you to be sanctified. 1Thessalonians 4:3 – "For this is the will of God, your sanctification;" - and specifically here, that you abstain from sexual immorality and that you possess your body in sanctification and honor. Number four: it's God's will for you to submit to human authority. 1 Peter 2:13 – "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution (that is, every structured human authority that God has put in place)... For such is the will of God..." Fifthly, it's God's will for you to express gratitude. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 – "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Sixthly, if He should so choose, it's His will that you suffer for the sake of Christ. 1 Peter 4:19 – "Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."

There's God's will for you. You want to know God's will? It's to be saved, to be saturated with the word, to be sanctified, to be submissive to authority, to be grateful, and if He should choose, to suffer, entrusting yourself to Him. Wanting God's will to be done and praying that it will be done is praying that those things will become a reality in your life and in every life you pray for. When you pray, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," you are asking God to effect and produce in you and in others these three great spiritual results: a deliberate rejection of all other wills, an unconditional acceptance of God's sovereign will, and a willing obedience to God's revealed will.

You know, the most profound illustration of what it means to pray this third petition comes from the lips of our Lord in Gethsemane. In Luke 22:42, He prays: "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; (that is, the cup of enduring Your wrath, of being separated from You) yet not My will, but Yours be done." When we take of the Lord's Table, we are reminded of what it may cost us and what it actually did cost Jesus to pray: "Your will be done." Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank You for the cup. We thank You for what it represents. Lord, we bless You that our Lord was the perfect example of what we have studied together this morning, that He willingly embraced Your sovereign will for Him, including the cross. But Father, we thank You that His entire life was a perfect example of obeying Your revealed will. Father, help us to follow our Lord in both of these paths. May we pray with Him: "Not our will, but Yours be done." We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.