



## The Way of the Cross

### Jesus & Politics | 11.5.23

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In 2019, the Democratic mayor, Pete Buttigieg, when he ran for president, he said these words at the beginning of his campaign, he was a former mayor of South Bend, Indiana. And he said, a vote based on Christian values should indeed turn the country around. But in a progressive direction. Christianity to me is about humility. It's about love. And if we want to put those values into political practice, at least by my lights, they lead us in a very progressive direction. Well, just a few years prior, Republican Senator Ted Cruz announced his election, his tendency 2015. And here is what Senator Ted Cruz said. He said, If Christians will simply show up and vote our values will turn this country around. I'm thinking he had a very different idea than Mayor Pete at that time, right? These two individuals couldn't be further apart on their political spectrum. But they claim Jesus and His way to be closely aligned with their political agenda. And maybe it's just a good thing. Everybody considered a compliment that when somebody runs for office, whatever their faith background is, they all claim no matter what their side is that Jesus is on their side. Everyone claims Jesus to be on their side. In fact, I heard somebody from the far from the far right, say this on the conservative, right. They said, Jesus believed in tough immigration policy, has supported user pay health care. And if Jesus had a gun, he would have defended himself against the Romans. Few theological issues there. Someone on the far left of the progressive left said, Jesus was a brown skinned Jew with just Group A who believed and same sex marriage, decriminalization of marijuana of all things. That he will be a socialist, an activist and a communist. Oh, yeah, they know Jesus really well. It's amazing that we try in so many ways during election seasons, to form Jesus into our image, rather than being transformed into His image. It's like, yeah, that's a good, yeah, thank you. It's like, we're all looking at a well, wanting to see Jesus, but we see the image of ourselves. So we think there is Jesus. And I think it's because we want to feel better about ourselves. So we claim Jesus to be in our image. And I think part of the problem is, we are more politically politically literate, than we are Biblically literate. And we're disciple by our favorite newscaster or a social media influencer more than we are by the Holy Spirit, who takes God's word and applies it to our heart in the context of a Christ centered community. When Facebook first started people, especially the older saints, and the older older saints would say, don't be so busy on Facebook, seek His face and read his book. Love that, partly because I didn't know how to use Facebook, but it was still a good, good line to have. And here's the reality. God doesn't pick any of our sides. He stands on a side all by himself. It is a self existent side called Holy, holy, holy, and he invites us to choose his side. And by what he spoke through Joshua, choose for yourself today whom you will serve. Joshua is no answers from me and my household, we will serve the Lord. We want to be on his side, we're choosing him no matter what. During the next 12 months, the rhetoric and polarization of politics is only going to increase and ramp up. As your lead pastor, I feel the need to prepare and safeguard our church in the season, to keep reminding us of what is most important as a church community. And for us to not forget the Satan will love nothing more than the division out there to cause division in here. At least in the Western world, for far too long. The enemy has divided the blood bought Body of Christ along political lines, and I think we ought to say no more, no more. Jesus in John 17 spent a whole chapter praying for the unity of his followers because they didn't have it on themselves. And they couldn't create it by themselves but he is praying father makes them one

as you and I are one makes Simon the tax assignment, zealot who's all about Israel and Jewish people and their rights make him one way The former tax gutter Matthew, who was all about Rome, make them one. And that's what the Spirit did. As a Spirit came down on Pentecost he began to form, not a church that had uniformity, but a church that had unity. In fact, Paul describes the unity of the church like this, and Colossians three, verse 11, where he says, In Christ, there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all and in all the heads used in the head, Greeks, but in Christ, all of the dividing wall of hostility came down. And we know that you in Greek we know circumcision and uncircumcision we even know slave and free, but barbarian and silphium, they were to polarize, polarized, really opposed to groups of people, barbarians, refuse of Greco Roman politics and the social norms of Greek of Rome, and settings were all about it, they celebrated that which the barbarians refused. But when it came to the unity of the church, every wall of racism and ethnocentrism, or nationalism, or religion, or religious upbringing, or social status, all of that was torn down. So if that's the case, in first century in the 21st century, we will have to decide, will we reconstruct the walls of division that Jesus tore down? Or will we keep them demolished? In fact, here's a question we can answer. Over the next 12 months, will we bear the fruit of Jesus's prayer in John 17? Or the fruit of political division? Which one will we bear the fruit of his prayer for unity or the fruit of his prayer for the church? Amen. Unity. Here's what I'm not communicating a map, communicating the politics doesn't matter, because it does. There are some serious political issues facing our day that are significant for our nation and for our country. Politicians and politics both need reform and accountability. And we ought to speak up in these moments, we ought to be politically engaged, we have the incredible gift of voting, it's a privilege, it is a responsibility, we get to be a part of a democracy that millions of people around the world have yet to taste, we ought to be involved because there are significant things in our world. So this is not a put away any political differences and let's just sing Kumbaya and be united. Now, this is not that kind of a series we have reasons to be politically engaged. In fact, the New Testament cheese teach us that God created government, he instituted government to serve His purpose, His will on the earth. And the gods places people in government or roles to bear the sword so that they can restrain evil. So when we see humanity, not flourishing and evil, not being restrained, and God not being honored, we do have a responsibility to engage and speak up and have political convictions. So the series isn't to say that politics doesn't matter, because it does. It is to say, though, that the Great Commission matters more than politics. The serious isn't to say that we shouldn't voice our political convictions because we should. But it is to say that the new commandment of Jesus to love one another, just as Christ loved us that matters more than being proven right. Chris is of all people can disagree without being disrespectful. We can and we should seek common ground look for common ground, even if we disagree on the approaches. We can find common shared values. And if we say, as we do here at venturi, that pursuing our community, having gospel conversations and sent moments, it is of highest importance to the mission of our church, then that means we are unwilling to lose even an ounce of gospel influence, simply because of the way we engage in politics, not because we do, but because of the way we engage in politics. I believe in my whole heart, that we can be united in our posture, though we are divided. Or though we may be divided in our politics, we can be divided in our politics, but yet we can be united in our posture towards God, our posture towards one another and our posture towards the world. And here's the news. Here's why we can't be we're not just a church of Republicans.

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And we're not just a church of debt. Democrats. Why? Because heaven isn't just for Republicans. And heaven isn't just for Democrats. I know that might be like news for you. I think you'll be surprised when you get up there who all is there. I mean, there's gonna be some libertarians and constitutionalists and Green Party folks, some independence, and some people who haven't even voted. Gonna be around the throne of grace, the throne of Jesus. So we're gonna spend eternity with people who vote differently. Why not practice getting along with people in the here and now as a way of rehearsing heaven, for the ven and there it's imperative that we learn to be united in our posture, though we may be divided in our politics, when it comes to divided politics. The question that I've often heard and we often ask is, I wonder what Jesus would do if he lived in divided politics?

Luckily, do. I wonder how he would engage? I wonder what he would do? Well, here's the good news. We don't have to wonder what Jesus would do. We actually know what he did do. We don't have to wonder what he would do. We know what he did do. Jesus lived in one of the most politically contentious times across a hall of Jewish history. I mean, the Jewish people have been under the Roman oppression for many years now, under rulers like Rome for many generations. Now, Jesus grew up in Nazareth, where they had multiple anti Imperial uprisings in his day, he lived in a highly politically charged environment. In fact, Jesus just didn't have two parties, two major parties to choose from, he had about six political parties and religious institutions that held political influence. And they all had a unique agenda to politics. Here are some of them, there were there were the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a group of religious priestly eras, aristocracy. And they held on to political influence by closely aligning with the Roman authorities. They were religious group, but they held a lot of power, but closely aligning with the Romans. And then you have the Pharisees. They were more of a conservative group, they had a conservative view of the Jewish law and the Torah. And they had incredible impact and engagement in their community. But they were not closely associated to the Romans like the Sadducees. Were, then you have the zealots. They were a violent resistance group, who took upon themselves to overthrow the Roman Empire, through insurrections and murder and assassinations, and violence. And then you have on the polar opposite the scenes who really fled to the mountains. Now we're gonna hunker down like some of us would want to do, I just get water, oil, flour, and one of these wait till Jesus comes back. And they literally separated themselves from the public life on any social and political order, just to be religiously pure. They lived upon the mountains, they were an aesthetic group of people. You have the Herodians, who were a Jewish faction that supported Harrods dynasty that the Roman Empire created to keep peace between Jews and Romans. And then you have the Roman Empire, the Romans who had down been ruling the Jewish people since 63 BC, and they would rule and reign in that land until fourth century AD as a long time. Fact in seminary at in response to the Zealots, Jewish revolt, the Roman Empire would come and lay siege on Jerusalem, and it would destroy the Jerusalem temple, causing Jews to be separated all over the world. And then the second century, they wouldn't renamed Judea, to Syria, Palestinian and poor Hadrian would come and rename the name of the land, to Palestine, to mirror Philistines, who are the ancient Israelite enemies they wanted to do was remove any connection, any identity of the Jewish people from their own land. You see how varied and complex the political climate is that Jesus steps into. And it's understandable that those who are waiting for a messiah expected a conquering warrior to come and liberate the chosen people of God finally sent someone God that would free us from this oppression. And then Jesus comes on the scene into this divided, varied complex political climate and Jesus's first words were pretty amazing. MARC record some of his earliest words and mark one on verse 15, where Jesus says, The time is fulfilled, it's finally here. The time has come, and the kingdom of God has come near, to repent and believe. The good news. The one of the most frequent statements of Jesus was the kingdom of God has arrived, it's come, it's being initiated in front of your eyes. And when most people heard the statement, you know what they thought. They thought this was incredibly a political statement. Because to have a new kingdom means that there was a new king. And Jesus was making a statement that he was the ultimate King, not Caesar, that the highest allegiance belongs to Jesus, not to the Roman emperor, that he was bringing about a new kingdom unlike anything that had ever seen. But the misunderstanding was in what kind of a king he would be and what kind of a kingdom he was ushering. So the common folk so that day, the marginalized groups, they receive this news of the good news with all their heart, the sick, the lame, the poor, the women, the marginalized, the oppressed, because finally a kingdom that they could be a part of, was here. But the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the religious groups, the elite, so that day, they pushed against it, because Jesus not was not one of them. And he in fact, challenged their interpretation and their perspective of God. The zealots challenge Jesus because Jesus was non violent, and he wasn't violent enough for them. He wasn't planning an insurrection against Rome. The seeds disagree with Jesus because he wasn't separate enough. He was far to mingle with the social and political and religious order of the day. They all were challenged by Jesus in the news of his kingdom, because they didn't have a category. For the new kingdom that Jesus was bringing in, he didn't fit with their agenda. He wasn't picking any of their science sides. He was here to bring about a new way of life, and the birth a new community, the kingdom of God here on earth. What about the

Romans? How did Jesus engage with a government of his time? Well, look at that for a few moments. There's a scene a profound scene that happens when Jesus is arrested. And he for the first time stands in front of Pilate, for the first time he stands in front of the government of the empire of his day. And I think this conversation is absolutely riveting. Look at Mark 15, records his conversation with Jesus and Pilate. It says in verse one of Mark 15, as soon as it was morning, having held a meeting with the elders, scribes and the whole Sanhedrin, the chief priests law tied Jesus up, led Him away and handed him over to Pilate. Let me pause there, all the six groups are represented here, the chief priests and hedron, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, Pilate is here, the only group that's missing is the Essenes, because they're still on the mountaintop, they're not that engage no matter what. So outside of them, everyone else is actually in the scene. And here is Jesus standing before Pilate. So Pilate asked him, Are you the king of the Jews? And he answered him, You say, so you say so. A pilot is not asking, Are You the Messiah? Because this is not a theological question at all. Pilate could care less, if Jesus is the fulfillment of the Messianic promises. He is asking, Are you the king of the Jews? Meaning Are you a political leader? Will your movement will your followers have ramifications on the Roman Empire? Well, what you're saying and what you're doing with it, remove power from me and the Romans. I love Jesus's response of ambiguity. You decide you say so. It's fascinating when Jesus stands before the Sanhedrin. They asked him a similar question, but a different agenda. They said, Are You the Messiah? And his answer is you have said so meaning Yes, I am. But when he's questioned about his political kingship, Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus doesn't answer with a yes or no, he answers yes and no. You say so literally, the Greek phrases. You say it with the emphasis on you. The lake Kim, Tim Keller, he says about this moment, if Buddha was asked this question, his answer would be no. If Mohammed was asked to ask this question, his answer would be yes. But Jesus answers this question with yes and no.

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He neither affirm arms nor denies or he does both at the same time. In John's account of this conversation in John 18, where Jesus is having this conversation with Pilate, John includes Jesus's words to Pilate, my kingdom isn't of this world. If it were my servants will be taken of swords, they will be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews, but they're not because my kingdom isn't from this world. What Jesus is saying is, I am a king, but not a kind of king. They you're assuming me to be. See, Jesus could have told Pilate, I'm just a spiritual leader, you can leave me alone. I have no agenda of the politics of today or the social order of today. And immediately pilot with a release to Aki go on with their way I got the answer I'm looking for. Or Jesus could have said to Pilate, I am a political leader. And it would have warranted pilot with full conscious arrest in Jesus. But Jesus says neither he says yes and no. Why? Because though Jesus was not coming into the world, as a political leader, his movement, his message would disrupt every social order in the world. Though Jesus was the king, he was not just a king of the Jews, he is a king of kings bringing in a whole new kind of Kingdom, the world had never seen. So he leaves it ambiguous, you say so, as in time, you'll see the kind of king that I am. The conversation goes on in marks 15, verse three, and it says, And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate questioned him again, aren't you going to answer Pilate hasn't gotten the answer he's looking for. So aren't you going to answer? Look how many things they are accusing you of? But Jesus still did not answer. And so Pilate was amazed. Just imagine the scene. The religious leaders are there, and they're accusing Jesus, they're frantic. They're making all kinds of accusations. Pilot, you know, at the end of the story, he wants to release Jesus. So he is asking Jesus, Jesus, just answer the question. Just defend yourself. Fight back, and you can be released, I literally had the power to let you go. So aren't you going to answer the question? And what does Jesus say? Nothing. He remained silent. He could have answered he could have refuted he could have argued. But he's said nothing. And hear it was in his words that cause pilot to be amazed. It was his silence. The cost pilot to be amazing, that word amazes literally he stood in wonder, in awe of the silence of Jesus. I think what pilot saw in this moment is Jesus. They're in the middle all by himself, and he is surrounded by every political and religious leader of his day, and they're accusing him they're threatening him of things he did not do. And there is Jesus standing square in the middle with on shakable peace, not feeling the need to respond or engage in the questions or accusations. Jesus was incredible, deep, profound inner peace, being still not even needing the answer pilot who

could release them. There is an incredible application for the church today, from this example of Jesus, that as people accuse you or me or the church, that as the enemies of Jesus want and answer from us, as political rhetoric, turns up the church of Jesus collectively in the people of God, collectively and individually, we can be the most non anxious presence in an anxious world. You and I, we can have the most non anxious presence in an anxious world and people are stirred up and politicians are stirred up and everyone is asking you a question. You can stand still. And the peace of the church in the tumultuous time can cause like it did for pilots, the amazement of the world. We just finished a series called bookends where we looked at Genesis and Revelation, the beginning and end of the story, and we peeked into the ultimate reality where Jesus returns and the Church of Jesus, the followers of Christ, our reigning, ruling victoriously gloriously with him for all of ages to come. And my hope is we peeked into that ultimate reality was that from that perspective, we can engage with the immediate reality of our life, whether it be politics, or sickness, A broken relay, we can engage in the immediate reality of our life with peace, because we know the end of the story. We can engage in political conversations with stillness. Why? Because we see Jesus to be Lord of all King of Kings. He's never dethroned. He's sovereign. He's got a plan of the universe that he's unfolding before our eyes. So in the midst of the chaos and questions, we can be still. We need to be alert. But we don't need to be alarmed. We should be politically engaged, but we don't have to be politically charged. We can be a non anxious presence in an anxious world. The story goes on, a new character is introduced to us. Jesus says nothing. And then notice what happens in verse six, at the festival pilot used to release for people a prisoner, whom they requested. And there was one named Barabas, who was in prison with rebels who had committed murder during the rebellion. This is a highly political environment, the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do for them, as was his custom. Pilate answered them, do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you? For he knew it was because of their envy that the chief priests had handed him over? But the chief priests stirred up the crowds, so that he would release Barabas to them instead? So Pilate asked him again, that what do you want me to do with the one you call the King of the Jews? Again, this shouted, Crucify him. Pilate said that why, what has he done wrong? But this shouted all the more crucify him. So wanting to satisfy the crowd, pilot released Barabbas to them, and after have a Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified. As a color and accustomed during the Passover festival, the pilot pilot could released one prisoner for the Jewish people. And here we're introduced the Barabas zealot. He represents a zealot in the story. So literally, Jesus is surrounded by everyone except the saints. Of course, everyone else is there. And Pilate wants to release Jesus. The crowd is calling for Barabbas. Now of how Matthew specifically based on early manuscripts, he paints this narrative on his account in Matthew 27, as he paints a story between Jesus and Barabas. Notice how Matthew 27 reads at that time, they had a well known prisoner, whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, Which one do you want me to release to you, Jesus, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah. Jesus was a common name and for central just like living is today like really common among all people. But Jesus was a common name and hearing Matthew's account. Pilate has not one but two, Jesus. On his hand, he's got Jesus Barabbas and Jesus the Messiah. Barabas literally means bar, which means son of an Abba, which means father. So Barabas means son of the Father. So you've got one Jesus, Jesus Barabas, who the murderer, a rebel, a prisoner, rightfully so, Jesus, Barabas, the son of a father, and then you have Jesus the Messiah, the only begotten Son of God. Pilate has to Jesus's on his hand, not just one and here's the deal. They both want to change the world. They are both revolutionary leaders of their time, once a zealot. And once the Messiah Jesus Barabbas. He wants to take over and change his world through insurrection, violence and assassination. He wants to change the world through course of power, greed, worldliness. He wants to change the world through militant power

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and overthrow the Roman system through his own ideas and efforts. But then you have G Jesus, Jesus the Messiah. He's not militant, he is merciful. He is a son of God. Instead of killing people, Jesus raises the dead. Barabas would take from the poor, and offer them false promises and assurance. But Jesus would feed the poor, heal the sick, open, blind eyes, open deaf ear Barabas came from war, Jesus came to bring peace promises a zealot, Jesus is Prince of Peace. Pilate has in custody, to Jesus's Jesus, perhaps, Jesus Messiah, and the crowd has the opportunity to get one of them

released. So who do they choose? Jesus Barabbas. They say, Give us Barabbas and crucify Jesus. Why would they choose Barabbas? It's because they know what to do with Barabbas one who kills but they don't know what to do with Jesus one who raises the dead. They know how to stop a Barabbas they've done that before. We can now power him he wants to kill but this man who was raising the dead and bringing sight to the blind, we have no idea what to do with him. So crucify Him and give us robbers. So, they chose a murderer, and gave up the Merciful One. They chose the guilty and gave up the innocent they chose the rubble in gave up the Redeemer. And Jesus the Messiah is Son of God, Lord of all, who has all power, all authority who could dismantle the arguments of everyone around him who can throw out angels in that moment. What does he do, he uses his power to surrender. He uses his power to become a substitute for Barabbas. He uses his power to save those who are yelling, crucify. Jesus was all authority. He chooses to lay down his life. And he uses authority and power towards sacrifice, self sacrifice, not self protection, self sacrifice. Jesus chooses the way of the cross. Berlin in the wilderness, Jesus is tempted by the enemy by Satan. And then one of us annotations says Jesus just bow down to me. And you can help all the kingdoms of the world. It's yours just bow down to me. But Jesus refuses, Satan was offering Jesus a bypass to get around the cross. But Jesus refused kingship by the world standards and by demonic influences. And he chose the way of the cross. Because this kingdom, the kingdom of God could only come to earth by way of sacrifice, and by way of the cross. So as we think about how we engage in the politics of our day, in how we engaged in the life that we live, we have the chance to choose the way of Barabbas or The Way of the Cross, the way of Barabbas the way of the world, or the way of Jesus the way of the cross the way a Barabbas seeks to gain earthly power and maintain earthly power, by way of violence and threat is all about winning at whatever costs. No matter who you have to hurt no matter what you have to do. It is always come out on top no matter the cost. The way of Barabbas is tribal it is worldly, it is greedy. It is fueled by fear, competition and victory all the way of Barabbas. But the way of the cross is entirely different. The way of Jesus loves his persecutors and turns the other cheek goes the extra mile loves extravagantly loves even our enemies here in the way of Jesus. The last is the first the weak or strong, the humble are exalted because this is an upside down Kingdom. The Way of the Cross rejects worldly means to kingship as Jesus Himself did. And it does not rely on earthly power even if you have it. Because it only relies on heavenly power. It doesn't rely on man's vacation. It only relies on God's vindication. The Way of the Cross sees a path to ultimate victory, not through self preservation, but through sacrifice. To hear the cross isn't tribal or nationalistic. It is about a global kingdom where Jesus is forming for himself a whole new entirely holy nation, made up of every tribe, language and nation all around the world. And he's forming for Himself a people. The way of the cross is not coercive power, but I'm compromising love for each other. Let me say the way the Cross does not give elite as to any Caesar of our day, but only to Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, that is the way of the cross. And here's what I want you to know. The world always chooses Barabbas. Because in the eyes of the world Barabbas wins. In fact, over the next 12 months, you are going to be tempted to do Beale Barabbas. Typing, emailing, writing, tearing people down, using whatever you can get your hands off, hands on, to bring a tear down people. The world wants to rob us and in the eyes of the world, bravas wins. But would you and I would we choose not the way of Barabbas but the way of the cross and be engaged politically. Speak up, make your voices heard, have convictions, be the salt of the earth that prevents cultural decay and moral regression be the light of Jesus, the Light of Hope, be engaged. But in the midst of that don't give into the temptation to be in the way of Barabbas. Why? Because ultimately, the robbers failed. Those like bravas cause a revolt in 70 ad in Jerusalem was destroyed. Ultimately, it's not the path of victory. promises will come and go. In the immediate term. It may seem like they win, but they don't ultimately in the eyes of God. But though Barabbas failed, the way of the Cross prevail, then that the way of Jesus, the way of the cross is unstoppable. And it didn't just change Rome, it changed the entire world. That's why today the cross still stands. We think about Jesus, not Caesar, we give our allegiance to Christ, not the government. Because the way of Jesus the way of the Cross always prevails. And that's what we're going to pick up next weekend. So you got to come back. Dubai has been, there's some of you who more than the way of the cross, you need to receive today the work of the Cross. You need to receive the fact that you and I, we were the Barabbas who are guilty as charged, and Jesus stepped in and became our substitute. This is the gospel, he led us go free. We were guilty as charged. We

committed the highest crimes against the Holy God, but he came in and says, I'll be your substitute. Take me in and release them to pay for the sins of our soul, the brokenness of our world. It is only seeing Jesus on the cross, there hanging with his arms stretched out, that is the hope of our salvation. No party, no leader can save your soul only Jesus can. So today, would you consider Christ to be your savior to be your Lord, give your highest allegiance to Lord Jesus. For those of us who are following Christ, refuse the way of Barabbas and embrace the way of the cross. And all of our engagement and all of our doing model for the world. The Way of the Cross the Father, help us, help us to be a non anxious presence and a highly anxious world. To trust in you. And trust in your story. And trust in the goodness of God, the sovereignty of God. We can remain steadfast in the cross of Jesus Christ, and model for the world. What Jesus modeled for us when he stood right there in front of Pilate. Go we need you. We trust you. Help us God to never lose gospel influence. Because of the way we engage in politics help us to be a community set apart, United more on mission more together, more for each other at the end of 2024. Then we were at the start of it. May you do that all by the power of your spirit and through our lives. There's anybody today who needs to receive the finished work of the cross so that we can live in the way of Jesus may this be the day of salvation, surrender, trusting Christ as our Lord and Savior. In Jesus name. We pray in the church said together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Could you take God for His word and for the scriptures that is preserved for us?