

The Soldier, the Athlete & the Farmer

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[0 : 00] Please do have a seat. Can I just add as well, a thank you to Alberto for drumming for us. I didn't catch him at the corner of my eye there, so sorry for not mentioning you earlier, but it is great to be here together, and we trust that as we come to God's words that he will speak to us.

So can I massively, massively encourage you to have your Bibles open there at 2 Timothy, and let's come expectantly to God's words. You should have also received one of these sermon outlines when you came in, and that's going to be helpful for us, as well as we journey through this passage together to see what Paul is saying and what it's saying to us.

So if you don't have one of them, then please put up your hand, and Ali Jackson will get one to you. And let's still ourselves as we come to God's word this evening. Let's pray together. Gracious Father, we would thank you so much for this day.

And we would thank you for your mercies that are new to us each and every morning. And we pray now as we come to the close of a busy week, and as we sit on the cusp of another busy week, that you would help us to block out any distractions to you this evening, and that you would help us to focus our minds and our hearts on you, and help us to hear your voice.

As we turn to this passage now, we think of the words that we read, that Paul instructs Timothy to think on these things. And we pray, gracious Father, that you would help us do that this evening.

[1 : 34] All for your glory, and for the upbuilding of your church in this nation, and in this world. Amen. Amen. So I wonder if you have any pet hates in life.

I'll come clean with you this evening. I've got one big pet hate in my life, and it's when I read small print. Don't know if you find that. We are inundated through our letterbox all the time with people trying to sell us stuff.

The other day, I'm just thinking of this week, I've opened two letters that come through our letterbox. First one is Virgin Media. High fiber optic broadband for eight pounds a month. I thought, yes, let's do it.

Small print. Line rental, 15.99 a month. All right, so it's 23 pounds a month. You know the thing? I think of another one. I think of banks, when they try and sell us mortgages, what do they say?

They say, fantastic interest rates. You can leave all your mortgage worries behind if you come to us. Small print, product fee, 500 pounds. Small print, small print, small print.

[2 : 36] Your home will be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments. I hate it when people try and sell me stuff. They sell me fudged truths, trying to get me in, and they just don't tell me the reality of the situation.

Do you feel like that sometimes in your life? And the thing this evening, as we come to this letter, the reason I spent this week in this letter, and I wonder if you've noticed it as we've journeyed through it over the last couple of weeks, Paul, as he tries to sell Timothy, what gospel ministry looks like, he doesn't hide the small print.

He doesn't hide the small print. He just tells Timothy the reality of the situation. This is what gospel ministry entails. This is what being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ means for you.

Paul writes this letter to Timothy. We've seen it the last couple of weeks. This guy who he's left in Ephesus to look after Ephesus Evangelical Church. Things were going swimmingly for so long, but as John reminded us a few weeks ago, things have gone very sour, very quickly in Ephesus.

False teaching infiltrating the church. Big personalities dominating the church. Good gospel people leaving the church. Things have got really bad, really quickly in Ephesus in this church.

[3 : 54] So how does Timothy feel? Disillusioned with the gospel. What is he probably already doing? Drifting from the gospel.

What is he tempted to do? Well, he's tempted to depart from the gospel, and especially from any kind of links with this apostle Paul, who he heard this message from.

Things have got bad in Ephesus, and they've got bad really quickly. And we saw last week that if he does depart and run, well, he's not the first person to do that from Paul.

Verse 15 of chapter 1, what we read there, what does Paul write? All who are in Asia turned away from me. All of them turned away from me. When the heat got turned up, all of them, they got out of there.

Especially, Timothy, especially, I want you to know about Phygelus and Hermogenes. Do you see these two men that he mentions here? Personally mentions them. Could it be that Timothy knows these men?

[4 : 53] Why does he mention their names? Does it just bring it home a bit personally a bit? Timothy probably knows these guys. Paul wants them to know that in his time of need, these guys got out of there. But Onesiphorus, oh, I can't say that name.

I tried so hard this week to learn that name. Onesiphorus, we'll call him that, okay? Do you notice how he gets a massive pat on the back from Paul in these verses, doesn't he? He's a massive big up from the apostle Paul.

He refreshed Paul. He stood by Paul. He went towards Paul when others were running away from Paul, and he stood by him. What a guy.

Two men deserted Timothy. I want you to know about these two men who deserted. And I want you to know about this one man who came towards me. What is the question that he's asking Timothy as we come to these verses?

Big question. Who are you going to be like, Timothy? Who are you going to be like? Are you going to be like these men who ran? Are you going to be like this man who came towards? Are you going to turn away from me?

[5 : 57] Or are you going to turn towards me? And you see, that takes us to the personal summons of verse 1 of chapter 2. What does he write? You then.

Do you feel that the pointy end of his finger as he writes these words, as Paul writes these words? You then. Does it all the way through this letter? Just flick with me.

Chapter 3, verse 10. You've got it there. What does he write? You, however.

Chapter 4, verse 1. What does he write? I give you this command. What does he want Timothy to do? Stay in the game.

Keep running, Timothy. Question. How is Paul going to do that? How do you convince a man who is on his way out that things are worth keeping going for?

- [6 : 58] What's his method? What's Paul going to write? Well, here's my question for you this evening, one I was thinking about this week. If you had to design a poster that recruited people for being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, what would you put on that poster?
- What do we see so often on church websites in the West? We see all the time. Happy people, right?
- Smiley people. As in, if you come to this church, you can be happy like the rest of us. Now, don't get me wrong, there's joy aplenty in knowing God our Father. Isn't that joy to call him our Father?
- But I wonder if churches, our brothers and sisters in Syria and in North Korea, do they have happy people on their church websites? What's the reality of following Jesus Christ?
- Well, do you see how Paul doesn't hide the small print from Timothy as to what it will mean for him to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and to be a gospel minister in particular?
- [8 : 02] What's it going to mean, Timothy? It's going to mean hard, hard, hard work. Following Jesus Christ, if you do it faithfully, if you stand in a hostile world and proclaim the gospel, it's going to mean that life is not going to get easier for you, it's going to get so much harder.
- And Timothy, that's the reality. I'm not going to fudge it for you. You just need to get your head around that. To stand for Jesus Christ, it is hard. Now, do we know that this evening?
- Isn't it hard to stand for him in this world? We're not the only ones to feel that, are we? Just straight from the outset there, be comforted by that. It is hard. And when we feel it hard, it should be hard.
- And there are two great realities in this section that I think Paul is bringing to Timothy's mind. He's bringing them straight to the front of his mind. What are those realities? The suffering.
- Suffering. And the risen Christ. Do you see what he does in those verses? Suffering, front of your mind, Timothy. But right beside it, the risen and the reigning and the ruling and the returning Jesus Christ.
- [9 : 14] Right there in front of you. I think they're the two ideas that hold this section together. If you just look at the section, I'll show you how that works. The suffering idea, here it comes up at verse 3 of chapter 2.
- And it comes up again at verse 9 of chapter 2. And the person of Jesus Christ, well, he comes up all the way through this section. What does Paul write? In Christ.
- Verse 1 of chapter 2. A good soldier of Jesus Christ. Verse 3. Remember Jesus Christ at verse 8. Verse 10.
- The salvation that is in Jesus Christ. Do you see what he's doing? Suffering right at the front of your mind and the risen and returning and ruling Jesus Christ right there as well.
- What is the ministry principle that he's trying to get Timothy to understand and embrace? Pain now, glory later. Big idea for this evening.
- [10 : 13] Pain now, glory later. What does he do? Well, he lists six imperatives, I think. Six things that he wants Timothy to do in this section.
- Four of them are to do with how Timothy is to work. That's verses 1 to 7. And two of them are to do with why Timothy is to work. And that's verses 8 to 13. That's where we're going this evening.
- But as we travel, the big question that we need to have in our minds, the big question that we need to ask of this text, and the question that will make a 2D study into a 3D study, is to ask the question, why?

Why is Paul writing these things to this man at this specific time? Why is he writing these things?

Because if we get to the heart of that question, then we can begin to see what these things mean to us. So let's journey through this section together. Let's see what Paul writes.

[11 : 15] Firstly, verse 1. Timothy, be strengthened. Be strengthened. Now, why does Paul need to write that? Because Timothy's weak.

He's weak. And what does he need to be strengthened by? The grace. And where is the source of that strengthening grace? It's in Christ Jesus.

Now, it's not the first time in this letter that Paul has introduced this idea. If you look at verse 9 of chapter 1, you'll see very similar wording there. Paul writes, because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus.

So this is the second time in the letter that he's brought this up. How are you going to be strengthened, Timothy? By grace. How is that grace shown itself? Do you notice how Paul doesn't just throw that out there as a token word?

He shows, Timothy, how the grace has shown itself. Well, the God of the universe before the foundation of the world, Timothy, planned to save you.

[12 : 22] And he sent his son, Jesus Christ, in the fullness of time, who came to give his life for you, Timothy, and saved you, Timothy. That's grace. But even more than that, he didn't just leave you to go about life in your own strength.

Verse 14 of chapter 1, he sent his spirit to live inside of you, his adopted child. God has taken you who was dead in your sins and transgressions, and he has forgiven you and restored you and put a new heart and a new spirit inside you, and he's adopted you as his child.

He's with you. We're going to look at it another way. God has shown redeeming grace, and God continues to empower you, Timothy, with sustaining grace.

That's the reality of grace. It's what we sing when we sing amazing grace, isn't it? It's his grace that has brought me safe thus far, and it's grace that will lead me home. Timothy, grace, if you get your head around it, it should massively encourage you.

Let grace sink into your mind and into your heart, and let it strengthen you, Timothy. Be strengthened by the grace that is in Jesus Christ.

[13 : 38] Now, I wonder whether some of us here this evening need to be strengthened by the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Are you here this evening, friends, and you find yourselves running flat?

Are you here this evening, and you are drifting? Are you here this evening, and the fire that was once there for Jesus Christ is beginning to go out? Are you running from one thing to the next in life, and spinning plates, and carrying the weight of the world on your back all the time?

And do some of us need to stop this evening and take stock of the grace that is in Jesus Christ? That it is he who is in heaven, that it is he who is holding the cosmos in place. It's not us.

We need to be strengthened by the grace, the grace that saved us when we couldn't save ourselves. The grace that God gives to us as his children daily to sustain us in this life every moment of every day.

Do you see how Paul says these things? He says these things not just to simply fill up Timothy's theological bookshelf, okay? He says these things for Timothy's strengthening.

[14 : 45] Be strengthened by the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Let that encourage you this evening. Be strengthened, Timothy. Secondly, what does Paul tell Timothy to do? Well, verse 2, he tells him to entrust to.

Now, what's the issue in Ephesus that Timothy is feeling the sharp end of? What is he feeling? Well, he's feeling probably lonely, and he's most likely feeling outnumbered.

His go-to guys, the guys in his church who understand the gospel and fight with him, they're either leaving or their voices are being drowned out because these false teachers are dominating the church.

How does Timothy feel? He feels on his own, and he feels isolated. I think what, in the context, Paul is saying is, Timothy, if that's how you're feeling, then what you need to do to solve that is you need to find, and you need to train, and you need to invest in, and you need to deploy more people to stand beside you and fight for the battle that is gospel ministry.

And what you need to do is you need to expend yourself in getting that gospel DNA into people who will stand with you. Get that into them, and they will pass it on to others, and they will pass it on to others yet.

[16 : 04] You see how Paul has got four generations of people in mind? I mean, this guy is a long-term strategist, four generations in mind. Paul is going to pass it to Timothy.

Timothy is going to pass it to reliable men. Reliable men are going to train and teach others. Passing on this gospel message, passing on the gospel DNA. What is the principle behind that?

What Paul is saying there, well, it's that the main way that the gospel message is going to be protected, and it's going to be strengthened, and it's going to be furthered in the church, and in the world, and in the city of Ephesus, is by passing it on to others.

In other words, it's going to be by training people. Let me ask you this evening, what are you doing by the way of passing on the gospel message, the whole counsel of God to the next generation?

You think about it, just practically in your life, what does this look like? In our families? Husbands, the way that we lead our wives and sacrificially care for them and lead our children, what does it look like as we pass on this gospel message?

[17 : 15] The way that we participate in our home groups, what does this look like? The way that we plan our kids' church lessons, what does this look like? The way that we do one-to-one Bible studies with people, the way that we visit people, the way that we conduct ourselves on Sunday morning, do we have this mindset in mind that we are passing on this gospel message, that we're helping one another as we do that?

That's why we do these things, all these activities in church. It's not just so that me and John can feel good that we're doing stuff in church. It's not just ticking a box. We do it because we need to be passing on the gospel message to one another.

Friends, this evening, have you got that mindset? Would your diary reveal that mindset? What are you passing on to the next generation? It's interesting, I was listening to Five Live in the drive up, I had the football phone in, I love the football phone in, listening to it in the drive up, and I don't know if you've been following the Leicester City story in the English Premier League this year, but the guy, they're interviewing a Leicester City fan who was sitting in the pub with his son and he said, I wanted to be here because I wanted to tell my son that I watched Leicester City win the league.

No, they didn't win the league today, but they'll probably win it. I wanted to tell my son and him to see Leicester win the league, and I wanted him to tell his son about Leicester winning the Premier League, and I wanted him to tell his son that he was there when Leicester winning the Premier League.

And I thought to myself, if that is worth passing on to the next generation, if football is worth passing on to the next generation, how much more the gospel, the eternal gospel. Now, why is this important?

[18 : 50] Well, if we don't pass it on, the message, it probably is going to die with us. Isn't it? That if we fail to pass this on, what happens? The next generation, they assume it.

What happens next, that and past, the next generation, they question it and probably depart from it. All the churches we know up and down this land that were once thriving centers for the gospel and are now nowhere.

Why is that? Because of this, that they didn't pass on the gospel. Are we taking seriously the command and making this a priority in the life of our church and in our lives?

And especially, I think, those in Christian leadership. You know, you think about those probable interns that we'll have in September, those who are raising their hands and saying, yes, we want to give this a shot. We feel like God has given us this gift.

What are we doing to encourage them and to push them on practically as they do that? And what are we passing on? We're passing on the whole counsel of God, the whole thing, not just the bits that we like, not just a soft and easy discipleship, not just rules and regulations.

[19 : 54] What are we passing on? A living faith in and a burning love for our Savior and King Jesus Christ. That's what we're passing on. Be strengthened, Timothy.

Be strengthened in grace and pass it on. Thirdly, what does Paul tell Timothy, verse 3? Timothy, join me in suffering.

Why does Paul need to say that? Was it not most likely that Timothy thinks suffering? Nah, I'm not up for that. Paul's saying, lift your head above the parapet.

And what's Timothy doing? He's lowering his head lower and lower below the parapet. Do you see again how Paul is not hiding the small print from Timothy? Now what is it going to look like for him to share in the suffering?

Well, do you see how Paul gives him three pictures of what this is going to look like in these verses, 4, 5, and 6? The soldier, the athlete, the farmer.

[20 : 57] Now why does he use those three illustrations? What do each of them have to tell and teach Timothy? Well, let's look at them together. Firstly, the soldier. What does a soldier, why does Paul commend the soldier?

For not getting entangled in civilian affairs. Now what is that speaking of? Not getting distracted. Not getting distracted. A soldier, he knows why he's there. A soldier knows his job.

A soldier knows who he's trying to please. Let's think of the guards that stand outside Buckingham Palace every moment of every day. Have you ever seen those guys?

I mean, they are unflinching, are they not? The people come up to them and try and take selfies with them. They'll try and make them laugh. And I've never seen a soldier that's standing outside Buckingham Palace laugh.

In fact, when I googled it before, the first thing that came up was soldier falls. A soldier had, they did the changing of the guard and he'd fallen over. And so this, because this never ever happens, this was big news.

[21 : 54] The soldier had fallen and tripped. It was all over the news because it never happens. Because these soldiers are dedicated and they know what their job is. Like the soldier, Timothy, you need to not get distracted.

You need to keep your mind on the reason why you're doing what you're doing. Let me ask you this evening, are there things in your life that are distracting you from pursuing Jesus Christ?

Are there things in your life that are drawing your attention and your concentration away from Him? Like it just, it can be so many good things, can't it, in life? Like a new house or our hobbies or our job that just slowly diverts our attention from Jesus Christ.

See, that's the challenge, isn't it? To never allow good things to rise up and become bigger than God. There's the soldier, but what about the athlete? What is the thing about the athlete that Paul draws Timothy's attention to?

He competes according to the rules. Big point, Timothy, don't cheat. Now why does Paul write that? Why do you have to tell him not to cheat?

[23 : 08] Well, could it be that Timothy is tempted to cheat, to take shortcuts in his ministry, to avoid those awkward conversations that need to be had, to avoid addressing the false teaching that's making its way into church, or even could he be tempted to cheat by subtly changing the gospel message to avoid conflict and to avoid people leaving the church?

Always the temptation, isn't it, to cheat, to change the message. Don't cheat, Timothy. And what about the farmer? Well, the farmer is up early in the morning sowing his seed.

Big point, Timothy, like the farmer, work hard. Work hard and don't be lazy. Why does the farmer have a crop at the end of the season? Well, because he did the hard work of getting up at 5 a.m.

to sow the seeds every morning. Why is Paul saying this to Timothy? Well, it's the easy and lazy thing not to do when things get hard in the life of the church.

Is it not easy just to ignore things? Or, worst case scenario, just to walk away? Do you think that's what Timothy's being faced with? Investing in people? Hard work.

[24 : 22] Dealing with people? Hard work. Addressing false teaching? Hard work. Listening to people? Hard work. Visiting people? Hard work. Praying for people?

Hard work. Putting Ephesus Evangelical Church right? Hard work. Timothy, don't get distracted. Don't cut corners and cheat.

Don't get lazy. What's the big thing that holds these three images together? The soldier, the athlete, the farmer. What holds them together? Pain now.

Glory later. Pain now. Glory later. Time spent carrying out your orders now, being faithful to your duties. You get your well done from your commander-in-chief later.

Time sweating out in the gym or on the track, building those muscles. Pain now. Gold medal later. Time up early, sowing in the field. Hard work now, harvest later.

[25 : 22] Do you see what he's saying? Pain now, Timothy. Pain now. Glory later. And what does Paul say to Timothy, verse 7? He says, reflect on these things. Think about these things, Timothy.

If you've got an ESV there, that's what it says. Think about these things. These are the lessons that I want you to mull over, Timothy. Think over what I'm saying to you.

Now, why is Paul saying that? Well, could it be that Timothy has stopped stilling himself before God? That he's stopped listening for God's voice?

Could it be that Timothy has stopped allowing the Holy Spirit that God has put to dwell in him, convicting him of things in his life that he needs to change? Could it be that Timothy has stopped opening the Scriptures every day and doing the hard work of stilling himself and thinking upon what God is saying?

Is that some of us this evening? Are we neglecting to listen to God's voice? Are we resisting the Holy Spirit as he seeks to shape our lives more and more into the image of Jesus Christ?

[26 : 35] And probably particularly in terms of our faithfulness to God the Father and our faithfulness to the Gospel? Some of us here this evening, do we need to seriously think upon these things?

Think over what I say, Timothy. Meditate on these things. Pray over these things. Go out and look at these things and study them. Because God, in his grace, has stuff to teach us there.

Fifthly, verse 8, what does he write? Timothy, remember Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ. What is it in particular that Paul brings attention to?

The fact that Jesus Christ is risen. He's risen. That is the realm in which Timothy operates, the risen Christ.

That is the thing that's got to define how Timothy lives his life. That it's not just any old captain that Timothy serves. His captain is the creator and the sustainer of the universe.

[27 : 37] He is the judge of all and he's the one who has conquered death. That is the captain that he serves. Has Timothy maybe lost sight of that? Jesus is risen as God promised in the scriptures that God is faithful in keeping his words.

Do you see how we're on to the second section now? If suffering is the big one that he's got to have in his mind, right next to it is the risen Christ. And I wonder if some of us need to get the person of Jesus Christ back to the forefront of our minds this evening.

That things may be hard but we serve our conquering king, not an impotent king. We worship a living saviour. We don't worship a distant memory from the past.

We have a brother who walks beside us and who is able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. Now how is that going to make a difference in Timothy's life? Well the same way that it transformed and it shapes Paul's life day after day it's going to mean that he will endure everything.

Do you see how he writes that? Endure everything. Why is Paul in chains? Because of his faith in Christ. Why is Paul mocked? Because of his faith in Christ. Why is Paul suffering?

[28 : 51] Because of his faith in Christ. And notice the link that Paul makes. Why does Paul do this? Why does he do it? Well a bound apostle, a chained apostle, means a free gospel.

Now the logic is that if Paul, he's saying if he did the easy thing and he didn't preach the gospel, he would be free. Because no one would want to arrest him and put him in prison for preaching something that everyone wants to hear.

In fact he'd probably have his own show on the God TV channel. Isn't he going to be free because he's not preaching the full gospel? But if he did that, then the very message that has the power to save men and women would be in chains and would be unable to move because he would robbing it of its power.

Why does Paul make himself vulnerable? Well he makes himself vulnerable because he knows that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It's the consistent shape of his life.

That's why Paul does these things. And that's what I love about this man Paul. That he may be the most persecuted man that I have ever read about.

[30 : 04] Ever read about. But he strikes me as the most freest man that's ever walked the face of this planet. Does he not? To live is Christ and to die is gain.

That's where I want to be. It's where I want to be. Oh to have that mindset that I endure everything. That everything that life throws at me for carrying this message.

I'm going to take it on the chin because I know what is at stake. And I know what is ahead of me. And particularly I know who is beside me and who is ahead of me. And he is worth it.

And I endure everything because I want others to know that message too. I want to play my part in seeing men and women from around this world who God has elected to come to himself.

To enter into the joy of knowing Jesus Christ and to one day stand in eternity with them worshipping before the Lamb. That's what I want to see. Timothy, join me.

[31 : 02] Endure everything. And I think that's what's going on in verses 11 to 13. What does Paul write? If we died with him, Jesus Christ, if we died with him, we'll live with him.

If we endure, we will reign with him. If we disown him, he will disown us. It's a little line from Paul probably correcting Timothy because that's the way he's heading.

Paul wants him to know about the stakes. If we are faithless, he remains faithful. When we are up and down, Timothy, when we stumble, when we fall, when we know our flesh, when we know our weakness, remember that our God does not change.

He does not change. He's a God full of steadfast love. A loving Father in whom there is forgiveness aplenty if we were to confess and to turn to him. He's a compassionate brother who is right there throughout all of this with us.

Do you notice there the tight-knit connection that Paul makes between the believer and Jesus Christ? He is right there with his people. Maybe that's a word for some of us this evening.

[32 : 11] Let that encourage us that he knows and he walks beside with us because we are in him. No small print, Timothy. No small print, no being around the bush.

Gospel ministry, it is pain and it is pain now. It just is. It's tough following and standing for Jesus Christ. But the truth of it is that it is hard work now, it is pain now, but it is glory later.

Glory later. You're one of my favorite examples of someone who didn't hide the small print in his advertising was Ernest Shackleton. Have you ever heard the famous advert that he placed in the paper trying to recruit men for his upcoming Arctic expedition?

And he puts the advert in the paper that reads this, Men wanted for hazardous journey, low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness.

Safe return, doubtful, but honor and recognition in event of success. Paul seems to be saying something similar, doesn't he, to Timothy? Pain now, Timothy, glory later.

[33 : 24] Brothers and sisters, let me leave you with the big question that Paul asks of Timothy in this section. What about you then? Are you prepared for it? Are you up for it?

Are you willing to follow Jesus Christ wherever he may take you and whatever comes at you? Are you prepared to do it? Well, here's what I want us to do as we finish our time together this evening before we rush off into the busyness of another week.

Let's just take a few minutes now to do what Paul instructs Timothy in these verses and to think on these things. So I found in my preparation there were five big questions that I was challenged on as I prepared for it and as I studied this passage and I've jotted them down on the back of the sheets that you've got you should have in front of you there.

So what I invite you to do just as we close let's just take a few minutes and let's just think about these things and let's pray about these things and let's see if God has got stuff that he still wants to say to us this evening and then I'll close in just a few minutes time.

Let's pray. Our loving Heavenly Father we would thank you for our time together this evening and we would ask that you would continue to help us to think on these things that we've seen in your word this evening.

[34 : 52] We ask that you would continue to strengthen us by the grace that is in Jesus Christ. Would you help us to love you and cherish you above all things? And this is our prayer made through the precious name of your Son Jesus Christ.

Amen.