

If you would, please turn in your copy of the Word of God to the Psalter and Psalm 17 as we continue our way through the Psalms of David. Please listen carefully. This is the Word of God. With what measure you use, it'll be measured back to you. A prayer of David. Hear a just cause, O Lord. Attend to my cry. Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit. From your presence let my vindication come. Let your eyes behold the right. You've tried my heart. You have visited me by night. You've tested me and you'll find nothing. I've purposed that my mouth will not transgress. With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I've avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held fast to your paths, my feet have not slipped. I call upon you for you will answer me, O God. Incline your ear to me, hear my words, wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. Keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. From the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me, they close their hearts to pity. With their mouths they speak arrogantly. They have now surrounded our steps. They set their eyes to cast us to the ground. He's like a lion eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in the ambush. Arise, O Lord, confront him, subdue him. Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword, from men by your hand, O Lord, from men of the world whose portion is in this life. You fill their womb with treasure. They are satisfied with children and leave their abundance to their infants. As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness. Amen. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of God endures forever. Well, shortly before Christmas

in 2022, there's an article, sorry, 2021, there's an article that appeared in the New York Times, no less, concerning the persecuted church in India, written by Jeffrey Gettleman and Suhasini Raj. And it was entitled, Arrests, Beatings, and Prayers, Inside the Persecution of India's Christians. In that article, the writers note, in church after church, the very act of worship has become dangerous, despite constitutional protections of freedom for religion. The end of the article, it focuses on a pastor called Vinod Patil, who refuses to stop witnessing for Jesus, even though he has to operate more like a secret agent than he does like a pastor. I'm reminded of a pastor in China. He said that when he was in seminary, they didn't just learn Hebrew and Greek and so forth and so on, but they learned how to jump out of a first story window, which is the second floor in America, I think, with your hands handcuffed behind your back, which is no mean feat. Something you have to learn to do, and something they did learn to do, and do learn to do, because they know they might need to do it

one day. Indeed, this particular pastor, with his handcuffs behind his back, had to jump through a plate glass window to escape from the secret police one time, and managed to land on the ground without breaking his legs. And even greater feat, perhaps, than whistling in tune. A fearful situation for our brethren there. At the end of the article, they describe this pastor in his daily work, He leaves his house quietly and never in a group. He jumps on a small Honda motorbike and putters past little towns and scratchy wheat fields, Bible tucked inside his jacket. He constantly checks his mirrors to make sure he's not being followed. Hindu extremists have warned Pastor Patil that they will kill him if they catch him preaching. So last year, he shut down his Living Hope Pentecostal Church, which had about 400 members, and shifted to small clandestine services, mostly at night. One cold night this past winter, Pastor Patil drove to a secret prayer session in an unmarked farmhouse. He quickly stepped inside. On a dusty carpet that smelled like sheep, two dozen church members waited for him. Most were lower caste farmers. When a dog barked outside, one woman whipped around and said, what's that? Pastor Patil reassured the woman that God was watching over her. He cracked open his weathered Hindi language Bible and rested his finger on Luke 21, an apt passage for his beleaguered flock. They will seize you and persecute you, he read, voice trembling. They will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me, Jesus said. Pastor Patil says, you get this energy just thinking about his name, the name of Jesus. The journalists conclude their article by stating, these Christians believe deeply in the teachings of Jesus. Do you believe deeply in the teachings of Jesus? I know many of you, most of you, perhaps even all of you do, I can see it in your eyes, the gleam of zeal as the word is being preached. You yearn to hear a word from God, and we pray this evening that's what we'll hear as we open up this psalm, a word from God. For this psalm is a psalm for Pastor Patil, but it's also a psalm for you, and you might need it sooner than you might like to think. In our psalm, David feels himself

surrounded by violent men. He says in verse eight, keep me as the apple of your eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings. Why? Well, from the wicked who do me violence, my deadly enemies who surround me. The word do me violence there is the word for destroyers. These are destroyers, men who cause havoc and take pleasure in doing so. They closed their hearts to pity. With their mouths, they speak arrogantly. They have now surrounded our steps. They set their eyes to cast us to the ground." He's like a lion, eager to tear, as a young lion lurking in ambush. David describes their character. He says, they have closed their heart with pity. It describes a heart wrapped

around with fat in the Hebrew. It's very graphic. But a heart that's insensitive, that doesn't feel you the way a healthy heart would feel. And these enemies of David have deliberately closed their hearts, hardened their hearts, steeled their hearts, determined not to show David or his men pity. With their mouths, they speak arrogantly. They're puffed up like a big, fat South American toad that likes to think it's much bigger than it really is. They're more beast than man. We see the dehumanizing effects of sin. He's like a lion, eager to tear as a young lion lurking in ambush. They're wild, ravenous lions on the hunt, hiding in the bushes, waiting to jump out and to pounce on David and his men, their character, their goal. David says, they set their eyes to cast us to the ground in verse 11. They have one goal and one goal only. They will only be happy when David is graveyard dead. That's easy to read, right? But put yourself in David's shoes. I once knew a senior politician in Northern Ireland and the IRA were out to kill her. And I remember sitting with her in her front room and feeling the fear in the house. Every time she walked to her car wondering would the IRA be waiting with their guns to riddle her with bullets. I left at night wondering would they mistake me for one of her sons and riddle me with bullets. It's real, it's tangible, you can taste the fear in your mouth and you can feel it in your gut. Gotta walk with David and put yourself in his shoes and feel you, the rising panic that would grip you if you were in his shoes. Don't let David's, well of course David's the psalm singer of Israel, of course he had trials but he knew God. Well you know God too and do you find it easy when you're facing death, when you're in danger? Do you find it easy to quell the rising panic in your soul? David is a man just like you, the similar nature, the same heart, the same fears, the same anxiety, the same mortality. We've got to feel his fear if we're to learn his lessons and derive the benefit he got from seeking the face of God in this Psalm. Their character, their goal, and their number, these men are not just here and there. They surround him at every turn. Like no-seams flying teeth in Savannah, Georgia, in the spring. It's the only time it's nice to be outside. Maybe the fall as well. And both those times in Savannah, Georgia, out come the no-seams. And they fly around your head in holding patterns. I think they have an air traffic controller who kind of guides them in to gnaw at your sweat. It's an awful feeling. I hope we don't have them here. I haven't met any yet. But certainly, there couldn't be as many as there were in Savannah. But David describes, he says, my deadly enemies who surround me, verse 9. They surround our steps, verse 11. They have now surrounded our steps. David can't take a step without bumping into them. They surround him at every turn. A likely sitz im Leben, life

situation, of this psalm is David, when he's being chased by Saul in those wilderness wanderings, when Saul is chasing him and closing in upon him on every side, and David feels sure he's being betrayed and he's in trouble. Now, God's kind providence might leave you feeling, well, I don't really have much need of this, Sam. I live in the land of the free and the home of the brave. And it's still pretty safe for me to be a Christian. And you're right, we are. That is certainly our case this evening. But judging from the rest of the world, America is fast becoming an anomaly, an increasingly rare one, too. We hear in Europe and England and Scotland and Ireland these hate speech laws. I hate speech laws. It's another oxymoron like Planned Parenthood. I hate speech. It sounds so reasonable, right? It's a bit like utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is a common ethic for those who forget God. If you haven't got God to measure goodness by, what is right, what is wrong, where do you get your ethics from? And the secularists will tell you, well, you just use utilitarianism, which is basically the idea you bring the greatest good to the greatest number, which sounds very reasonable. And who could argue with that? But young people, the catch is in the word good, who gets to define good and by what standard? And whenever a nation forgets God, government becomes God, and government becomes the ones who define goodness. Men become the ones who define goodness. And the question then is, which men? Hitler, Hugh Hefner, or someone in between? And we're not simply qualified to define what is good. And if you give man that liberty, it won't be very long before he's calling evil good and good evil. I heard recently, actually this morning, I was reading about a Finnish MP who was threatened with jail time because she tweeted a Bible verse that criticized homosexuality. In Scotland, hate speech laws now make it an offense to have offensive literature in your house. Well, what is offensive literature? Mein Kampf is offensive. But surely we should be able to read it to learn the lessons of history. But what if it's a hymn book or a Bible? That becomes offensive literature that could hurt the feelings of citizens and be therefore regarded as an offense. Or maybe you need this psalm this evening for a much more mundane level. Maybe you find yourself in a hostile marriage, married to an unbeliever, husband or wife who hates God and therefore they hate you. You cannot be so nice to persuade someone who hates God to love you. If they kill Jesus, you'll not be safe. And maybe you find them lurking in ambush for you, always parsing your words, pushing your buttons, trying to provoke you to anger. And then when you get angry, then they mock you for your Christian faith. Or maybe you live in a work environment that's increasingly hostile. The liberals like to speak of safe places for the alphabet mafia to do their thing. But there are no safe places for Christians in this world

increasingly. Whatever the case, Psalm 17 is in the Bible, and therefore it comes with a warning. You might need these words, and sooner than you think. How do you respond to such seasons when men are out to get you, or even when Satan's out to get you, and you feel he is that lion crouching for you? Well, the psalmist has two key lessons. And if you remember nothing else from this sermon, remember this. Two key lessons. When you're in trouble, remember two things. When you pray, God hears your voice. When you pray, God hears your voice. And when you die, you'll see his face. Let's look at the psalm together. First of all, when you pray, God hears your voice. Hear a just cause, O Lord, attend to my cry, my passionate, ringing cry." Prayer is a personal matter, and it should be a passionate one. It's one thing to know that God in general hears the prayers of people. It's entirely another to know that when you pray, God hears your voice and all the particularity of your individuality. He hears your voice. He recognizes the tone of your voice, like you hear the tone of your child. At nighttime, women are especially adept at this. There are six children. They all have a distinct cry. I hear a child crying, but Catherine knows which one it is. And the psalmist derives great comfort from this, that God takes a personal interest in your prayers and mine. Hear a just cause, O Lord. Attend to my cry. Give ear to my prayer. From lips free of deceit. What kind of a God do we approach in prayer? First of all, one who is a passionate concern for what is just. Literally the first verse says, hear righteousness, O Yahweh. God is concerned about justice, what is fair and right and true. That shouldn't surprise you. We're made in God's image, and we take intense delight in seeing justice done. Open up Netflix or Amazon Prime, and most of the shows have to do with bad people being caught and put in prison, whether it be the reality police shows or the detective shows. We watch the whole season because we're determined to see the bad man found out, arrested, and put to justice, if not actually killed. and made in God's image. God is just like us in that sense. He's a passionate concern for what is just and what is right and what is fair. Secondly, under this first point, God also is the kind of God who doesn't always seem to be listening. The psalmist says, attend to my cry, and the Hebrew word literally means pay attention. That's important to realize, that when David prayed, he didn't always feel that God was listening. And so you shouldn't be surprised that when you pray, you don't always feel God listening either. Now feelings and reality are two very different things, as we'll see in a moment. But sometimes you'll pray and it won't always feel as if God's listening. And I love the reality of the Psalms. Just because you feel God isn't listening, we'll see in a second He always is. A third thing about this God

is he knows who we are and what we like, what we're like, sorry, and what we face. Verse three, you have tried my heart. Your heart, you remember, is much more than just the seat of the affections and the emotions. In the Hebrew mindset, the heart includes the whole inner man, the real you. We think with our heart. Our conscience is pricked in our heart. And we feel and emote in our heart, but it's the whole inner man. And David says, you know who I am. You have visited me in the darkness of the night, David says. You're visiting me by night. Alec Mateer says, nighttime is a time when thoughts readily wander and false courses are entertained. As you're lying in your bed with no one there but you by yourself, remember your wife or husband snoring beside you. Husbands snore, wives don't, of course. But it's at that moment that the real you comes out in the darkness. We let our minds wander. And God knows me. When I'm in public, he knows me. When I'm in private, he knows me all the way down to the bottom. God knows the real David. You've tested me. The word test implies hate being applied to a metal, to prove it's metal. You've tested me. You've brought me into the furnace of affliction. And when you have, David says, you will find nothing. Now, that's pretty That's pretty far reaching words. David here is not implying sinless perfection. He takes comfort at the end of the psalm that when he dies and awakes, I will awake in your likeness. That kind of assumes he's not yet in God's likeness. He still has imperfections clinging to him. Now, of course, we read these psalms through two lenses, through the voice of David, through the voice of Christ. Christ can say this in totality. You're a justified Christian by a savior who can look at God and say, you have tested me. for evil, for defect, for sin, for flaw, and you have found nothing. The all-seeing, searching eye of God has penetrated down into the heart of your Savior and searched him when he's under pressure, attacked by the devil, hated by malicious and wicked men. When they reviled him, he didn't revile him in return. When they threatened him. He did not, when he suffered, sorry, he did not threaten. He's pure, not even a flash of hatred once ever flashed across his heart. His heart's pure as the driven snow, and it's his righteousness that is now your righteousness. But David is saying in these words, in terms of the particular accusation that Saul or some other enemies brought against him. And he's saying, Lord, you know that while I'm guilty of many other sins, I'm not guilty of this particular sin. You have tested me, and you will find nothing. Verse two, from your face let my vindication come. It's a great lesson to us. You and I, like the Pharisees in this morning's text, we see the faces of men far too much. But David says, there's only one face to see. and one smile to seek and one

frown to hate. If God is pleased with you, it doesn't matter who on earth is displeased with you. And if God is displeased with you, it doesn't matter who on earth is pleased with you. And David is gripped by that sense of God. I want your smile, oh God. I don't care how many or how big are the men that stand against me. If God is for me and God is pleased with me, then I can be content and rest in that. I have purposed that my mouth will not outrun your law. That's amazing. When you're under pressure, when men are attacking you and men are slandering you, it is the easiest thing in all the world, is it not, to respond like with like. They're assassinating your character in the office or in the church, and so you go back and you go around and you assassinate their character. And David says, no, they may be slandering me, but I have purposed. I have set a course for my heart and my life. It's not about me getting my own back. It's about me not transgressing your law. You won't step outside the bounds. With regard to the works of man, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. He's, I think, ruminating here, you remember, on the time whenever one of his men in the cave, when Saul's looking for a place to relieve himself, and he goes into the cave, and it's dark, and he's kind of grouping about, goes over to the corner, and he's relieving himself, and one of David's men says, God has delivered your enemy into your hand, go kill him. And David goes and, remember, he cuts just at the edge of Saul's cloak. And the Hebrew says his heart struck him, his conscience struck him, because he'd used a weapon to attack even the cloak of God's anointed king. It was not his place to kill the king. It was God's place to kill the king. But what restrained David in those moments, he says, was the word of your lips. He didn't find the strength, he didn't find the wisdom, he didn't find the self-restraint in such moments to come from his own heart. He found it coming from God's Word. which is a reason why you and I have to be in God's word every single day because we need God's word to form the moral compass of our lives. One ship sails east and the other west by the self-same wind that blows, but it's the set of the sails and not the gales which determine which way they go. How do you set the sails of your soul? By God's word or your own thinking? Well, if you lean on your own mind in those moments, You'll find all the wrong emotions mounting up in your heart and no way to beat them down or to chart a way through the storm. But God, but Paul, David, by the word of your lips, I have avoided the ways of the violent. My steps have held fast to your paths. My steps, plural, the intricacies of life, not just one step, but every step I take through life has held fast to your paths, again, plural. One of the commentators, I forget who, was talking about, here's the intricacies. God's

ways are simple, but they're also complicated. And we have to be able to match our steps to God's paths. And David holds that, and his feet have not slipped. So he serves a God who knows who we are and what we're like. And we also then serve a God who is listening even when we don't feel it. Verse six, I call upon you, why? For you will answer me, oh God. Incline your ear, bend down your ear. God's like a father speaking to a little child, bending over to hear the cry of their voice. He begins to say, I'm not sure

God's listening, but by faith, he reaches through the fear.

The fears are real, but they're not to be trusted. God listens whether you feel him to be listening or not. What's this God like? He's a God who has a passionate concern for what is just, who doesn't always seem to be listening, who knows who we are, where we are, what we're like, and what we're facing, and a God also whose ways are matchless, God-like, and divine. Matchless, God-like, and divine, sorry. Verse seven, wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior, of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. Wondrously, the word wonder, it's a word for miracle. It describes something so great, so beautiful, so wonderful that only God could do it. There may be times in your life

when you can't see a way for God's love to get to you, but God's love isn't an ordinary kind of love. It has a wondrous way to it that can reach down to you and find a way to you and lift you up to the deepest pit. Even though you can't find a way out, God's ways are not your ways, his thoughts are not your thoughts, and his love is not like your love. God's love is indomitable and enduring and wondrous. Wondrously show your chesed, your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. That's like God's name here. What is God's name? He's the Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at his right hand. That's his name. Which means, Christian, if you seek refuge from your adversaries at his right hand, he'll be your Savior. Doesn't matter who your adversaries are. the devil's hounding you, you can seek refuge at God's right hand, and he'll be your Savior. If the world is hounding you, you can seek refuge at God's right hand, and he'll be your Savior. And even if you find your enemy, your own heart, your flesh, an enemy rising up within your bosom, in those moments, you can seek refuge at God's right hand, and he will be your Savior. I ask you under this first point, what's this God like? He's a God whose care is both reflexive and tender. Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. Reflexive, the apple of your eye is the pupil of your eye. That most tender place that you reflexively take care of. Even when you try, when you're at the, remember when I first got contact lenses, which I don't wear anymore, But when I first got them, it was a nightmare

trying to stick them in my eye, because the last thing you want to do is stick your finger in your eye. And the contact lens, it's awkward. It's difficult, actually. You have to put a drop of fluid onto the lens, so it'll kind of suck onto your eye. But you hate touching your eye. And then if you sleep with them on and they kind of dry onto your eyelids, you've got to kind of scrape them off. And it's the hardest thing in all the world to do, because your pupil is the one thing you'll protect at all costs. Even when a doctor's examining it and maybe trying to do surgery on it, you find yourself, even when you want to let him touch it, you find yourself unable to let him touch it. And that's the way God takes care of you, Christian. He guards you as the pupil of his eye, his most tender spot, his most precious place. And you guard your pupil like that because you can't afford to lose your pupil because you've only got two of them. And if you lose one of them, you've got one eye. Lose both of them and you're blind. And David, God protects you, he says, as the kind of person he cannot afford to lose. You're precious to him. His care is reflexive and tender. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. It's a picture of a hen gathering her chicks under her wings. We had a little sparrow nested in the little decorative trees outside our front door. There's two of them either side of the door. And this sparrow nested there, which was difficult for her because that's where I go and sit and read in the chair there. And she would lose her nut when I would go outside and sit attacking me. And she'd go and sit in her little nest and cover her little hatchlings with her wings. It's a picture of beautiful maternal tender care. This picture of Boaz taking Ruth under the shadow of his wings, so tender, so kind, so careful. Husband protecting his wife. That's the way God protects you. God hears. When you pray, God hears your voice. And then secondly, and briefly, when you die, when I die, I will see God's face. Verse 13 to the end. Arise, O Lord, confront him, subdue him, deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword. It's wonderful, I love that. It's again and again the same. Arise. What's it tell you about God? He's sitting on a throne in complete control and all he need to do is stand up and it's over. David's enemy is the king of Israel. And all God need do is stand up and it is over. Confront him, literally the Hebrew says, confront him to his face. God's attack against our enemy is as personal as our prayer. Our vindication comes from God's face. And he subdues our enemies face to face. Deliver my soul from the wicked by your sword. It's a wonderful thing. that God is compassionate and kind and tender, but he has a sword and he knows how to use it. Like the John Wayne movies would be no fun at the end of the movie if John Wayne's getting attacked

and he's like Barney Fife, you know, pulling his gun out of the holster and going, where's the buying switch? Where did the bullets go? Ah, I don't know what to do. It's not, you don't want that kind of a hero, you want John Wayne or Clint Eastwood to draw the guns. And one shot, one kill. It's a wonderful thing to see a man in a movie that has power to put evil down decisively. That's the kind of God we have. And as David's thinking about his own death, he thinks about his enemies. And they're more to be pitied than to be feared. They're like lions. lurking in ambush. They have no pity in their heart. They're violent. They want to kill David, and they surround him. But at the end of the day, these men are just that, men facing God. From men, deliver me from the wicked by your sword, from," notice he repeats the word men, from men by your hand, O Lord, from men of the world whose portion is in this life. Their only portion is in this life, and they've no portion beyond it. They live governed by worldly values. Though they live for a time, they will not live forever. And while God's common grace fills their womb with treasure, you fill their womb with treasure. They are satisfied with children, and they leave their abundance to their infants. While the treasure comes from God, they never look to God. Like so many in the world, and some also in the church, they take the gift and forget the giver. And when they die, and die they shall, the best they can do is leave their treasure to the next generation, because they can't take it with them. Now David's speaking about Christians here in the next verse, but it's also instructive. As we read this, Sam, David's asking you and he's asking me, is that the way you are? Because we can be like that, I can be like that, you can be like that. We can live as if this world was the whole show, as if the treasure of this world was all that really matters. What will your treasure count for you if, when you die, you can't take it with you, if that's all the treasure you have and it's taken away from you? What? Poverty. As for me, I'm not like that, David says. I shall behold your face in righteousness. that David will see in heaven

what Moses was forbidden to see on earth. I'll see the face of God. That's what excites David about heaven, being in the presence of God. It's a powerful diagnostic question to ask ourselves. What is it that excites you about going to heaven? I've said this before, but recently we've heard Geoff Thomas preach at Twin Lakes. This old man, he's 85 or six now, and that's old. If you're 86, forgive me for calling you old, but if you can't be called old when you're 86, I don't know when you can be called old. But he's still sprightly and alive and full of grace, and his preaching was wonderful. But he was asked in the Q&A, what is it that, what is your most precious thought about Jesus? And he's Welsh. Oh,

he says,
my most precious thought about Jesus, that I will soon see his
face, his face that was spat upon for me and punched for me
and bloodied for me and bruised for me, beaten for me. I will see the face of him
who
loved me and gave himself up for me. And that's all David
has to say. And I do believe in heaven, there
will be, we'll live life as it was meant to be lived. It'll
not just be one long church service. We'll be building things and
designing things and exploring the earth and the outermost reaches
of the cosmos. And there may be golf in heaven
too. and other sports to enjoy, and we'll swim with the dolphins
and the whales, but what excites a Christian about heaven, what
excites a healthy soul about heaven is not what he will experience
in the heavens, it's who he'll meet there, he'll see Jesus. The face of God in the
face of
the son, and it's the face of a father. And when I awake, I shall be
satisfied with your likeness or in your likeness. David, it's
1 John 3, isn't it? Behold what manner of love with
which the Father has loved us, that we should be called children
of God. And thus we are, though it has
not yet appeared what we shall be. But when we see him, we will
be like him." David's not like him now. Oh, but he'll be like
him then when he sees the Father's glory in the Father's Son. And in that moment, in
that beatific
vision, his sin, the darkness of his soul, the iniquity that
has clawed at him and tempted him and drawn him away from God,
all of those emotions of Paul in Romans 7, the good that I
want to do, I don't do, and the evil that I hate, that I find,
I practice. Oh, wretched man that I am. Who
will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through
Jesus Christ, my Savior. He delivers me now through the
gospel, but he'll deliver me then once and for all when I
see his face and become like him. He who died in my place
and for my sins. So when you face enemies on earth,
Take these two thoughts home with you. God hears you now,
and you'll see him soon. Soon and very soon, you will
see the King Christian. Let's pray together. Father in
heaven, we thank you, Lord, for your mercies that are new every
evening and every morning. We thank you for Psalms, like
Psalm 17, that help us to chart our way through a troubled world
that hates you, and because it hates you, it will also hate
us. And forgive us, O God, forgive
me, forgive the people here, O Lord. We've all fallen short
of David's example here. We have not held fast to your
path. We've given in to violence, to
malice, to getting our own back, to scratching and biting. How hard it is, O God, to
when
we are reviled, not to revile in return, when we suffer, not
to threaten, but to commit ourselves to God who judges righteously.

Oh, send your grace to help us be better and do better. We might follow the example of our older brother, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.