

Title: The Superiority of Love

Text: I Corinthians 13:1-3

I Corinthians chapter 13, please. I Corinthians chapter 13. We call this the Love chapter. In truth we are talking about the LOVE OF THE H.S.

I Corinthians chapter 13 verse 1...(READ Vs 1-13)

PRAYER

Lord, may this series on this chapter so get into our hearts and lives that we would understand that without love we are truly nothing. Without your love we can not really minister. Without your love we cannot see results as you would want them. How, we need love. Your kind of love. The world has made all of this so confusing for us. They talk of love and it doesn't seem to match with what you say. So, help us, lord, to understand.

And we thank you for your love. You loved us when we didn't even care about you. You loved us so much that you sent your son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross to pay for what is really wrong with us...sin. And we know that without the cross there really isn't any hope for us. So, we thank you for the cross...Where we can find forgiveness of sin and hope for tomorrow. Thank you, Lord, Teach us we pray...for Jesus sake....Amen.

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Well, what is this thing called LOVE. The world really wants it. That is for sure. When you go into a bookstore, Christian or secular, it is amazing how many titles are about love. Turn on your Radio...any station..and you will hear songs of love. And that generates some romantic feelings within some of us. You know, you hear them everywhere. The world wants LOVE. People want to be LOVED.

But, very little attention is being given to GOD'S KIND OF LOVE. And that is why people are not really satisfied. Why they are not fulfilled.

Let's me just remind you that the Greeks had four words for love. And I think we need to remember this. In English we have only one word. And we use that word with all kinds of meaning. For example..we say.."I LOVE MY DOG. And, I love my wife." LET'S HOPE THEY ARE NOT THE SAME...RIGHT?

I mean..we throw that word "LOVE" around. But the Greeks do not have that problems. They had a word for all the different kinds of LOVE.

STOR-gay....is a very social word. It was used of family. For love of parents. Love of family members. It was used of times when families got together. It was also used of love of animals.

Then there is the word PHILO..Friendship. A word used of close friends.

Then there is physical love ..eros . The kind of love to describe the relationship between husband and wife. This word, by the way, does not appear in the N.Y.

Then there is the word , and I am sure you are familiar with this word... the word "AGAPE". This is the word that is used here in I Corinthians 13. It is God's love. What is God's love. It is described here in this 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians. And boy, do we need this kind of love.

Now, in light of our modern world and the Play Boy philosophy, I would like to strengthen out one thing. And that is the wrong concept about the difference between people and things. And let me put it to you this way. In the Bible God meant for us to love people and to use THINGS. But the world has reversed that. That want us to love THINGS and to use PEOPLE. And that is not love. That is selfishness.

Turn over, please, to I John chapter 2. And let me remind you of what the Bible says--warning us about loving "THINGS." I John chapter 2 verses 15-17...God meant for us to LOVE PEOPLE and to use THINGS. Things do not bring happiness. They are to be used to accomplish certain purposes. You can some times use ~~and~~ things to show your love to people, as we often do and say. But if you do not love people but love things you are not loving with God's kind of love. I John 2 :15 says..."Do not love the world, nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world."

Do you want to know what the things are in the world? Vs 16 -

"The lust of the flesh"..you're old sin nature desires "things" because it is sinful. It is selfish. It is bent that way. "And the lust of the eye". We see things that we want, we desire, we covet them.

"And the boastful pride of life." Which is not conceit. The phrase 'boastful pride' is a confidence. It is talking about "worldly security." The word "life" does not refer to your life. It is talking about your livelihood. So, if you put this together it means "boastful confidence in your means of livelihood." It is things again. It is materialism. It is worldly security.

And John says.. "THAT IS THE WORLD. AND DON'T LOVE IT." WHY? Vs 17.. "It is passing away... BUT, THE ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER."

That is the one who loves God. And loves others. There is a sense in which you cannot love others until you love yourself. But how can you love yourself until you love God. And understand why he created you and what you are all about.

Love is so important. Now, come back to I Corinthians 13.

In order to really understand this 13th chapter, we need to look back at chapter 12. In the last few verses of chapter 12 Paul list the ^{spiritual} gifts that have been given to the body of Christ. He says that every christian has been given a ^{spiritual} "GIFT"; And we need to use those gifts in ministering to one another. But the people in the Corinthian church had a problem. They all wanted the ^{spectacular} ~~spectacular~~ gifts. They ^{wanted} ~~want~~ to be in the limelight. They wanted to be noticed by others. So, Paul says in Vs 31 "BUT EARNESTLY DESIRE THE GREATER GIFT." In other words, you desire all ^{those spectacular} ~~these~~ ~~spectacular~~ gifts of tongues, and healings and so forth, but "let me show you a more excellent way."

Dear friends, the "more excellent way" is God's love.

Now, I would like you to think of that word "WAY". Love is not simply and act. Love is not simply a moment. When God talks about His love, it is A WAY OF LIFE. It is a way, a path, a direction in which God wants YOU to go. A path by which He wants you to live every day of your life. THE WAY OF LOVE IS WHAT WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT, IN CHAPTER 13.

And it is more excellent...it is greater...it is greater than anything you can dream of. And I guess the reason why is because I John 4:8 says "GOD IS LOVE." HAVE YOU EVER GOT A ^{handle} ~~whole~~ OF THAT THOUGHT? I mean..really god a whole of it? GOD IS LOVE.

He is not merely or only love. HE IS LOVE. And His love is without end. It is infinite. It is without boundaries. I like the song that says: " His Love has no limites.. His grace has no measure."

That is so true. Because GOD...IS...LOVE.

And God meant for you and me to love people and not things.

Now, today, I will deal only with the first three verses. Verses 4-7 we will look at next week. And then we will conclude with verses 8-13.

only
(1A) So, today we will look at the way of love as necessary for all christian ministry. Next week we will look at the way of love as being different from all normal human reaction. You are going to see, next week, in verses 4-7 that we don't usually act this way. It goes right across human nature. And finally, I would like to show you how the way of love is greater than all gifts. It is the greatest thing there is in the whole world. There isn't anything as great as love. It is superiority to everything else. It is the highest good. It is the best thing. It is what you and I really need. We are never going to be what God wants us to be, untill we learn to love. NEVER. Jesus said that everything that was every written in the Bible is summarized into two things: Love God with all your heart, and love your friend as yourself.

Everything God ever said is summarized by love. This is so every important.

(1B) Now, first of all let me give you a little outline of these first three verses which I believe will help you understand the content.

cut
Let's look at these three verses again(Read Vs 1-3, emphase word "if")

NOW, THERE ARE THREE THINGS THAT I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT TO YOU.

First
(1C) Each verse begins with the word "IF" This means that it is hypothetical. It is hypothetical. No one ever did it. Make sure you read those verses right. *He is* not saying that there are people who speak all the tongues or languages of men. He is not saying that at all. It is hypothetical.

The Greek construction would say "If..maybe you will or maybe you willn't," "But if you ever could". And you don't have love it is still a waste of time." No one every speaks with all the ^{languages} ~~languages~~ of men...And yet even if you could, if you don't have love you are zero, nothing.

And to emphasize the point he throws in "angels." And some people have said to me, "Well, my gift is to speak the language of angels."

Well, I have problems with that because every time the angels spoke in the Bible they spoke in the language of the people they were talking to.

You say, "Well, that was Hebrew." NO, they spoke both in the O.T. and the N.T. which means Arabic, Hebrew and Greek. I don't know what else they know, But I know that when they communicated to people they spoke to them in the language that they knew.

Now, that is not what it means. The point is..If you could speak like an angel..if you could speak all the world languages, but if you don't have love, you ^{are} nothing. It doesn't accomplish anything.

(2) The second thing that I would like to point out to you is that there is a common phrase in each one of those verses. "BUT DO NOT HAVE LOVE."

And do you know why that is important? ~~for you and I to center our attention~~

Because He is saying that it is possible for us to have christian gifts and ministries, but not have love. It is possible to do what others say **is** great and wonderful and good, but if you don't have LOVE it is really nothing.

(3) The third thing that I would point out to you is that ~~is~~ the conclusion of each one of these verses is different. Meaning..there is a different point.

① Notice: at the end of Verse 1..he says.."I have become a noisy gong."

So, his point in verse 1 is what happens to us when we don't have love. No matter what ministry you might be talking about, what will happen to us when we don't have love in our lives? That is verse 1.

It says "I have become". Do you know what that means? It means "You once were not that way." *But now you have become.*

You know, some christians can experience God's love. And then for some reason can slip into being a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal again. "I HAVE BECOME THAT." A christian who thinks that he can live and ministry and do the work of God without love..He is going to become something that he wasn't once.

And it is also in the "perfect tense" meaning that "he has become this as a habit of life." He is doing his ministry..he is going about doing things, but there is no love there.

It is a terrible thing. But that is what will happen to you without love.

(2) But, in verse 2 we have a different ending. Please notice it.

It says if I have all these things: prophecy, knowledge, faith, but if I do not have love, WHAT AM I?....NOTHING.

Now, that is a statement of value. ^{verse 1} In the ~~first~~ verse he is telling us what will happen to us, if we don't have love. In Vs 2 he is telling you what you are worth. A lot of people think that they are really important if they have all this knowledge. And, yet, ~~he~~ ^{Paul} is saying that if you don't have love, you are worthy nothing. It is a statement of value.

Self esteem, self image is involved in Verse 2.

(3) But now look at Verse 3. It is different also. It says "if I give my possessions to feed the poor, deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." And here ^{Paul} is talking about the "results" or the "rewards". The things that you can expect, obviously from God. And God is saying that even if you gave everything, if you don't have love, ~~god~~ ^{it} doesn't do anything for you. GOD IS REWARDING LOVE. GOD'S MOTIVE FOR ALL CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IS LOVE.

~~So with the brief outline, let's now look at the~~
~~And that is the first thing we are dealing with, today, from verses~~
~~1 to 3.~~ ^{Way of love as to not being} THE WAY OF LOVE IS NECESSARY FOR ALL CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. I don't care what it is. There is no substitute.

(2B) ^{Now} Knowing that, I would like to take each one of these verses and force it upon your mind as to how essential love is in your life.

(10) First of all in verse 1...Without love your ^{Communication} ~~communicate~~ is not effective.
~~speech~~...Your speech..your communication is not effective unless love is present. That is why love is necessary. Because without it, you cannot even talk right.

Have you ever thought about that? Have you ever heard someone say something that was really great in content, but there was no love?

Do you know what happens when people talk and they don't have love? God says that it is like a nosy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Now, I was going to illustrate this point by playing for you a cymbal solo: you know...a solo on the cymbals...But my better wisdom stopped me. ^(Shirley)

Do you know what you sound like to people if you don't have love? I don't care how great your words are. And you English teachers forgive me, I don't even care about your grammar. Now, what I mean is, English teachers, that we ought to do the best we can. But there are some folks who have never had the privileges that others have, and yet they still LOVE. God is no respecter of persons.

Some folks murder the King's English, but let me tell you something. When there is LOVE it speaks....

You can speak the right way...you can use correct sentence structure... you can have the greatest vocabulary, but if you don't have love, you are playing a cymbal solo, you are wasting your time.

That is what God is saying here. So, what happens to people who don't have love? Well, two things, I believe, are taught in this verse.

(19) One, deals with the results of communication. What is the result of all of ~~our~~ talking? And man do we talk a lot. Have you noticed that? I mean, you don't. But some folks do. Some folks have this problem. The world is full of talk. And now we have the problem...we are so skilled..we have so many machines, we can record it all. You know, volumes of paper...reams of paper.. You know, every year I go through my files and say, "WHAT IS ALL THAT STUFF?" You know, all this communication.

You say, "It is necessary!"..It makes me wonder what folks did when they didn't have it. It is kind-off like the question that goes through by mind, "I wonder what it would be like without a telephone?"

Do you know what I mean? I think how could Charles Spurgeon minister in the 1800's ..how could he minister and see over 14 thousand people come to Christ under his minister and he never had a telephone.....I can hardly believe that.

And machines? How can we exist without copying machines and word processors? I mean it is just hard to believe. We forget that it wasn't until 1450 that printing press was invented.

What did people use before that? Don't tell me a quill..... Or you see that T.V. aid of a monk who needs ZEROk because he can't do the job...

Don't you know that God has always used the same thing? PEOPLE LOVING....

That is what he has used.

And all the machinery, all the methods, all the paper, and all the phones in the world are no substitution for one little sweet thing...LOVE...

One person loving. No matter what equipment or supports he has in his life, HE LOVING IS WORTHY EVERYTHING.

The reason why our society has lost its sense of the individuals importance and the reason why we all are lost in the mass of the machinery of life, is because we have lost what is the highest good. IT IS LOVE. Machines cannot love. Equipment cannot love. Paper cannot love. PEOPLE LOVE.

Communications, friends, is a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. What does that Mean? Well, the word "noisy" is the word for echo." Have you ever made an "echo"? You know, you stand out on a cliff over looking a canyon and scream: HELLO! I DON'T LIKE YOU....And it come back at you from the walls of the canyon. ECHO..

Now, the trouble is that this echo is not just words echoing across the canyon. Because this word echo is put with the word "blast". Now, have you ever put forth a blast and ~~listened~~ ^{listened} to it echo? It just vibrates all over the place..And that is what it means to listen to someone who doesn't love... That is why I wish I had brought some big ~~any~~ ^{any} cymbal in here and just crashed them together. And then let the sound vibrate all over this sanitary until your ears hurt. And then maybe you would know what it is like to talk ^{to} someone and not love them. It hurts. It doesn't help. It just hurts. That is what it is like: a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

When will ~~we~~ ^{we} learn. All the best things you say, if you don't love, God says that the results will be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

You see, dear friends, the reason behind this kind of communication is what a lot of us have not learned. You ~~see~~, ^{if} we don't think we are talking right, we go ~~get~~ ^{to} a speech class. We go anywhere ~~accept~~ ^{except} to the source.

Have you ever had anyone come to you and say: "You know, people don't seem to respond to me when I talk to them. What could the problem ~~be~~?"

And then to say, "It is simple. You don't have God's love." That is a little hard, isn't it? Maybe that isn't loving. But, it is something we ought to think about.

Maybe the reason people do not respond to what we are saying is because they sense that we don't really care about them. We don't love them.

We need to think about this. All the words in the world. Everything you try to do in christian ministry. And ministry is filled with words..whether you are singing a song, teaching or witnessing, or whatever, it is filled with words. And if we don't have love, God says, it is going to be like a nosy gong and a clanging cymbal.

Let me give you an illustration. Turn to colossians chapter 3. I want to illustrate in the case of husbands and wives. In Colossians 3 verse 19. God said an interesting thing about husbands. And it deals with loving when you speak...Loving speech...

Now, God said many times to speak with love. Like Ephesians 4:15...³ speak the truth in love. He told us to let no unwholesome word come out off our mouth. But only that which ministers ~~grace~~^{grace} and builds people up. God has a lot to say about how you and I talk.

But this is a classic example. Colossians 3:19..."Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them."

Now, that is talking about speech. And I would like to break it down for you so that you will really understand what is being said.

The word "embittered" comes from a root word meaning "to cut." And it ~~comes~~^{comes} to mean "sharp". "Cutting". It is communication that hurts. It does not help. Husbands love your wives and ~~don't~~^{don't} be sharp. Don't cut."

You say, "What is that? I don't understand that?" Well, let me give you an illustration.

Your wife is fixing dinner. And she says, "Do you want cheeze on the carrots?" "I DON'T LIKE CARROTS!"...Now, that is sharp.....You see....That is sharp... I just want to make sure you all understand. I don't want anyone going out of here confused.

Of course I know that not all of you are extraverts. And the intraverts handle it a little better. Would you like carrots tonight?...Ah, No!..

It is still the same thing. Little attitude...Little sharpness...Little cutting...I haven't got time for you. I am very impatient with you. You are not doing what I want you to do. You are ^{Not} doing it at the ^{speed} speed that I want you to. And you are so upset. And bang..you cut them off.

"Could I ask You.....! "I HAVE ^{N'T} GOT TIME!" And other people just turn the other way and keep moving.

LOVE! "Husbands love your wives". What an illustration! Communication without love? It is no good. Back To I Cor 13. *Love is essential in communication*

(2c) The second thing, from Vs 2, is also very important. The reason why the way of love is so ^{essential} necessary for christian ministry is because without it your spiritual understand is incomplete. You may think that you know every thing, but friends you don't. If you don't love, you don't really understand.

That is the tragedy of trying to learn the Word of God and grow spiritually, You know, move from the milk to the meat of the Gospel. And you should try to know all you can about the Bible. But, I want to tell you something. You can learn every thing there is to learn about the Bible, ^{But} and if you don't have love...GOD' Says "YOU ARE NOTHING."

You have no value to God's program and work without love. And a person with limited knowledge, with limited opportunities..who loves is worth everything.

Now, Paul made some strong statements about this point in Vs 2 of I cor 13. He said "if I have the gift of Prophecy"...

and Did you notice that the word "gift" is in italics? The word "prophecy" is a noun. It is referring to "the revelation from God." ^{Not} the gift of using it. "IF I HAVE ALL THE REVELATION OF GOD...IF I KNOW ALL THE GREAT MYSTERIES OF GOD.....Whatever might be the secrets of God....If I know all of that... IF I HAD ALL KNOWLEDGE....BUT, IF I DO NOT HAVE LOVE I AM NOTHING.

If I had faith to move mountains, but I do not have love, I am nothing.

and And who doesn't see the importance of Faith. Turn over to Matthew chapter 17 And let me illustrate the meaning of "faith to move mountains."

In Matthew chapter 17 the phrase to "move mountains" is ^{an} illustration of demon possession and casting out a demon. Vs 19 the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Why could we not cast it out?"

They are talking about a demon. And Jesus said to them in Vs 20 (RD 20-) Man! That is great. Faith to move mountains. The mountain here was casting out a demon.

Look over at chapter 21. A second illustration of "faith to move mountains" is found in chapter 21 verse 18.....(READ Vs 18-20)

You know, that always gets me. It just amuses me. How did they do it? Jesus did it. Isn't it amazing? Everytime Jesus did something they said, "How did he do that?"

They just kept questioning him as to who He was. They never did quite understand.

Vs 21.....(Read Vs 21 and 22)

WOW! That is tremendous! To have faith like that.

Now, turn back to Matthew chapter 7. And let me show you why it is dangerous if you don't have love.

Matthew chapter 7 verse 21..."Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Which we have already learned. The will of God is loving God not the world...

Vs 22.."Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name, and in Your name cast out demons." That is the illustration of Faith removing mountains."in your name perform many miracles?" The fig tree withers. "And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."

Instead of practicing love, they practiced lawlessness. All I am trying to say to you is that you may not even be a believer if you do not love.

This is such an important principle. Back to I Corthing 13....And here is the point that I am trying to make: Miraculous abilities are no guarantee that you ^{are} what God wants you to be. That is very clear in the teaching of the Bible.

So, you see, people want to have all this great stuff in ~~their~~ ^{Their} life: prophecy, knowledge, know all mysterious, Faith..But listen, if you don't have love, GOD SAY YOU ARE NOTHING. You ~~are~~ ^{are} of no value to Him and His program.

SO, WHY IS LOVE NECESSARY? First, because if you don't have it, your communication is not effective. And secondly, if you don't have it, your spiritual understanding is incomplete. *Very important*

(3) And third, without ^{Love} your sacrificial giving is insufficient. I believe you ought to give. He says..Vs 3.."If I give all my possessions. Literally... "bit by bit". "Piece by piece".

And the word "poor" is not in the Greek text. That sort of spiritualize the idea. It makes people feel good in giving. It is not saying that at all. It is just saying "I am giving away everything that I have...bit by bit.

Suppose you give everything you have away. He says that if you don't have love it doesn't profit you anything. God doesn't honor it. He doesn't bless it. There is no spiritual reward. There is no ^{Financial Sec.} ~~treasurer~~ in heaven, ^{Keep records} ~~Regardless~~ of what you gave.

Now, there is a real problem in this text. Some of you may have a footnote on it. Look at Vs 3 where it says "if I deliver my body to be burned"..and look in your margin notes..It says "some ancient mss read THAT I MAY BOAST."

I hold that that margin footnote is part of the text. And I would like to tell you why. I believe the correct translation is: "If I deliver my body ^{That is the way it should read.} THAT I MIGHT BOAST." That refers, then, to the previous statements. And it is showing why God does not bless when we give everything we have or, even, give our bodies to God..dedication totally...why God doesn't bless. Because the motive is wrong..THAT I MAY BOAST.

You say, HOW CAN MANUSCRIPTS DEFFER BETWEEN "boast" and "burne".? Very easy. In Greek there is only one letter difference. The word "boast" and the word "burn" look just alike except for one letter. It is an easy mistake.

WHY do I believe it is the word "BOAST" and not "burn"? Because all three of the most ancient manuscripts of I Corinthians all have "THAT I MAY BOAST." The earliest of the earlist ~~manuscripts~~ ^{have that reading.}

also

Therefore, I believe it is the correct reading. Because it makes sense. If I give away everything, if I even dedicate my body --THAT I MAY BOAST— There is the root problem.

A lot of us are in it for self. You see your purpose in giving, dear friends, whether it is things or your self, but your purpose in giving is the key as to whether there is love or not. If you are doing what you are doing in order to boast—to be proud--it is selfishness, it is not love.

(2) And there is a second thing that I believe is being taught in Vs 3. And it is so very important for Christians to understand. The profit you receive in giving is not found in what was given. We are not talking about an amount here or cost. It is not in what was given. But in the motive behind it. WHICH IS LOVE. It is as if profits are nothing if I do not have love. There is no blessing, there is no profit from God, if I do not have love. No matter what I have given. No matter how much I have dedicated my life to the Lord. LOVE IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.

In Luke 21 Jesus saw a poor widow putting 2 mites in the offering plate. It wasn't equal in value or amount to all that the rich man had put into the offering plate. But Jesus said that she had given more than all the rich men together. It isn't the amount. It isn't the size of the gift. It isn't how expensive it is. DEAR FRIENDS, IT ALL COME BACK TO WHETHER OR NOT LOVE IS THE MOTIVE. GOD BLESSES LOVE. GOD PROFITS LOVE. God builds people up because of love. Do you want to see people ministered to because of your ministry? Then learn to love.

And I end with this fact. GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE WHAT?..... GAVE....You see...Jesus is our great example. We didn't do anything to deserve salvation. Are you waiting for people to respond to you and then you love? That is not love. Are you waiting to feel like loving? That is not love either. LOVE ACTS IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD. Feeling come, but you act.

It is a way of life. It is a way of life that is obedient to God and His Word.

Do you know the way of love? Do you do what God wants you to do, regardless of whether or not you feel it? Or, do you wait for the feeling?

You say, "Well, I am not going to give to anybody anymore unless I feel it in my heart?"

Well, I want to tell you that you don't know and understand the love of God. LOVE ACTS.....LOVE DOES.....LOVE MINISTERS...Because it knows ^{the example of} ~~that it is in~~ the ^{Jesus} ~~Word of~~ God. And sometimes we don't know whether we feel it or we don't. But love is rooted in obedience to God. And sometimes we do what we don't feel like doing. And that is a greater demonstration of love than doing it because we ~~do~~ feel like doing it.

LET'S CLOSE IN PRAYER

Father, help us to understand your love. Teach us to love. Teach us to see that the way of love is necessary for all christian action. I pray, Lord, for those ~~we~~ ^{Problems} who have never experience ^{your} God's love through Christ Jesus. Have never seen that He loved us so much that he paid for our sins on the cross and have not yet made that decision to trust you for salvation and eternal life. God help them, right ~~now~~ ^{as christians}, in this moment to believe in you. To trust You., And I pray that all of us may have a new commitment to Love. Help us to make commitments, right now, to love people ~~and not things~~

We pray in the name of Jesus.....Amen.