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Racism is Wrong - Mayor James Evers - ORU Chapel

Holy Spirit Research Center, Oral Roberts University

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-Racism is wrong

Chapel 9/27/72 Major Evers

This is the day that we honor Mayor Evers who is one of the most unusual men our country has ever produced. He has been given many honorary degrees from the colleges across the nation. He is the first mayor of a city of this type in the United States. Only the third in the nation. He is a man who has bared his shoulders and his heart to physical danger, continuing the work of his late slain brother, Metger, and I recently watched him on national television when the network had come into Fayette and observed him during a normal days work, in which he had to deal with a mass of people that kept coming from early morning to late at night. All of them with problems, deep needs. Some of them angry with each other, both black and white. And I was struck with the way he dealt with each man with almost the wisdom of a Solomon. There was one young man there who apparently wanted everything, but didn't want to work and the Mayor worked him over from his head to his feet. He told him to get out of there and get to work and the very next one was an older person who needed help, it was apparent that he did - he reached over and patted him on the shoulder and gave him love and consideration and I thought it was near the wisdom of Solomon they way he handled those diverse individuals - one able to work, one not able to work, and it was a word of wisdom here, a word of knowledge there, but always he was an inperterbale man, and I was rather envious that you could hold your composure as the people kept coming with diverse needs some of them with gentle words, others (tape blanked out)

We must have at ORU a man we want to honor. So faculty, administration and students will you give an ORU welcome to Mayor Evers. (Applause)

Mayor Evers:

Thank you very much! Thank you very much! I'm sort of like another person I know - very seldom am I at a loss for words, but this time, Mr. President, I want to say that I'm more than honored and I feel somewhat out of place because I feel that the strength that Jesus shown me certainly should.....(tape blanked out.....)

.....a black man who comes from just one step from slavery with the voice that he has. Would you do it for us?

Song: "Amazing Grace"

(Tape blank)

.....and then we would hum it real slow - all of you do it - for you see in those days we had nothing. We couldn't go to the best schools, Brother Roberts, cause you wasn't around. And we didn't have a decent bus to ride cause there was no buses for blacks and the Indians and Mexicans. We had to hop it down the road - get spit on by the mean young white boys and girls who just didn't know any better. Who'd been taught that black folks and Indians and Mexicans were nothing. Thank God we kept pushing and kept pushing we kept saying some day grace is going to change their evil hearts and make them somebody. And then we just kept on humming and we said 'Well, Mamma don't worry, if they kill one of us today the other one will have to keep going, because Christ died that we might live and if He dies who are us not to say that we can't do the same thing? Just gotta keep believing that we can change this country and change our state and stop electing politicians and start electing men who care and women who love and make our community a safe community - so there'll be no more Metgers, and no more Bobby's and no more John's and there'll be no more races and hatred taught from the pulpits, from the governors mansion.....(tape blank)(picks up).....represents the whole university, not just one. We kept believing that and we still believe it. We're gonna keep on fighting because wrong is wrong and we pray that some...a man like Brother Roberts would come along and represent all of us and want to give us a chance to become a part(tape blank).....

End of belt 1 - beginning of belt 2

.....you gotta get on planes at 12 o'clock at night and fly to Tulsa - and fly and think nothing about, 'cause if He's for you - can't nobody touch you - 'cause it ain't what a man was yesterday, it's what he is today that counts. We're not gonna blame you white folks for how cruel you've been, just change - just stop and become somebody.

Cause ain't none of us been saints, ain't none of us been holy all our lives, but Thank God we ain't what we used to be and just makes sure that you young folks here will just come to Oral Roberts and go out and say 'well I went to Oral Roberts' a school where a man believed in change - not talk - who believed in doing something and you got to go back and do the same thing in your community that Brother Roberts has done here. It's just that important. And we can't do it - oh yes you can - if he can do it you can too, you got to believe that. Maybe not as big, but as positive and as sincere and you got to change the hearts of your poor old mothers and fathers who hate black folks, who hate indians, who hate minorities - only because they don't know any better - they've been taught over the years. You say well what are you talking about, Mayor? The whole thing in this whole world is because people did not respect others. All other things are not even important if you learn to love and respect people all things we wanted will come a reality. Wars of wrong, wars are destructive and they destroy not only human bodies, but they destroy property and they destroy good will and only through our love and to the church and our understanding of our fellow man are we gonna be able to change that. You say' what kind of mayor are you - that's the kind of mayor I am - I'm firm and I'm tough, but I'm fair. You got to be tough, but you got to be right. You gotta let white folks know when they're wrong and black folks the same. You don't have to be re-elected - you got to be elected to serve that term and let your work speak for you for the next term. That's why our presidents and our candidates are confused cause their hearts not right - they worried about the material things and not what should be basically the moral and basically the love and respect for all of us and you wouldn't have polls showing 55 and 60 percent and some showing 29% and all that kind of mess. You show men running to make this country a safe country - a good country - and that's your job. Legislators, it's their job to make it safe. Schools, it's your job to prepare young folks to go out and be good citizens and not hate them or kill them. And black folks, don't get confused with hate - it ain't worth it. Hate's a sickness that eats away at the heart of a

person and makes them nobody. So let's don't hate our white brothers that have hated us, because they have been sick or diseased and only love can cure. It doesn't mean bow your head 'nobody better not hit me' - but it means demand and give the same respect that you want. And let white America know that we are somebody and all we ever needed was a equal chance and we can prove to them that we can bounce a basketball just as good as they could, if not better. We can prove to them that we can fly a jet just as high and fast as they can, if only we've been given a chance and we can be president of an institution and do just a good a job as any of them can, if we only given a chance. All we gonna say as Mayor of Fayette, we believe we got the best town in the world. We don't have no red tape - we don't have no racism - better not be obvious in that town, cause I like a hawk going up a chicken, cause I hate racism in any kind of form - black or white ' cause racism is wrong and it's kept us nothing so long. So as you go across the country and you gotta be bigger than hate - you say, well I thought you's gonna make a different kind of speech - well you wrong - The trouble now we make a lotta speeches that don't mean nothing. Talk is cheap and all the policies running around the country talking about what they going to do for the country and Indians living on the ground and black folks living in shacks and shanties and poor white folks forgotten. We gonna get somebody who cares about folks and the do's and not talk so much and do something to make this country a better country. And believe me when I tell you let those kind of people from the dog catcher to the president - it's gonna be a better country to live in and a safer country and in our town Mr. President, we don't worry about locking your doors, 'cause we just don't tolerate no wrong doing, the mayor or the judge. We don'twe try to end welfare, not create welfare, by creating a work fair for those who need to work and can work and we try to provide training for those who are untrained - not blacks - not white's but those who are untrained and give them a chance to become trained and self-supporting. That's our job - that's your job - and you go to school and get a BS degree or a BA degree or whatever it may be - it don't mean nothing unless you want to go out here and use it for

the welfare in the business and raise those up who have been left behind. That's what it's for. If you're not gonna do that you're wasting your time - we got enough PHd's and DDD's now doing nothing. We need you to go and get some and do something for mankind. And young white's, don't worry about being called a 'nigger lover' - nothing could be any greater than loving us. (applause) because you see anybody can be a nigger you know, and niggers they didn't do nothing to nobody - low and mean - that ain't us. A lot of white niggers, so you see we can have just niggers - all of us - so don't worry about being name called. In our town we don't allow no name calling - we have an ordinance against it. (applause) That's what power can do for you.....

In our town we have an ordinance against name calling so you say well what's that for.... Well, us colored folks know how to do tricks. We had to make an ordinance in order not to say directly what it was for - we say well they have an ordinance against name calling 'who called somebody names in this city?' Uh-oh, so in order if you call somebody a "hunky" in that town it cost you \$100, we never called no 'hunkies' no way but if you call me a nigger, boy, that's \$100 for disturbing the niggers peace. (applause) so you see that's not racism - that's ordinance and the law says you can't call nobody names. And everytime you call somebody a name it's another \$100 - so if you call me a nigger 5 times thats \$500 plus the mayor's cost, but all I'm trying to show you is that we can end that kind of stuff by just having laws on the books and enforcing the laws on the books and then we don't have to worry about people sitting on the streets 'cause we have a law against loitering and just sitting around doing nothing ' cause it createsmy Mama taught me a long time ago in the Church of God in Christ that an idle mind is the devils workshop. So we try to keep our people busy - young folks - my whole staff - I'm the oldest thing on the staff. And one of my secretaries is 22 and the other one is about 40 something - black and white - I believe in that. No point in me lying to you. I don't believe white folks can do more than I can do, but I can't do no more than white folks so we do it together. Now I can't say Indians 'cause there's no indians in our.... no Mexicans there - only black inside of the town so only trouble we have there. But we

care- that's all they mean, young folks - you've got to learn to care and black folks don't be fooled - white folks ain't got no more sense than we got - ain't got no more - just got 5 - that's all they got - and we got 5. What they've done in the past they've ready to control their 5 and 4 of ours through many cases through fear, through brutality, through hate and through denial and now we ain't scared no more. Let's stand up - let's don't become in reverse now - the kind of hated the bigger man - let's level off as you do when you're flying out to Tulsa, you level off at 26,000 feet and you go straight in and let's do the same thing now with our race relationship. At last we we now have cracked the door in most places - just cracked. Let's open the door wide and let's level off and let's all walk through those doors together. What a great country this could be if we'd just do that. America is the greatest country in the world - I don't care how bad it may seem, ain't no other place in the world that's any better than America. It's up to us to make it right, 'cause we're the citizens and we know each other. It doesn't mean you got to be no coward or no uncle Tom or Aunt Jenny, just be a man or a woman 'cause can't no white folks nowhere ever think they can buy me off or get me to do things just because they're white. And ain't no black folks nowhere who can get me to do things just because you're black. I do it because it's right or don't because it's wrong. That's the way you got to stand. And you can't go to Tulsa and say one thing and in Fayette say something else. If you believe I'm lying, come on to Fayette. We got black and white working together and we mean that. Mr. President, we became mayor that listens. If you can't work with black folks - there's the door - quick get out of here! If you can't work with white folks there's the door. If you stay here you're going to work together. We're not gonna have no blacks and whites in this - we're not gonna have it. You happen to be employed by the city of Fayette and that's your job and we haven't lost a one yet. It all depends on how the man who sits at the top or the woman. What kind of rule you put on this institution will be the kind they'll carry out - it's just that simple or they all will leave. That's why we gotta get men in position to say something and mean it that's why we gotta get presidents and governors who stop for the country and all of

us and include black folks and other poor ethnic groups. Make us feel a part of as you've made me feel here today. You made me feel wanted and appreciated. What a feeling it could be all over this country if people just cared enough and you've got to spread it. Say why you can't come here and talk that way man because we pay you - that's right, that's one reason - our town is run just like your school - of a donation. Every dime we go around the country and raise we carry it to our town. We haven't raised a dime taxes since we've been there and we've got in over 8 million worth of federal money cause when I go in to speak, the money we get we use for matching funds for my folks. We've got the vocational training school there for our folks, we've got streets- ...we had no streets in the black community and very few in the white community and now we got streets almost all over our town. We had a ½ inch water line not for black folks, but for folks and now we got a 4 inch water line all over our little town. So yes, you have to pay me, but it goes ten fold to what you give me here so I want you to know it - there's no point in lying saying no I just come for the cause - I ain't come for the cause - that's a part of it, Brother President, but the cause won't pay my way out of here on that jet. Only that \$100 and something dollars will get me back to Mississippi, so we gotta be honest with our folk and we gotta tell our people and let them see what se've done and the money we raise goes - we've got a \$400,000 multi-purpose assembly building and all it cost us was about \$100,000 - money that people like you had donated and that's why that President Roberts is so loved so far, so much, because he does something with the money - a lot of folk well just raise money, just raise money can't see a blank thing to do with it. I'm saving souls, I'm helping folk, but where's the money because it's hard to go heaven broke and hungry and raggedy, mistreated by old mean policeman. You can't hardly think about going to heaven, you thinking about living, but when you're in that kind of atmosphere then you have time to level off and think about going to the great beyond as we all should think about. So men like our president and your staff and

End of belt 2 - begin belt 3)

and you and women are beginning to make, we hope, that kind of impression somewhere - we're trying to in Fayette, because just remember, we're all God's children and He created every one of us the way He wanted us to be and those of us who are fortunate enough to have good eyesight and good limbs, think about the many who was born blind born crippled, born deaf and just born here. So you see you could have been either one of those, black, Indian or Mexican, but for some reason God brought us what we are and we ain't no different from nobody else and those who are less fortunate it's our duty to create old folks homes and day care centers and health clinics and good government to include those who have been left out either physically, economically politically or socially. It's your job, young folks, to make sure that you go back home, wherever you're from, and let folks know that it's wrong to deny anybody because they're white, black or whatever color they may be. You gotta do that. You gotta do it for Brother Roberts, for yourself, and for me and for all of us 'cause that's what this country's about and you don't have to become selfish, just do all you can do. You say "what can I do" do unto others as you'd have them do unto you. It's just that simple. No whole lot just do unto others. If you don't want to be mistreated, don't mistreat nobody else. If you don't want to be denied the right to go to a movie, don't deny anybody else. If you don't want them to grow up poor and in poverty don't ... give them a good job - a good education, that's all. Go and visit the poor. Ye who are fortunate enough, as we try to do - we're trying to raise money now to buy them one of those mobile house units - the Winnebago and they cost a lot of money and all I want to do is get enough money every year to take 5 underprivileged high school boys and girls on a two week vacation - just let them see. It may not mean much to you, but there are many poor black, Indians and whites and Mexicans who never get out of their county. You'd be surprised what it might do to bring them on a two weeks tour of our country and let them see some things. Free - so we're gonna raise the money and we're gonna buy one of them - we're gonna give our young folks, those who never get nowhere, a chance. You can do little things like that, may not be big things, but it's something

- one of those five or ten may someday become the governor or the president and look what he could do - try and help so many other folks cause someone hope him. Look what President Robert's is doing for so many of us, for someone hope him. That's what it's all about. Thank you so much and may God bless you. (applause)

Well, Mayor you've talked to us in language we understand, because we feel what a man says as well as hear what he says. I'm just quite sure some of our students or faculty would like to step to a microphone and say a word or ask a question. We do have a few minutes and if you wish to do so would you do so immediately? Say what your name is and what state you're from so the Mayor might get to know you a little more personally. I know that you're deeply moved and you might want to express yourself.

My name is Dave Oglesby and I'm from Nebraska and the Lord's been speaking to me about us as a body of Christ giving what we have and I don't know about you but I feel like giving some of what I have toward that bus and however the Lord would lead you, but He's been leading me to give some money so(President Roberts speaks: "Let's just take an offering, let's do something religious) Amen! (applause) Just take it out and pass it to the end of the row and someone will pick it up and we'll give it to the mayor. Dave: Alright - Mayor Evers: Let me say this then - and the first thing we gonna come and bring is gonna be Oral Roberts I promise you we're gonna come by here with the.....(applause)

Let's have the ushers come down now at the end of the row.

Pres. Roberts: Mayor, if they come here they may never go back now just remember that. They liable to stay here when they get.....oh you'll pass through here okay. (laughter) Alright, if you have a need in your life, give of your need, give of your want to someone else's need and see what God will do in your life and this is ...the name of this bus like machine - it's not a bus really is it? It's a camper that sleeps people on it it's quite large and quite nice and we'll just load you down mayor, not only with the

love that you can hear, but the love you can carry on that jet plane. Amen! Praise the Lord!

Well where are all of our wonderful black students? How about one of our blacks stepping up and saying a word back. "Here I am" Pres. Roberts: "Wave at me I can't see - okay way up there at the top, I see you. Oh now how about that way up there at the top?" Very Good"

I'm Delores Sanders and I'm from Hobbs, New Mexico and Mayor I'd like to say that in all my years of experience I've heard many people talk, but never have I heard someone say what they meant and mean what they say. I thank you for the opportunity of being able to speak up, because we as black students really enjoyed and we are trying our best to do as you say and not to hold racial prejudices, but to be individuals. I ask your prayers and if I had the money I would give more than just a dollar to the fund, but I'd give all I could. Thank you for being here and pray for us.

Pres. Roberts: Alright, we got a black and a white on each side. Which will let the other speak first? Go ahead brother, oh alright. Say it!

My name is Sundi from Nigeria, West Africa. I've nothing to say about what the mayor just said because everything was anointed by the Holy Ghost and the Lord is speaking to me to get up here so the student body can pray for him that God will bless Him for what he's done and what he's been and that God will give him His divine protection. I was most impressed when he said he goes where I want to go without anybody God's because it seems one with Jesus majority - when we have Christ we are protected so right now the Lord is asking us as a student body to rise and pray for you for God's protection. Pres. Robert's: Can we do that a little later at the close? We want him to pray for us too. We'll be glad to do that. Is that okay? Good. Alright,

Mayor Evers, I'm Chuck Strong from Atlanta, Georgia and I'd just like to say that we really enjoyed what you have to say today. If you have any influence with Miss

Coretta King we'd like maybe for you to write her and maybe tell her about our campus and maybe she'd come out. I think that's on the agenda, and we're really excited about her, some of us from Atlanta, we're really excited about her coming out and have somebody from back home. Mayor Evers: Well she's a dear friend her husband and I was very very close and I can call her almost anytime I get ready and I certainly will. (laughter) And I certainly will call her and if could sort of ask her would she come - cause this is the kind of thing she would love because Mrs. King is such a wonderful woman such a warm woman and she would be glad to come I'm sure of that - then I'll call her as soon as I get back I promise you that. Then I'llhas she been invited already? Well, "let's say we'll work on it - I'm sure she'll come...I'll....."

My name is Mike from Pennsylvania and I've had the experience of being in a minority and I never knew what to do with the experience and I just want to thank you for recognizing the crack in the door and pushing the door wide open. Thank you.

Is there anybody from Mississippi, from the Mayors state? We have several from Mississippi..... Are you Mississippians ashamed you're from Mississippi? I can't hear your pointing. Say it! Miss Mississippi get up there will you? You are a Miss so far...

I'm from Mississippi and I'm proud of it and I just wanted to say that I came here with a lot of bad feelings because I've heard a lot of things about you, Mr Evers and most of them haven't been good because...."Well, go ahead and let's hear some of the things.....now really I think this is ...we don't know each other..go ahead now what are some of the things you worry most about?" Really I thought I've heard a lot about.....and I heard that you ran all the white people out of Fayette, but I don't know for sure - I've been there many times, I used to go there to the dentist and mostly what I want to say is I appreciate what you said and I've changed my mind about you. Mayor Evers: I just want to say that I don't know but two families that moved from Fayette - Dr. Mangum is my dear friend, he is a dentist....no I think this is good

cause rumors can destroy you, as I said before rumors.....(tape fades out)
.....she cut me all to pieces in the paper, but she's my dear friend!!!now
but you see, there to again, we just don't know each other and the more we get
to know each other then she can go back home and - what I want you to do is
come to Fayette ' I don't have to be there - just come there and see and there's
no harassment not if the governor come through there and said Evers harass white
people that come through there - remember that? "No I wasn't there." It's not
true. There was - anybody who speeds through Fayette - the speed limit is
35 miles an hour (applause & laughter) "but I think you'll find that this is what
we're gonna have to keep doing for we have to....and honey, if I was half as bad
as folks said - you know, after all my brother was killed, you've never heard where
I try to attack white people, you never heard where I even plotted against white
people. I try to get you to understand you've got to change, you've got to open your
mind up and listen and get to know for yourself, and you young people got to stop
listening to gossip so thatI'm gonna go see him and say 'listen here, I heard
about you Evers, that you's the mayoris that true? Just ask me. Just
come up to anybody you hear.....don't pre....what is it? pre-judge anyone, just go
and I know you've been.....that's why I say.....he been taught that he don't know
any better cause all you've been taught was he's a bad guy - you see me on TV lots
of times in Mississippi leading 400 or 500 people down the street marching and boycotting
stores, what they don't say is all he wants is to get his folks a job and get off the
welfare and if we spend money...and she's right ' I have a pretty rough name in Mississippi
but one thing they can't say is that I'm a crooked politician - I know what they talking
about but I produced. The thing is I don't get labeled one particular group I think
I'm like a lot of Republicans - I got a lot of good friends who are democrats; and then
to show you how crazy I am - I have a lot of respect for George Wallace. (applause)
Alright you say well why do you say that Evers, you know why? He said...we know where
George stands...and a lot of these liberals we've took all their liberal talk - they'll
stab you in the back, but George will knock you right in the face and you know that

.....and you know how to deal with that kind of a man. In that wise I respect....
I don't say I agree with him now don't get me wrong...I say I respect him because
he says the same thing in California that he says in Alabama - he says the same
thing in Mississippi that he says in Tulsa Oklahoma - That's yours and this is ours -
and you have to respect a man of that now I don't care.....for that very reason
I'm going to see him when I get back - I promised to see him - I called there once
before he was very ill and I'm going to see him - not because George Wallace is
a white - used to be what I considered a racist, but because God made him and some-
times just going can change him and I'm gonna go down there and let him know that
regardless of what he's done against my folks that God is stronger than he is - I'm
gonna go down and sit down and talk to him - if he don't listen to me then he's just
another one of them mean folks - at least I'm gonna try.

I'm from Mississippi, from Jackson and I just want to say I wouldn't want to live in
any other state in the U.S. than Mississippi. "Bless you, do you live near...."

Yes - I live near you. "Don't say that I'll lose face - you mean you live near my
wife's home." Yeah. "They call me the Bobby Kennedy type you know - Bobby lived
in Washington and got relatives in New York, so they claim I live in Jackson and got
relatives in Fayette just to be mayor - that's not true. To clear it up - I live
both places so that's the way we've been taught. Thank you darling."

I'm from Ohio and I'd like to say that I think your speech is really good and you know
it was really right on and I would like to say something = it's not directed at your
speech, but at a situation - Whenever people start talking about blacks and whites
and about whites hating the blacks - like I shouldn't take it so personally but I
do - and I feel like I'm being pointed at and I don't like to be called a white I
like to be considered a person and I've never hated anybody - I mean I've hated people -
but, "not any color huh?" Well, yeah, but you know I take it personally and I think
a lot of people feel that way they don't like to be called you know, just cause they're
born with white skin or black skin. "I agree and I have to agree to it but it just so

happens that in our country we are distinguished right now - I hope young people like you change that - you are either considered a white person, an indian, a Mexican - so we do.....and I agree that we shouldn't have to do that, but until we become Americans - you can just say Jane or John or Job we just have to - - we're working at that but right now you still were distinguished even what bothers me most is the newspapers - The newspapers - if a young white boy rapes a young white girl - if there's a young John Doe raped a Susanne - but if a black rapes somebody - there's a black boy rapes a white girl. Well that's not so there you go. And then for instances I had trouble with UPI and AP they referred to me as the black mayor of Fayette and my question then was ' do you say the white mayor of Chicago or the white mayor of New York or the white mayor of Tulsa - I just had to be the Mayor of Fayette and the white mayor of Jackson and the white mayor of Hattiesburg? No. So I feel the same and I agree with you - we shouldn't be referred to as black or white, but just as Charles and John and Jane and Helen and whatever the case may be - we have to keep working at it.

My name is Carolyn Carver and I'm from Glenn Allen Mississippi and I enjoyed your speech too. "You want' to come on back home now, we don't want to lose you'all up here, now don't you'all get carried away here in Oklahoma." Pres. Roberts: We have only one name that is allowed by the honor code and that is "brother" and Bro. Evers - we love you. We would like to thank the student body for your prayers and for \$800.00 and before we go let's have a word of prayer cause I just want to thank the Lord for this time. Jesus we come before you and we've seen again how that if we just step out on faith how you can answer prayers and we just thank you for this money and just ask that this money will be used for the glory in your Name. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.

Roberts: Would you pray for us Mayor Evers?

Evers: Thank you very much - I'm really overwhelmed - You president ask me to do something that I've never been asked to do - I'm serious, but he asked me would I pray

for us here - let me say this as I do - I was brought up in the Church of God in Christ and we do pray, we do pray at home, but I've had family prayers - we do it every morning so I guess the same prayer we do there can do good here. Would you bow your heads, please. Heavenly Father, I want to thank Thee for giving me the courage first to accept this kind of a challenge and I want to thank Thee for having these kind of young people who believe that we can change and will change. I want to thank Thee for giving black folks and the young whites - to help them to get to know each other better - to work together and help us to become more willing to share the things that Thou hast put here for us. Continue to protect us and guide us and please, Father, end the hate, end the denial and give those of us who've been left out so long a chance to join those who've been inside. And for those who've been denied and have no hope give them hope and give our white brothers and white sisters to understand that you created all of us in Thy own image. We ask in Jesus Name and for Christ's sake. Amen.