Mountains of Assurance for Molehills of Doubts

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[0:00] my people. I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession, for I am the Lord.

Lord God, we praise your holy name for your faithful word, for the promises you bring us in this morning as we look at your word and see the mountains of assurance you've provided for us.

We bless your holy name for being so good. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You can be seated, and we'll dismiss our kids to children's ministry. And if you'll open your Bibles to the book of Exodus chapter 6.

Today is going to be a very visual sermon. There's a lot of complex data involved in this particular message, so I invite you to pay close attention to the screen as I go through the message and be especially appreciative that I dipped all the way back into MS Paint 1990 for the Comic Sans font that you will enjoy this morning. It's a daring choice. So there's a very big portion of scripture that we're going to cover this morning, and I do want you to be able to kind of see where we are and how we're going to navigate through it. We're going to be in Exodus 5, verse 20, all the way through Exodus 6, verse 30. And the one thing I want you to see in this kind of expansive text is just that the whole thing is bookended by doubt. We have in chapter 5 and verse 20 the peoples revolting and doubting the whole plan. We have Moses following up their doubts with doubts of his own, and then in chapter 6 we get a section of God's assurance, but then later we see that there is more doubts. We see in verse 12, Moses said to the Lord, behold the people of Israel have not listened to me. How shall Pharaoh listen to me? I skipped one in verse 9. The people are unable to hear because of their broken spirits, it says. And then in verse 14 through 27 we seem to have this genealogy dropped out of nowhere into the text, and we'll explain why that's there and what we're supposed to do with that. But then at the end you see Moses still doubting. He says, you know, Moses said to the

Lord at the very end of the chapter, behold I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me? So he's got this big section of scripture, and you've got these little bits of doubt, and everything else happening in that particular section of scripture are God's promises. And so that's where I get the title, Mountains of Assurance from Mole Hills of Doubt. I'm sure that there are untold number of doubts in this room. You know why I'm sure of that? As I've been reading through this passage, I've just asked the Lord, God, where am I doubting you? Like, where am I doubting you? And wouldn't you know it? Like, answers came almost immediately. Well, what about this? And what about here? And so on and so forth. And I'm a very average person, so I'm assuming that you're like me. And you may not even know that there are these little doubts wedged in your life in which you're just simply not trusting God to do what he said he would do, and so on and so forth. I have honestly things in my life that the Lord has shown me over the last few weeks that are sort of like, okay, I am not expressing true faith in you in this area. And I need to learn how to trust you more clearly in this particular area.

[3:42] And I'm sure that that's true for you as well. But today, I don't want to talk about that. I want to talk about the massive mountains of assurance that God provides. Because how could I guess what your little doubt is? But I can tell you that whatever your doubt is in comparison to the assurance God offers, you literally are the molehill in this, and God is the mountain. Now, while we're in this big section of text, I do want to cover one piece that might have perplexed you, especially when you started reading your Bible. Maybe to this day, you still wonder about this.

Let's talk about genealogies for a minute. Because as we can see in that slide, that whole section there, the whole purple section there, that's a genealogy, where you get the typical begats and sons of and so on and so forth. Now, there's 25 of these in the Bible, give or take. And I think when the average Christian gets to one of these sections, they're like, well, what am I supposed to do with this? What is this here for? And how am I supposed to respond in my quiet time when I get to a whole begat section? Let's just cover that, because it's in our text. Let's just talk about how do you handle a genealogy? First thing to understand, and we'll use this outline throughout this message and also next week's, is God communicates his assurance to doubting people through three categories. And you could summarize those three categories as I am, statements about who he is, I will, statements about promises, things he will do, and I have, statements about his past faithfulness. So another way to think about this would be God gives us assurance in three categories. Number one, his personality, where he says, this is what I'm like. Number two, past performances, this is what I've done. And number three, promises, this is what I will do. So what does a genealogy have to do with all that? Well, a genealogy is, amongst other things, in that category of God's past faithfulness. It's showing you the past faithfulness of God. One day, if I ever get the time to do it, I'd love to write a little book called

Brushstroke Theology. And what Brushstroke Theology would be about is about how God assembles seemingly tiny things to tell a much bigger story, a story that you and I would never see coming in a million years if we were just paying attention to the little brushstrokes. And I've chosen Van Gogh's painting Cafe at Night here for a couple reasons. First of all, not a lot of people know that this is most likely Van Gogh's intentional or unintentional portrayal of the Lord's Table. So what you've got here is a very European recapitulation, if you will, of the Lord's Table scene, where you've got Jesus standing in the white, serving 11 disciples seated. And you've got that menacing dark black figure there in the doorway.

That's Judas. And then, of course, the window behind Jesus, the panes. You can't see it at this scale, but the pane is in a cross shape. And so it's just a cool painting. I've had this in my house over the years. And I love this painting for that sort of intentional or unintentional nod to this central theme in scripture, which is the Lord's Table. But I also chose this painting because it was just one of the top of my head that I knew you could see the brushstrokes, even back there. Every one of those little cobblestones is a brushstroke. What you do when you paint, if you've not painted, is you just go one brushstroke at a time until the painting is completed. And I think when it comes to just understanding God's purposes in the world, in history, and even in your life, the thing you need to understand is that he is painstakingly, carefully, with all perfect wisdom and skill, assembling a picture that you're a part of, but you're not the main focus of. God means to display his own glory in all of the world. And he assembles, honestly, countless tiny little brushstrokes and tells a story with those brushstrokes. So what you should do when you're reading a genealogy, one thing you should do is you should just be like, I don't know who Nadab is, but he's brushstroke.

He's a part of God's plan to tell a story that is much bigger than any one person. In fact, I think I did that on the slide here. I actually found some of these guys. If you can go to the next slide.

See, that's, I don't know who Merari is, but that's his stroke right there. Yeah. I found some [8:25] of the guys in our genealogy. I just take the microscope, but I found them. I actually wrote a little prayer a while back that just would be something that a Christian could put in their Bible. And I don't know how useful this is because there's not that many genealogies, but if you come to a genealogy in your Bible, this is what you could respond to the Lord with. You could say this, Lord, you knit each one of these people together in their mother's wombs cell by cell. You knew every hair on their head. You knew every thought in their head. You knew their goings out and their comings in. These people were without exception sinners, and by nature wanderers going their own way. And yet in a level of orchestration that goes beyond my ability to conceive, you providentially directed their lives in such a way as to accomplish your particular purpose and tell your particular story. The names on this list are like brushstrokes that you have carefully laid down throughout the centuries on the canvas of history in order to show the world that you are God. So what do we do with the genealogy? Well, that's what we do. We acknowledge that God is a master craftsman who uses the ink of reality, the canvas of history, to portray a story that only he can tell, and only he can tell because only he is sovereign and providentially able to direct all things to accomplish his perfect will. So when I say that this section of scripture is all about assurance. I want to say that even the genealogy is a kind of assurance. That when the average Christian looks at that, they can say, I don't know who any of these people are. And then you remember, God knew, and he knew everything about them. And some of them obeyed him, and some of them disobeyed him, and all of them sinned.

All of them were willful and went their own way. And God, in a way that we can't even conceive, directs the course of history to a particular outcome so that he can be seen by all as the glorious God that he is. So let's keep in this category. We're talking about past performance stuff.

We're talking about one of the ways that God displays his assurance to us is to talk about his past performance. Let's stay in that category and go back to verses two through eight to look at the main section of our text. This is where God responds to Moses after Moses provides another objection, another concern, another doubt. This is what God says beginning in verse two.

God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, as God Almighty. But by my name of the Lord, I did not make myself known to them.

We will get into that at the end of the message, what he's talking about there. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord.

[11:56] Lord, I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord." Now, you can see all three categories of God's assurance. Do you remember what they are?

This is who I am. This is what I've done. This is what I will do. You can see all three of those categories in this section of Scripture. You see seven I will statements. Interestingly enough, when God offers—I've got to be careful with my rabbit trails this sermon. There's a lot going on here—but when God offers a covenantal assurance to Abraham, here to Moses, and then again in Jeremiah 31 for the new covenant, each time he offers seven I will statements. He offers this perfect I will. I will, I will, I will. So we see the I will promises here. We also see several references to God's nature. This is the I am statements. We see a number of those in this passage. But we're going to focus today mostly on the references to God's past faithfulness. Several I have in the past are several kinds of statements like that in this passage. Now, I said a moment ago that there are 25 genealogies in the Bible, give or take. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a genealogy.

It's like a little mini genealogy. It's just a couple centuries. But it is a genealogy. And what God is doing when he uses this phrase is the same thing he's doing when he uses the big one. He's demonstrating his masterful execution of his providential will in actual people over the course of history. And if you count the occurrences of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when those three names appear together, you're into like hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times. This phrase is used repeatedly throughout the scriptures. And it's almost always used as a means of providing assurance.

For instance, in first Kings 18, this is the passage where Elijah is doing the showdown with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. How does Elijah pray when he asks the Lord to consume the offering?

He recites this formula. It's not because it's a magic formula, but because it's an emphasis on God's faithfulness. He says, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, let it be known this day that you are God and that I am your servant and I have done all these things according to your word.

[14:54] Father, this is what you'll see throughout the Bible when this phrase, these three names appear. God is invoking his past faithfulness through the lives of these three very imperfect men.

In the call to worship this morning, we read Psalm 105, which again is pretty representative of this idea. Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he's uttered. O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones, he is the Lord our God.

His judgments are on all the earth. So you have these over and over and over again in the Bible. When you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob referenced, it's God saying, remember what I've done.

But in a sense, it's also remember what I'm doing. The invocation of these three names comes, some surprises develop in the New Testament, okay? And I want to talk to you about the surprises we see in the New Testament related to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The first one is something that Jesus discloses in Mark 12, who's arguing with the Sadducees, and the Sadducees don't believe in the resurrection. And Jesus is answering some of their dumb questions that are all sort of frame-ups and so on. And then at the end of this discourse that Jesus offers, he says, by the way, you guys are wrong about the resurrection not being a thing. And he says this. This is in Mark 12. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Firstly, he says, firstly, when God says, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he isn't saying, I was their God. He's saying, I am their God. And Jesus says, you know, God is not the, he is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Now, theologically, I guess this shouldn't surprise any of us. When God says, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and not, I was the God. One of the things to just bear in mind, and I need to do a podcast on this. This is a very interesting topic, is that when God is issuing these promises to Moses, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those guys are in God's presence. And he's actually, he's actually fulfilling his promises to these three men in working through history. If God has saved you, one of the, I'm sure, many things that happened in heaven was he looked over at Abraham and said, you have another son. My promise in Genesis 12 is true.

In fact, Jesus actually talks about Abraham in heaven kind of a lot relative to the topic. And he talks about Abraham presiding over a feast in heaven. This idea that God is still fulfilling his promises to Abraham and is kind of nodding to Abraham in the fulfillment of those promises, it's a very interesting idea to me. It's a very interesting idea that as he secures his bride, the church, and builds out his people to be a blessing to all the nations, Abraham's there. And he's like, you're fulfilling your promise to me. So when God is assuring Moses, I will do this for the sake of Abraham, he's looking at Abraham in some sense. It's kind of a miraculous thing. Now the other surprise is more surprising. And that is, is that we find out that the true sons of Abraham in the Bible are not ethnic. This begins to be displayed in the book of John. In John chapter 1, verse 9, it says, the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

[18:49] But to all who did receive him and who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God. So you've got this category in this section of scripture where he came unto his own, and that's an ethnic category, right? He came unto the Jews. But then in the section following that, he talks about how those folks didn't believe in me, but here's another category.

But to all who did receive me and who believed, all did receive him and who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God. So you've got two kinds of belonging in this John passage.

You've got an ethnic belonging and you've got a spiritual belonging. See, one group has Abraham's genes and the other has Abraham's faith. And what you see in the New Testament that's surprising is that Abraham's descendants are those who have his faith, not his genes. And you'll see this in a for not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. Not all who are children of Abraham are his offspring. And then in Galatians 3, it becomes even, that was Romans 9, Galatians 3 says, so then the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith.

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have been put onto Christ.

And there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male or female. For you are all one in Christ. And verse 29 is the kicker. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring. Heirs according to the promise. So let's put these two things together.

Third, we're still talking about God's past faithfulness, but in some ways his past [20:53]faithfulness is encroached very much so into our present and very much so into kind of what God's going to do in the future. And what we're seeing here is that when God says, I have been faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he's saying, that's why I'm going to be faithful to you. When God cares for you, when he saves you, when he cares for you, when he sanctifies you, when he leads you out of this or that burden, out of this or that slavery, out of this or that life-dominating sin, he is making an installation on a promise he made to a man thousands and thousands and thousands of years ago in which he said, leave your father's household and go to the place I will show you, and behold, I will make you a great nation. You're part of a promise that was made thousands and thousands and thousands of years ago. And the thing is, is that we see in the Exodus, the story is, is that it's all about this ethnic people, and then we have to extrapolate that out and understand that like the story of being freed from a particular place and a particular tyrant and a particular burden to go to another particular place and so on, that story is just a foreshadowing. It's just a whisper. It's just a shadow of a much bigger story of deliverance that God is executing for all those in Christ.

> And you're not just freed from a tyrant that lives in a particular place. You're freed from the tyranny of death itself, the book of Hebrews says. You're subject to lifelong slavery to death and the fear of death and so on and so forth. And it's just, it's just glorious. You know, sometimes when, when a little kid will come after, after children's ministry and they'll show me the painting, the thing they drew, and I have to be careful, I have to be diplomatic and be like, you know, well, tell me about your picture. My mom taught me that. You don't say, oh, is that a car? Because a lot of times it's not a car. And so you say, well, tell me about your picture. And then they tell you what it is. And then you can be like, yeah, that's great. If we went in there and found the best, there's a few kids that are especially good at drawing, we said, like, draw me a horse. And they would draw a horse and you would know it's a horse. They might call it a hosey, you know, but you would know. But it's not even close, right? Friends, I worked for two weeks on this message to just celebrate the glory of God. And my horse is terrible. Like, the goodness of God is so glorious and big that 40 hours of study and writing is but a stick figure compared to the glorious thing that is represented in this text. So this idea that we are part of what God has done, we're still, we're a payment on a promise made thousands of thousands of years ago. That makes me want to trust God. I want to show you something else in this text that I found to be stunning.

And that's kind of related to the architecture of the text itself. This would still be kind of in that category of things God has done. The other day, I noticed that Brett Weinstein, who is an evolutionary biologist, conceded, and I don't remember this concession being made by someone so prominent so far. But he's a prominent evolutionary biologist. And he conceded that the field of intelligent design is on the cutting edge of science. And that it has raised questions that evolutionists have yet been unable to answer. And he's referring specifically to Stephen Meyer, who did the Joe Rogan show, if you're interested in hearing Stephen Meyer. He's a Christian scientist who has through scientific method, kind of observed, especially in the field of biology, that the world is just built on an irreducible complexity. It's just, it's just impossible for this to have mutated into being, is sort of his argument. And Brett Weinstein, who I think has a fair amount of integrity, has acknowledged as an evolutionary biologist, yeah, intelligent design, it's, it's posing questions that we don't have the capacity to answer with the evolutionary model. So this idea of intelligent design, this idea of irreducible complexity, it's, it's evidence for God, right? People don't understand that the Bible has all sorts of evidences of intelligent design. And I want to try to show you one of those today. And it won't take long, but just bear with me, because I'm sketching a stick figure of a horse right here, okay? We're just going to take the text that we've been looking at this morning. We'll go from Exodus 6, 2 through verse 30. I just want to show you some things that are, that are there that you wouldn't necessarily notice. This is, this is what we would call a chiastic structure. So could you go to the, okay, so let's look at this pattern. I tried to break this down. Let's look at this pattern. Maybe just take a moment to look, like what's going on here? What do you see? So what, what we see here, let's, let's go to the next slide. Now you see the numbers.

So it's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. And then the numbers go back down again from six to one. Okay. Just, just breaking some thoughts into your brain to kind of show you the text. All right, let's go to the next verse or the next, next slide. So this passage of scripture we've been looking at has what's known as a chiastic structure or introverted parallels, an introverted parallel where you have six statements made and then a central statement.

And then those six statements are remade again in reverse order. Now this is, this is in a book.

[27:00] Remember, one of the hard things about Exodus is you got to remember it's the second book of the Bible. This is a very old book. So what we have is a chiastic structure of inverted parallelism in a book that is thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of years old.

Maybe that was too many thousands. I'm excited. So here's, here are the statements that appear in, in first a progressive order. And then that order appears again in a mirrored opposite coming back the other way. So you have in one verse, God spoke. Actually, I wrote these down. So, so verse two, God spoke. In verse nine, Moses spoke. In verse two, I am the Lord. In verse eight, I am the Lord. In verse three, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob. In verse three, but by the name of the Lord. In verse seven, and you shall know that I am the Lord. In verse four, I also established my covenant with them. In verse seven, I will take you to be my people.

In verse five, I heard the groaning of the people whom the Egyptians hold as slaves. And then in verse six, I will bring you out of the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from slavery. And what we've got in the middle is this central statement. And when you see this in the center of a thing, these chiasms appear all over the Bible and they are evidence of intelligent design.

These don't happen by accident. Not many of them anyway. You see the central statement. It's sandwiched in between all the toppings of the salad or the sandwich. And the central statement is God saying, I am the Lord. I am the Lord. Now, this is how you would actually look at this graphically.

Next one. This is really what the Bible is full of. The Bible is full of little temples leading you into the Holy of Holies. And I could show you passage after passage after passage where this shape shows up in the Bible and in a document thousands and thousands and thousands. I'm just going to say more thousands of years old. So why do I share that with you? Well, because we're talking about our little molehills of doubt. And we're saying, you know, guys, there is a mountain of reasons to trust in the Lord. We could look at brushstroke theology, God's perfect use of imperfect people throughout history to paint his picture. The way that God is still fulfilling promises he made to Abraham so many years ago. Your inclusion in those promises by faith in Christ. The masterful orchestration of God, not only in history, but in the actual biblical text. He's doing all of this incredible design work in the text that most of us would never even know about. And yeah, I've got doubts.

[30:02] But man, compared to what God is saying to me in the word of God, my doubts are not very impressive.

Now let's close by looking back at verse two. God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob as God Almighty. But by my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them. What does he mean there? He never told them that his name was Yahweh. When you see in the English Bible, the Lord, and it's usually all caps, that's a reference to this special name that God disclosed to Moses at the burning bush. You can go back and listen to Dove's message on that particular topic. And what you've got here is that God reveals a new name when he is about to do a new thing with his people. Now the name that he was known by before to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob was El Shaddai. And there's a really good chance that that name means the God of the mountains, which makes a lot of sense given what they were called to do and where they were called to go and so on and so forth. And even a call back to Eden, which was a mountaintop. So you've got this early name, El Shaddai, and it's I'm the God of the mountains. Okay. And then we get to the burning bush and Moses says, well, who should I tell people that you are? And he says, well, you tell them that

I'm Yahweh, which means I am. Now what we need to be clear about is what's not happening here is God's not saying like some people call me Chuck and some people call me Charles.

Like these are not names of equal importance. What he's doing as he's moving through history is he's revealing himself more and more fully. I remember how we talked about henotheism and this idea that early on people thought maybe that God was just like one of the gods and, you know, maybe he was more important, maybe not. But God's progressively revealing himself and he reveals this name Yahweh, he's like, no, this is, I am. I have no starting point. I simply am. And what we're seeing is, is that as God moves through history, he's giving us more and more clarity about his nature.

And that all terminates when we get the final name of God. What's the final name of God? Let me read, let me read the text to you. Hebrews 1, long ago, at many times, in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, he's spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He's the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. And after making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Final name for God is Jesus Christ. The fullest revelation, the fullest picture of who God is, going from, I'm the God of the mountains to, I'm the God who died on Golgotha. I'm the God of the cross. And when the new believers started saying, the new Jewish believers started saying, Yeshua is Lord, they were saying, Jesus is Yahweh. [33:24] That's what they were saying. Jesus is Yahweh. The fullest revelation of who God is, came when Jesus came, lived a perfect life, and offered himself as a payment for your sins and my sins, with Abraham in his mind. Not only Abraham in his mind, of course, but Abraham in his mind. A promise made all the way back in Genesis 12 fulfilled when Jesus offered himself as a payment for those whom God would save.

The final revelation, the final name, Jesus Christ. And I'll leave you with what Jesus says, another crazy Abraham reference that Jesus makes in John 8, 55. Listen to this simple verse.

Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad. Let me pray. Father God, you are amazing. We celebrate you, not only who you are, but that you would care enough to communicate to us who you are. Thank you, Lord, for being our God, for teaching us who you are. And for in your perfect time, a time of fulfillment to reveal Jesus Christ to the world as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, in whom, for whom, by whom all things exist, who sustains the world and the universe by the word of his power.

And after making purification for sin, sat down at the right hand of the Father. So, Lord, now as we turn to observing the table, would you fill our hearts full of faith?

May we partake of this table celebrating that you are so good. May we taste and see in this table that the Lord is good. Amen. Well, I wanted that graphic up there just to stick that in your mind a little bit, but let me read from 1 Corinthians 11 and we'll partake together.

[35:32] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. We see some visitors here this morning. You're more than welcome. We're so glad that you're here, and we partake in communion every single week, and we would encourage you, if you're a follower of Jesus, to come and partake in this table together as really a sign of God's amazing work that he's unified brothers and sisters who maybe don't even know each other yet. So, come and partake in this table. As you do, when you go sit down, remember the three assurances. I am, I will, and I have. All of that is represented at this table, so come and partake.

Thank you. skill skill