

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Easter A
April 9, 2023
Matthew 28:1-10; Lord's Prayer Conclusion

Amen!

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

What does this mean? [Or, What is meant by the word Amen?]

This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen means "yes, yes, it shall be so."

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!]

What a glorious day! The Holy Spirit has gathered us here to celebrate the greatest event in the history of the world: the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what makes our celebration so joyous is that it is a day of absolute certainty. Certainty that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. Certainty that He bore *our* sins on the cross. Certainty that He was laid in the tomb. Certainty that He rose from the dead. Certainty that He "lives and reigns to all eternity." Certainty that He is really with us this morning, especially in the bread and wine of His Holy Supper. Certainty that He will return in glory. Certainty that He forgives us all our sins. And certainty that God hears our prayers and answers them.

But such was most certainly *not* the way it was that first Easter morning. For Mary and the other Mary were certain that when they went to the tomb, they would find soldiers guarding it. They were certain they would find a rock in their way. They were certain that if the rock were moved, they would find Jesus lying inside the tomb, as dead as He was when He was buried.

But all their certainties were turned on their head when they saw the rock rolled away from the entrance to the tomb and an angel sitting on it. His message didn't seem to help much, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay." (Matt. 28:5-6). Even then, they were uncertain. After all, all they had was the angel's word and an empty tomb. While it would certainly be wonderful if it were true, how could they be sure? And when they were told, "Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." (Matt. 28:7). Yes, he had told them. Yet, this was too good to be true. Would they really see Him again? Still, uncertain as they were about Jesus being alive, "they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples." (Matt. 28:8).

As they went, all they could be certain of was what they had seen and heard, even if they didn't understand it. Then, Jesus met them and said, "'Greetings!' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.'" (Matt. 28:9-10). Now they were certain. Jesus was risen from the dead just as the angel had said. They were certain that Jesus was alive.

This was all the best of news. Still, there was more to it. What did it all mean? You see, without the resurrection, Jesus' death is only a death; but with His resurrection, Jesus' death is a death-destroying death and a life-giving death. For when Jesus rose from the dead, He declared to all that His Father had accepted His death on the cross as the final sacrifice for sin. By His resurrection, He demonstrated to all that He had overcome death and defeated it. This is the glory of Easter! Jesus has defeated sin, Satan, and death for us. We need not fear to stand before Almighty God, in this life or in the life to come. Alleluia!

And that's why we rejoice today. That's why the "Alleluia" sound forth. "Praise the Lord!" Praise the Lord for His Passion and saving death! Praise the Lord for His resurrection! Praise the Lord for His forgiveness! Alleluia! No other word seems to do.

And yet, there is another word appropriate for our Easter celebration. It's a word that flows only from Christ's resurrection and only from God-given faith, for only such faith clings to God's promises. And that word is "Amen." It concludes the prayer our living Lord has taught us to pray: For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

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This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen means "yes, yes, it shall be so."

Indeed, "Amen" is a great Easter word. We say this word at the end of prayers because it expresses our "firm assurance that God will grant our Petitions," especially the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer. James tells us, "Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1:6-8). When we pray we can, should, and must be absolutely certain that God hears our prayers and answers them.

Like Mary, the basis for our certainty does not lie within ourselves. We are too fickle. Too often we are "like a wave of the sea." In fact, we really aren't sure of much at all, except maybe death and taxes.

No, our certainty lies in the certainty of the resurrection of our Lord. Jesus Christ has redeemed us by His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. By His suffering at the hands of sinful men, by His death on the cross of Calvary, He offered Himself as the perfect and final sacrifice for the sins of the world. His resurrection shows that His Father accepted that death as full payment for our debt of sin. His resurrection declares to us that He has overcome death and that we too shall rise again, for those who are baptized into Christ's death are also baptized into His resurrection (Rom. 6:3-11). So we know for certain that His resurrection is for us, each of us. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we too are certain of

rising to life after death. Because of Jesus' resurrection we have life even now after being "dead in trespasses and sins."

And because we have a Savior who "lives and reigns to all eternity," we are certain that our heavenly Father loves us and cares for us. We are certain that He hears us for Jesus' sake. You see, we do not pray alone, for Jesus is alive and He intercedes for us. It is through Jesus alone, a living Jesus, that we can approach God's "throne of grace" at all. Thus, praying in His Name and as He has taught us, we pray, "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever." It is through Jesus alone that we can ascribe to God the Father what's rightfully His. It's His kingdom, not ours. It's His power. And it's His glory. It all belongs to Him, not us. And it belongs to Him forever.

And with Jesus as our older brother, God desires to give those to us as well. That's why we conclude such a prayer with our heartfelt "Amen!" For so doing declares that we are certain that God will not only hear our prayer, but that the answer will be a resounding "yes." "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." (2 Cor. 1:20).

Thus you have an opportunity to say "Amen" throughout the liturgy - after the invocation, after absolution, after pastoral greetings and blessings, after prayers, after being dismissed from the Holy Communion, after receiving the Lord's blessing at the end of the service. It's not just a word of agreement. It's a word of certainty that what has just been said is or will certainly be done. It is a word of faith and confidence and it should be spoken boldly.

In Christ's death and resurrection we are declared righteous in God's sight. So "Amen" is a great word for Easter. It expresses God's desire that we should live with Him because of Jesus' death and resurrection. It expresses our confidence that God hears us for the sake of our living Lord, Savior, and King Jesus Christ.

And because He is risen we are certain that God hears our prayers and that we shall live with Him forever. "Yea, yea, it shall be so." Now and always.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!] Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener