

"God's Amen "  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11

April 5, 20015

Easter Sunday (*Festival service*)

A long time ago, I was a pastor for a deaf congregation in Wisconsin. One year the time change occurred on Easter weekend. I remember having a great Easter worship service. Near the end, the door opened in the back and a deaf woman and her hearing husband came in. They had forgotten to change their clocks. I was pronouncing the blessing and they came into the sanctuary just in time to hear/see the word amen/AMEN. They had missed everything.

In a sense though, we could say that Easter is like one big AMEN, if we truly understand what that word means. Many think AMEN means "end". We say AMEN when our prayer is over and finished. If that's right, then many people would say that Easter is not like an AMEN. Many people think that Easter is a one day celebration, separate unto itself. It is a day for Easter eggs and candy. It used to be a day for new fancy Easter clothes and church for most people. Easter is still a day for families to meet for Easter dinner. If that is the meaning for Easter, then Easter is not an end for any process.

But some people – religious people – know that that the Church has remembered special time before Easter. Some people know about Lent – the 40 days before Easter. Some people even know about last week – Holy Week with PALM Sunday, MAUNDY Thursday, and Good Friday. Our church and many other churches had special worship services for Lent and for Holy Week. If you missed out on those services and only came for Easter, we are glad that you came today and happy that you are here to hear the Easter message, but you have missed a lot. You have missed a very important message.

Before this day of Easter, we celebrated Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey just last week on Palm Sunday. We saw Jesus washing His disciples' feet and giving them a special meal which we will receive ourselves today. We saw Jesus praying intensely in the garden. We saw the

injustice as Jesus stood trial before the Jewish council and before Pontius Pilate. We saw Jesus' terrible suffering and horrific death on a cross. Does that mean Easter is an AMEN for this story – merely a happy ending for a sad story? Yes, but Easter is so much more than that.

What does it all mean? When we consider Jesus' death last Friday and all deaths that occur, that forces us to remember what the true and most important problem for humanity is. It is not politics, economics, climate change, or medicine. Those are important problems but the chief problem is death. We can change some of those other problems, but we can't change death. We can ignore death or delay death, but we cannot stop death.

The Word of God tells us that death is here because of sin. Sin is (means) our rebellion against the God who created us and requires certain behavior of us. We cannot change or stop our sin, either. We are born in sin and are by nature sinful. We are stuck in problems that we cannot control or change.

But God proposes a change – a way to save us both from sin and death. This is the gospel – the good news that Paul is talking about in our text. Paul had been preaching good news about life's chief problems to the people in CORINTH. The people had received that good news, were standing (depend) in that good news, and saved by (because of) that good news. But what IS that good news?

Paul says the first and most important part of that good news is that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures." We meditated about that message during the time of Lent and especially during Holy Week. Why is it so important? If Jesus did not die for our sins, then Easter means nothing for us. It might be a happy day for one man – Jesus Christ – rising from the dead. But if still have our sins, then we will stay dead in our graves and, on the Last Day, in hell.

But Jesus DID die for our sins. The Scriptures had prophesied this. Jesus took our sins from us and brought them to the cross. Jesus on the cross endured the punishment for us and our sins – and not only our sins, but for the sins of all people who ever lived. Jesus accepted death and died

on the cross for us who had deserved death. On the cross, Jesus took away the power of death to ever hurt us and the power of the grave to ever hold us. Jesus died to gain forgiveness for us, overcome death and the grave for us, and to give new life to us – a life that never ends.

But that's not all. Paul says that "He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures". If Jesus said, "It is finished" on the cross and that meant all His work to save us was completed, then why do we need Easter? Paul thought that Jesus' resurrection was important. He gives a list of over 500 people who saw Jesus alive after His resurrection. Paul wants people to know that Jesus resurrection was a historical fact. Why? What does Jesus resurrection really mean?

Jesus' resurrection is the true AMEN to Holy Week and Good Friday. But AMEN does not mean "the end". Remember your confirmation instruction on the Lord's Prayer where it says, "Amen, mean means 'yes, yes, it shall be so.'" If Jesus had died and remained dead, could we know that our sins are forgiven for sure? If Jesus remained in the grave and did not rise, could we be (feel) sure that we will leave our graves and rise to eternal life? There would be too many doubts, too many fears, too much skepticism and disbelief.

But Easter is the "amen" for Good Friday. All of our sins fully and forever forgiven by Jesus' death on the cross? Jesus' resurrection says, "AMEN – yes, it shall be so." A new life here on earth with God, enjoying His care and blessing by Jesus' death on the cross? Jesus' resurrection says, "AMEN – yes, it shall be so." Our own resurrection from the grave to life and resurrection for our family, friends, and all people trusting in Jesus by Jesus' death on the cross? Jesus' resurrection says, "AMEN – yes, it shall be so." Eternal life with our Lord in the place He has prepared for us in His Father's house by Jesus' death on the cross? Jesus' resurrection says, "AMEN – yes, it shall be so."

You have forgiveness. You have new life. You have resurrection. You have eternal life. Jesus' death on Good Friday earns all those things for you. Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday

puts the AMEN on all those things – Yes, yes, it shall be so! So, we rejoice today. We live every day with joy. We eagerly anticipate our resurrection and eternal life in eternal joy. For Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed, Allelulia!) And AMEN – yes, yes, it shall be so!