

God's Great Amen!

Easter Sunday

March 27, 2016

*For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.
That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.*
2 Corinthians 1:20 (ESV)

There is at least one word in the Bible that is the same word carried over from the Hebrew into the Greek language, and then the same carried over from the Greek into the English language. Maybe there is more than just this one word but this word is of utmost importance. Any idea of what word that is – that which is the same in Hebrew, Greek and English? Amen!

In the original Hebrew it was a word which was never to be uttered lightly. It was a formal, solemn, “I agree,” or “I affirm!” And it was always in the context of God, or YAHWEH in the Hebrew, which too was a word never to be uttered lightly. Most simply “Amen” means a very bold and earnest Yes for us addressing God.

This morning we are celebrating God’s Great Amen to us. Actually our Call to Worship this morning says it all!

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. 2 Corinthians 1:20 (ESV)

Easter is the celebration of God’s great Yes to us, through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the fulfillment of all His promises which He put into motion before the world began. Before His creating the first two human beings, Adam and Eve.

Leading up to Easter we have been working through the *Letter to the Hebrews*. We have come to realize that it is a difficult book to follow. But the *Letter to the Hebrews* is all about God’s great Amen! The book or the letter actually reaches its climax near the middle of the book where certain themes are repeated over and over, highlighting God’s great Amen to us. This morning we are at the climax of that letter, beginning in Hebrews 9:11

¹¹ *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*

¹³ *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

¹⁵ *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*

¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸ Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.**

²³ Thus it was necessary for the **copies** of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Hebrews 9:11-28 (ESV)

⁵ Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"

⁸ When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...

¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶ "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds."

¹⁷ then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin [needed].

Hebrews 10:5-10, 15-18 (ESV)

Do I get an Amen? Sin has already been dealt with, once and for all! Jesus' last words here on earth before his death on the cross, recorded in the Gospel of John, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

God's great plan of redemption that he set into place before the world even began had come to completion in Jesus' death on the cross. Many people today question why Jesus died on the cross and whether or not he even had to die on the cross. The answer is a resounding yes! Amen! You see, God takes all of our sins, from the very least of them, to the very greatest of them, very seriously. The penalty for all of our sins, from the very least to the very greatest is death. While we might not like that and while it might seem unfair in human terms, we humans do not set the rules. God set the rules and then He said that the penalty for disobeying the rules is death. No

one captured it better than the apostle Paul, *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 5:23) *For the wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23). God set the parameters that the penalty for our sin(s) is death and that the only way they can be atoned for is through the shedding of blood.

In the Old Testament it had to be through the blood from the sacrifices of animals – goats, calves and others. They had to be from the best they could find – the first born, those without defects and they had to be presented by priests – those who supposedly had clean hands. It was believed that those sacrifices were only for the Israelite people. But that Old Testament plan of God was only temporary. It was only a copy pointing to a more perfect plan to come. The original plan could not do what it was set out to do, for many reasons: 1) The sacrifices had to be repeated over and over and again; 2) the sacrifices were never completely perfect and without defect; 3) the priest themselves never really had clean hands; 4) God's plan of redemption was always greater than just the Israelites. It was for all people!; and 5) those sacrifices never really changed people's hearts.

Enter Jesus Christ, God's Great Amen!

*When Christ appeared as **the** high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more **perfect**¹² he entered once **for all** into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption...¹⁴ he offered himself without blemish to God, to purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

¹⁵ *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from their transgressions.*

While we might not like the rule which God set that says there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood, the Good News, the Great Amen!, is that God even provided the sacrifice, the one human sacrifice, which was without blemish or defect, the only one with clean hands, and the only one who can change human hearts.⁵ *Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me;"⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'*

Hebrews 10:5-7

Jesus came to do what none of us on our own could ever do, God's will perfectly. And by Jesus offering his own body as the sacrifice it says *we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all* (10:10). Amen!?

Because Jesus did God's will, offering his own body, He lives and he offers us eternal redemption and the gift of eternal life as well. It says Jesus's sacrifice was for many. It was actually for all. Jesus' death on the cross has or had the potential of providing forgiveness of sins for all. But the truth is that many throughout history and many still today do not accept the free gift that God has offered us in Jesus Christ, because it comes only through repentance (the

acknowledgement of our own sinfulness and our agreement to turn from that sinfulness) and to put complete faith in Jesus for salvation. For those who have repented and do have faith in Jesus, our sin has already been dealt with. As the apostle Paul says we are free from condemnation. The only thing we need to do is to be faithful as we eagerly await Jesus' second coming.

Many people will show up in churches around the world this morning. Many who don't attend church on any other Sunday of the year. And even for ourselves who attend on most Sundays, we need to ask ourselves why? What's it really about? Is it about me? Is it about all the others around me? Is it about the good breakfast? Is it about the nice new clothes I get to wear this morning? Is it about the music? The answer to all of that is a resounding no! If we have come this morning for any of those reasons, we have missed the mark.

The only right reason for coming this morning to celebrate Easter, and in fact not just on Easter but on every other Sunday of the year, is to give a resounding Yes, an Amen to God, for His Great Amen to us, the gift of His Son Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who was slain for the entire world, that whosoever shall believe in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. We come this morning, not for ourselves, not for all those around me, not for all those other things. We come this morning to give glory to Jesus Christ, He who is God's great Amen to us.