

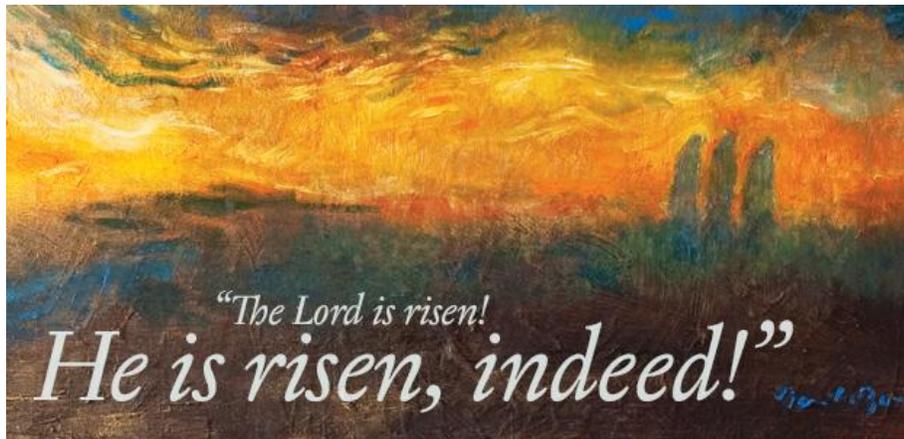
**Credo VII – “Amen.”**

April 16, 2017

A Sermon by the Rev. John C. R. Silbert at Trinity Presbyterian Church; Butler, Pennsylvania  
Easter Sunday, Year A  
(Part 7 of a Sermon Series)

*Text: “For in [Jesus] every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes.’ For this reason it is through him that we say the ‘Amen,’ to the glory of God.”*

-- 2 Corinthians 1:20, NRSV



(Image credit: <https://www.transformingcenter.org/2016/03/choosing-walk-together-encountering-risen-christ-road-life/>)

Let us pray: Our Father and our God make us masters of ourselves that we may become the servants of others. Take my lips and speak through them; take our minds and think through them; take our hearts and set them on fire, for we would see Jesus this morning, in his name and for his sake, we pray, Amen.

Someone has written that there are four words that are commonly known throughout all the languages of the world. They are the words: “OK”, “Coca Cola”, “Alleluia”, and “Amen.” Somehow, some way this little Hebrew word – *Amen* – that is about 4,000 years old has survived into cultures that speak Greek, Latin, Italian, German, French, Spanish, Gaelic, English, Urdu, Farsi, Zulu, Kenyan, Korean, Serbian, Croat, Inuit, Oglala Sioux, Burmese, Cantonese, and mandarin Chinese to name a few – undisturbed and untranslated. There are a few places on earth that do not know the word, or the sound of it, or the meaning – *Amen!*

It is a tough word; a persistent word. Amen is a word that in its sounding affirms what has already been said and done. It is a word that is meant to take and own a share of the claim of what has been said. Amen is a word that rings loud and clear and true like a bell!

Amen has its roots in the concepts of trustworthy, sure and true. It means "Yes." One says it as a response to what someone else has said that is agreeable – "Amen" means, *"Let it stand! What has been spoken is true!"* As Henry David Thoreau once said, *"It takes two to speak the truth – one to speak and another to hear."* – Amen! That is Amen's role: to listen earnestly for the truth, and on hearing it, claim it!

Amen is a word for the confident who refuse to back down from what has been spoken; a tough and scrappy little word that when offered is not afraid to claim the ground around it. Amen believes that what has been said, what has been done, is trustworthy and true; that what has been voiced is worth repeating and believing again and again. It is a word Jesus used often with his disciples, though in translation, the word "Amen" itself got lost: *"Very truly (or "Truly, truly") I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise."* (John 5:19) what Jesus said was not *"Truly, truly,"* or *"Very truly,"* but was actually saying, *"Amen, Amen! . . ."* Again Jesus said, *"Amen, Amen anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life"* (John 5:24) . . . And yet again he said, *"Amen, Amen, the hour is coming and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."* (John 5:25).

To double the word "Amen" like Jesus has done is to express great confidence that what is about to be spoken is weighty and sure: *"Amen, Amen, what I tell you is sure!"* Perhaps you have heard a Bible-thumping preacher ask for an "Amen", as in *"Can I have an Amen?"* I'm sorry, if you have to ask for an 'Amen', you're not very confident in what you are saying. "Amen" does not come with a question – like a caboose at the end of a long train – *"A-mennnn?"* When Jesus used the word, he doubled it and loaded it up front with the engine pulling the freight! *Amen, Amen* – and why? Because he knew that

what he spoke was trustworthy and true . . . that even in the shadows of life's darkest hours, in its hardest days, and in the desertion of its loneliest nights, that after all he was and is good for it. His Amen has strength and conviction even for us.

The 1989 Academy award-winning movie "Glory" is the true story of the establishment of the first Black regiment in the U. S. Army – the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, created in late 1863 to serve the Union Army in the Civil War. It was a unit made up of many ex-slaves and runaways. One of the most powerful of the scenes of this great film is when the men of the regiment are gathered at the campfire on the eve of a battle they have been given the proud honor to lead against the confederates at Fort Wagner on the South Carolina Coast. The scene is one of singing and encouraging one another in "the call and response" style of witness that is part of the greatness of the spiritual and testimonial witness of the black Christian experience. The sergeant major of the regiment, wonderfully portrayed by Morgan Freeman, takes his turn to witness and forms this public prayer to God:

*"Lord, we stand before you this evenin' to say 'thank you.' For we thank you, Father, for your grace and your many blessings . . . Now, I run off and left all my youngins and kinfolk in bondage, so I'm standing here the evenin' Heavenly Father, to ask your blessins' on all of us; so, if tomorrow is our great getting' up mornin' . . . ahhh, if tomorrow we have to meet the judgement day, ahhh, our Heavenly Father, we want you to let our kin folks know that we died facin' the enemy! We want 'em to know that we went down standin' up amongst those that are fightin' against our oppression . . . We want them to know, Heavenly Father, that we died for freedom! We ask these blessings in Jesus' name – Aamen! Aaamen! AAAaaMenn!"*

Now this is a prayer of conviction! And the "Amen" spoken in that moment echoed through all the troops gathered round that fire because it rang true! They knew this man and in their hearts believed that what he prayed was deep and true.

All the Sundays of Lent we have looked at a portion of one of Christianity's oldest confessions: the Apostles' Creed; we have focused our attention on its third paragraph: *I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sine, the resurrection of the body*

*and the life everlasting. . . Amen!* I decided to conclude this series with this last word – a word that claims as true all the rest of the words.

By doing so, I made this a seven-part series, and the number seven is the best number – it is God’s perfect number – as Easter is God’s perfect day. My late preacher-father, the Rev. William G. Silbert, Jr. is smiling at this, I’m sure!

But the word Amen is also the fitting conclusion to all that has been said in making our way through these powerful statements of belief each Sunday – Credo: I believe in the Holy Ghost – the person sent by Jesus after his resurrection to be with us forever as a comforter and companion; I believe in the holy catholic church that is joined and knit together through time and culture and place and space as one universal body that represents God to the world that is made possible by the Spirit; and the fellowship so joined is a communion of saints that bears a legacy from the past through us and in to the future; that we are saints together along with the women who first made their way to the garden tomb to discover that no stone, no death, could keep God’s glory down; that we belong to disciples like Peter and Thomas who having dismissed the Lord and his promises once, twice, even three times, could embrace him deeply and well, and in a completely new way – for it is in God’s nature to keep coming to us to love us with his promises; that the many loved ones and family of the generations who have made this church their home to worship here have something good to give us that we ought not take for granted, that we should be actively embracing every Sunday, truth be known! You belong here as much as they were here – to bless and be a blessing to generations yet to come . . . The Spirit is here in our spirits calling the church to witness to the truth of the gospel; to be active partners with him in forgiving sins and in being forgiven; to reckon beyond all shades of doubt or shadows of death that there is “*a great getting’ up mornin’*” for us all and the life everlasting, because Jesus Christ is God’s eternal *Amen!* He is God’s trustworthiness and truth . . . Listen to these words spoken by the Apostle Paul in talking about our Lord Jesus Christ:

*"For in [Jesus] every one of God's promises is a 'Yes.' For this reason it is through him that we say the 'Amen,' to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 1:20, NRSV)*

By joining your voices in the Amen – especially on Easter Sunday – you bear witness, no less than the women who ran to find the others the first Easter, to tell them that that Jesus is alive! That this day is not like any other day, but is a day the crowns all other days – Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! For in him is life – the life where all God's promises are kept trustworthy, sure and true . . .

I believe this!

The Lord is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Amen

– and Amen!

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.