

Sermon Text for October 4, 2020

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

I Chronicles 16:35-36, Matthew 6:9-13

“Amen”

We started looking at the Lord’s Prayer in the midst of the pandemic on July 5 and we have been in it faithfully now that we approach today, the last Sunday, October 4. We have looked at each phrase, in some cases, like today, at each word. We have interpreted the prayer in a way that makes it more understandable for us. This is where we find ourselves, and this copy is going to be posted on today’s blog in the 100 day Challenge if you wanted to find it again. It will be up there permanently: Daddy, you are in heaven, let my life make your name holy, bring your kingdom here on earth through us, your church family. Let your will, which is always for our good, be done through us. As your will is done in heaven, so let us do it on earth. Give us today what we need for tomorrow. Forgive us our sins just as we forgive the sins of others, and please don’t make it conditional as to whether or not or if we forgive the sins of others. We are trying. Help us to not put you to the test as you always lead us in a direction that is good for our lives and always give us what we need when we are tempted by our own desires. Snatch us away from the devil who is trying to divide up and separate us so that our desires and our wishes become stronger than our unity and our faithfulness to you and your church. And then as a footnote, just in case we think we are in power, your kingdom and your power and your glory reign over all eternity. Remind us that your kingdom and your power and your glory are still and will always be in charge. Amen.

Yesterday I had the honor of presiding over the wedding of Katelyn Darrenkamp and John Boyer. What a celebration. They said their vows to each other, and I warned them it is easy to say these vows, it is easy to stand up in front of people and say that you are going to love someone for the rest of your and their life. But once you say Amen, once you have said your wedding vows, then the work really begins. The hard part is living up to them, just like in marriage. Today, saying Amen is the easy part, but living out what we have just agreed to over these past few months, well, that’s a bit harder. Let’s read.

READ SCRIPTURE

One aspect of the life of First Presbyterian that I am so proud of, is that we have not been caught up in the partisanship that we see around us. I don’t hesitate to get

political, I think all that we do and all that we say has an impact on the politics of the day. But we have managed to not be partisan, to not take sides except the side of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Just as a date to circle on the calendar. I've put my sermon list together and on November 1 the title of the sermon is: Would Jesus vote? Maintaining that spirit of non-partisanship and yet complete involvement as disciples of Jesus Christ we have to follow what we read in I Timothy 2:1-2. We pray for them so that we can live a quiet and peaceable life in all dignity. I pray for the complete recovery and health and safety of our President right now.

We've had a lot of fun over these past months as we've looked at the Lord's Prayer. In February of 2015 I preached on this topic, Amen, as we ended together the Apostles' Creed. Maybe you remember that sermon well, but probably not. The last word is always Amen. In most mainstream churches you say amen at the end of a prayer, at the end of a sermon. Amen was added in the past at the end of some hymns. In that tradition Amen has been used as a sign of conclusion, finality. But not all traditions understand Amen in that light. For many Amen is an agreement during a sermon. Amen, instead of STOP means keep going. In many traditions Amen is an encouragement to continue instead of a command to stop, it is a word that means I'm just getting started instead of an appeal to stop.

So where did Amen come from? You probably did not know it but you are all able to speak Hebrew. Amen is not an English or American word, but rather it is a Hebrew word with a number of different meanings. Stay with me as I work through not all of them but a very extensive list of meanings for Amen. Now would be a good time to get out your Bibles because we are going to use them. I'm going to keep you guessing and keep you on your feet. It is going to be a different type of teaching, so stay with me.

I think most of us have been taught that Amen means traditionally: So be it. Meaning you confirm or support what was stated. It can also mean make firm, to trust and believe, verily or truly, firmness and steadfastness. One of my favorite uses of Amen is found in Isaiah 7:9 where the prophet states "If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all". (in Hebrew. IM LO TAEMINU KI LO TEAMENU). In Exodus 4: 31 we read that the people believed, were convicted of what was spoken. They were amened. In English you can't use it as a verb but in Hebrew it is often used as a verb. Psalm 41:13 we read at the end of the psalm what I call the double dip of Amen, Amen. Habakkuk 2:4 tells us that the righteous shall live by their faithfulness. They shall live by

their Amen. Nehemiah 8:6 once the book of the law is opened for the first time in generations the people proclaim Amen, Amen, and then raise their hands and worship God.

Amen has a broad variety of meanings. It is not by any means strictly a closer but rather it is a very powerful confirmation of all that has been said, a binding contract in some cases. It is an assertion that not only do you agree but you will support and live by what was said. That is why it is imperative that we finish with Amen today because it is, yes an ending, but also because it is like the handshake and our signature that says by God's power I will live my life in this way. In some ways Amen is not the end of our prayer, it is really the beginning as we now look to live our lives according to what we just agreed when we said Amen.

There are consequences to saying Amen. Look at Deuteronomy 27 where Moses gathers the people and he lays before them the way in which they ought to live their lives as they follow the God who led them out of Egypt. After each statement the people say yes, I am going to do that, yes, I agree. I will call my God as a parent who loves me unconditionally and not live in fear waiting for my God to drop the other shoe. I will forgive my neighbor knowing that it has eternal implications. I will not allow Satan to divide me and my family over issues that God does not really care about.

I'm really enjoying watching the NBA finals and watching LeBron James marching toward his 4th title with 3 different teams. It is historic if you are into that. There is an announcer, a hall of famer Paul Pierce whose nickname is The Truth. Amen can also mean, that is the truth. You know who else is called the truth? Jesus said I am the way, the truth, and the life. Our belief in the truth ultimately will decide whether we believe that God is in charge or not, whether God is going to win or not. If we do not believe that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life then we are going to wander our entire lives looking for meaningless falsehoods upon which to base our lives. Not a very satisfying way to go about life.

Amen is a reminder to all of us that we are people of the Word. We do believe in certain unchanging truths which we find in Scripture. We reform society with the Word and we are constantly being reformed by the Word. Amen does not mean we are set in our ways, but rather that we believe we are ready to be shaped and guided by that to which we just Amened.

The final word of our prayer belie an expectancy for the second coming of Christ that will change all that we believe. But until that time let us join together and say Amen to that which we agreed to and will follow. Amen? Amen.