

Amen!

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 0 0] Now, I want just for a little while this evening to go back to, well, at least begin at 1 Chronicles, chapter 16. Really, I just want to look tonight at one word. And it's just at the very end, in verse 36.

At the end of this psalm of praise, David says, then all the people said, Amen. And praise the Lord. Amen. If you haven't been listening, you probably think, great, that's the end already.

But that's what we think, isn't it, when we hear amen? We think, oh great, that's the end. We can go now. That's the kind of signal. It's the end. Goodbye. We've finished. We're home.

But it's not really that it's not signalling. It's not the end. It's not like when you see a film, and at the end of the film you've got the end. It's not the kind of religious version of that.

It's something much more significant than that. And it's full of significance, really, as a word, and in fact, as all the words are in the Bible. And it does eventually point us to Jesus. It points us to Jesus Christ, and I'll explain that in a minute.

[1 : 0 7] I want to take a little bit of a journey with this word, and understand a little bit more about it. And really, what I'm saying tonight is actually very linked in with what we were talking about this morning, and the importance of truth, and how significant that truth is.

Truth that is declared by Jesus, and the way of the truth in life, and that is in the word of God, which is the truth of God. But in the Old Testament generally, this word, it's a Hebrew word, and it just really meant, it really meant firm.

Something that was really firm and strong and reliable became to mean something that was true, and trustworthy, something that was used eventually to declare acceptance of God, and acceptance of God's will, and your commitment to God's will.

So when you said amen, you were saying amen to God, and to his declared will, and to what he said, and to who he was. And in this Psalm here, this Psalm of David, it's a Psalm of Thanksgiving, and the people came together to sing this Psalm, and it was in praise and adoration and thanksgiving to God for bringing the Ark of the Covenant, this religious icon that was a sign and a symbol of the presence of God among them, and who he was, and what he had done for them, a sign of his covenant in many ways.

And with this Psalm of David, they themselves, all the people at the end of what David had said, said amen. This is true, praise the Lord. We give thanks.

[2 : 5 4] And this declaration of praise becomes sectional of different, there's different Psalms that are kind of fused together in this inspired song of praise from David, Psalm 105, Psalm 96, Psalm 106.

And the people are simply saying amen. This is true, we accept what God has said, and it's a wonderful Psalm of praise to the nature, and to the character, and to the trustworthiness of God it speaks about.

It's primarily thanksgiving for his covenant, for this relationship he's entered with him that goes right back to Abraham, and that is being fulfilled in them and will be fulfilled.

It's not a narrowly Old Testament focused Psalm. It's much broader than that. It speaks about the promises of God that are from everlasting to everlasting.

Edinburgh, Malawi, Russia, and that continue to be fulfilled in our time, which is why we praise and why we give thanks.

[4 : 07] It speaks about his wonderful acts. It speaks about his glory. It speaks about his miracles. It speaks about his salvation. It speaks about his love. It speaks about his splendor and his majesty. It speaks about why we worship him.

It speaks about him as the king. It speaks with joy. It speaks about salvation. It speaks about all these things that remain relevant and remain significant, and the people at the end as they hear this declaration of who God is, his faithfulness, his covenant, his promises, his worthiness, that it is good to worship him, they say, amen.

Now that word is then developed throughout the Bible, and it's developed into the New Testament, where again it becomes part of the spiritual language and the terminology of the people of God, of Christians, both corporately together, but also individually.

So it did become a stylized end to prayers. We all still really finish our prayers usually with amen, and it doesn't mean the end, although we think it may be its come to mean the end, the end to doxologies and prayers and to public worship and to private worship.

And when the people of God came together in the New Testament, there would be this corporate acknowledgement of the truth of God that was preached, the truth of God that was sung, the truth of God that was discussed and that was talked about and that was spoken of, and as a sign of their commitment to that, the people would say amen.

[5 : 46] They would say, this is the Word of God, so let it be, let it happen. Let it be that we accept this and that it is good and that we believe it and that we fall in with that truth.

But in the New Testament it was uniquely used also by Jesus. Amen is used 56 times in the New Testament, and in 25 of these times it's doubled up.

So we have amen, amen. Now you know probably where the New Testament uses amen, amen together.

It's if the older people will know particularly maybe here, and you can class yourselves as the older people and say the authorised version of the Bible where Jesus was speaking and he had something important to say.

What did he say? He said, verily, verily, I say to you, just an old word which meant truly, truly, or you could also just transliterate it and say, amen, amen.

[7 : 07] And that was often the case in the New Testament. It's a weaker in the NIV where we have, I tell you the truth.

Verily, verily, although we don't use that word, we don't say that word. Truly, truly I say unto you, and Jesus would use that at the beginning of a declaration, at the beginning of something important.

Now, if you have time this evening, I would encourage you, well, at some point, to go home and to look up all the verily, verily, or the truly, truly, or I tell you the truth statements of Jesus. Because this is Jesus saying and announcing something very important.

He had something very significant to say when he said amen, amen. It was used at the beginning of an important declaration. For example, in John 3.3, which says, I tell you the truth, are verily, verily, I say unto you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again, is born on you.

So he was saying something very important. He declared that by the use of this amen. It was emphasising not just truth, but Jesus being sovereign over that truth.

[8 : 20] I tell you, I say to you, it's a unique formula. It's not found anywhere else and nobody else uses it. Jesus uses it. And that's very important because it is a vital revelation of himself.

It's a revelation of who he is as the one who declares the truth and the one who speaks truth and the one who we follow as being the truth. In Isaiah 65, 16, it says, whoever invokes a blessing on the land will do so by the God of truth.

Or that could be translated, otherwise, the God of the amen. The God of the amen. So it's the same thing that Jesus was invoking this sense of who he was.

Jesus himself is the God of the amen, the God of truth. And when he was expressing these things, he was expressing his own divine self-consciousness as being a revealer of the truth.

So he was declaring unchanging, significant truth that remains truth for us. And I guess that goes back very much to this morning. She means that we can't really tamper with the word of God.

[9 : 29] We can't just adapt it and mold it and change it as time goes on. But it is a revelation. It's something that is given that Jesus gives himself.

And in the same way, we, an extension to that is when we say amen, we are recognising, or maybe we don't realise that, but the truth of the amen is that we are recognising who Christ is, that Christ's own claim is to be the truth.

So he's the standard of the truth that we don't find the truth in ourselves ultimately, but in someone else. He's the genesis of truth. Truth revealed through Jesus as an objective reality.

Yeah, he is a being, he is a person, but in him is truth personified, truth originated, truth declared, truth passed on.

He's the, he calls himself the end of truth and the beginning of truth. He's the Alpha and he's the Omega. And that is where faith, faith takes us. It takes us to a place where we've come to recognise that Jesus is more than a Santa Claus type figure.

[10 : 45] He's more than a figment of the imagination. He is more than a character in history. He is truth incarnate. And that truth incarnate therefore will always be, when we recognise that, that will reflect our attitude to him and our worship of him and our praise and adoration and obedience towards him.

Recognising that is a life-changing fact. Why do people not become Christians who have heard the gospel, who know the gospel? Why did the false teachers in 2 Peter that we were speaking of this morning, why did they recoil from the, from the gospel?

Because they recognised that if Jesus becomes the truth in your life, then your life needs to change. Our lives need to change ongoing and constantly if Jesus Christ is the truth.

Rather than getting up in the morning and deciding where the truth and our lives will reflect that, that we see that Jesus actually is the truth. That means that day to day living needs realignment.

Our day to day living will be realigned because Christ is the truth. And if we are to know life and light and joy and blessing in our lives, then we realign ourselves to the, now that's an ongoing challenge for us.

[12 : 10] But it's what gives us purpose. It's what gives us accountability because as the truth, he is the one to whom we are accountable. So we're not just accountable, self-accountable as it were.

Self-accountability would be great, wouldn't it? Oh yeah, I'm accountable to myself and nobody else. We take that as being a real stand of maturity and strength. I'm courageous. I'm just my own man. I'm just accountable to myself.

But that just means we can basically really do what we want. And what Jesus claims when he says, a verily, verily, or amen, amen, or I tell you the truth, or I am the way of the truth, he is claiming that great authority for us as a congregation and as individuals in our lives.

And so there are many applications for that, I guess. And a couple will be, one that's a reminder that our faith in Jesus Christ brings us into conflict with the world in which we live because it's the complete opposite of relativism, which is kind of, I think, the way a lot of people maybe subconsciously think today, that there's no absolute truth.

Well, the only absolute truth is that there is no absolute truth, which of course in itself is an absolute truth. But life is a journey, a self-discovery, that we just, we're learning, which is true at a kind of macro level. We do learn about ourselves, but it's not an ultimate truth.

[13 : 46] We're not the centre of our own existence. And it is the case that there is something outside of ourselves which is more significant than us and is more permanent than us and is more reliable than us and will be there long after we're gone.

But yet this truth and this absolute God is a God of love and grace who wants a relationship with us. So it's not, ultimately, it's not scary.

Yes, it's life realigning and it's changing, but it's not scary. Far more scary to be alone in this world and be the only sort of measure of truth and absolutism.

So it's tremendously lonely to have that weight of finding meaning and finding significance in ourselves when we can find significance and meaning in the one who made us.

And in the one, although we're separated from them naturally, we can come back to that through Jesus Christ and His work in the cross. So in many ways that kind of whole relativism reveals itself very often in how we live.

[15 : 00] Do I choose as a Christian, as a Christians today, do we choose to do what God wants us to do? Because he is truth, because he loves us and because he's good and because he's just and perfect. Or do we just do what we want to do?

Because other people say it's okay and because, well, hey, that's just fun. So our ethics and our morality and our standards are implicated by amen, by this recognition of who God is and the truth that He is.

And along with that relativism, it also reminds us, as the Psalm, the Psalm of praise that David sings in 1 Chronicles, that God is trustworthy.

This is really the Psalm of praise and thanksgiving is really all about the fact that God has remained true, that He's remained faithful, that He's a covenant keeping God, that He's a good God, that He's a loving God, what He sees as right, what He sees as proper, what He sees as weighty, what He sees as will come true.

Sometimes it doesn't look like that for us. Sometimes we wonder, where is God? What's happening? As many times the people thought that in the Old Testament and there's that, but there's that ongoing journey of faith, where it's an ongoing realignment of ourselves to Him.

[16 : 22] And therefore, when He commands us, He does so because He loves us and He's trustworthy.

And He will never command you to do something that's bad for you. Never. If He does something, if He commands you to do something that is not loving or is morally disreputable, then we're in the hands of an ogre.

And there is no hope for any of us. We are all damned. But God is true. God is the God of the Amen. And that goodness of God enables us to obey Him through faith and through being reborn and through the power of the Holy Spirit, especially in times of trouble, times of difficulty, in times of doubt.

You might be facing difficulty, struggles, doubts. Faith in God, I think I mentioned this this morning, is seldom challenged when things are going great.

But when we're in trouble, we question the goodness of God. We question the truth of God. We question the veracity of God. We question the purpose of God.

[17 : 45] Now, there will be times when it all is a mystery, but if life is only about you and about a make-believe God, who we thought was good, but isn't because of what is allowed to happen, then we are more to be pity than anyone else.

If we don't believe in a dead Jesus who died on a cross but who on the third day rose again to defeat the power of death and the grave, on our behalf, to show himself victorious over everything as his anointing, then we don't understand who he is.

And that's hugely significant and hugely important in our lives. An utterly practical truth for us. So just as we close, I think it's important for us to be challenged by this God of the Amen, this God who claims to be truth and who wants us to seal his truth with our lives and with our faith and with our obedience.

So from John 3.3, there's that challenge to us about the greatest truth, the greatest truth of all.

I tell you the truth, verily, verily, amen, amen. No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born anew.

[19 : 21] So there's this radical, transforming reality that we need to be born anew from the inside, with not a heart that hates God or challenges God in unbelief, but that has come to have a soft heart, a graceful heart, a loving heart, because we are forgiven and because we have come to him by faith.

That is the core truth of the Bible, of the Gospel, that I'm wrong, he is right, I guess as basic as that, but I'm lost and I'm in the dark and he is the light.

And my life is short and he is eternal, but he promises to break that barrier and to bring us to himself and to embrace us into his family.

And that goes right back to this section and before it, the covenant with Abraham, the Abrahamic covenant, which remains the same basic covenant that we celebrate of the Lord's Supper, it's the new covenant in my blood, it's the same covenant, it's just renewed in Jesus that we believe and we accept is the same covenant, bonding blood, divinely administered that he's made on our behalf.

Are we going to put our faith in Christ or are we going to be those who continue to boldly state that we will be true to ourselves, rather than being true to Christ? It's hugely significant that we consider who he is.

[21 : 07] But it's also hugely important that we remember this truth that he is a Savior worth serving because he's the God of the Amen passage here in 1 Chronicles 16 reminds us to that.

That he loves and he loves because he is a great God and because although we fail him and we fall and we stumble, he is committed to us and we are to be thankful that he's with us.

And this Sam of praise was when the Ark of the Covenant, this symbol of God's presence among the people, came back among them. And we have this God with us, Emmanuel, the Jesus who comes and he makes us dwelling among us and he is with us.

And because he's with us, he's glorious and we can rejoice in him and we can give thanks. Even things aren't great tonight, maybe in our lives that we can give thanks because he's with us.

And because he loves us and because we've got a purpose in him and because his covenant is true and he has praised me to the Lord, the God of it, from everlasting to everlasting. It doesn't change, you know? We change from day to day. We get older and we get more, we get more weak and we get more impotent and we aren't able to do things, but he never changes and when we put our trust in him that way, then we can know that in our own good life.

[22 : 26] So that even though we die yet, shall we live, even though we're getting older, that inwardly we're being renewed day by day. And the older people in this congregation here, they're all getting younger day by day, spiritually.

They're youths, they're teenagers spiritually, because you grow downwards spiritually in maturity. You become youthful and trusting and simple in your faith.

And there's that renewal and that strength and that joy that he's a saviour worth serving because he's God of the Amen. And we look forward to being people who can say Amen.

Not as a ritual, but because we recognise and know. In 1 Corinthians 14 verse 16 it says, I think I'll look it up because I'm not convinced of my own writing.

I've written it down. I hope I've got the right reference. 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 16. If you're praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say Amen to your Thanksgiving?

[23 : 28] Since he does not know what you're saying, you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. And it's simply a recognition of the importance of understanding that we can say Amen.

And it's important that we know and appreciate who God is. And when we say our Amen to him, whether it be in simple prayers of our lives or the significant prayers of our lives or the end of a service, and all God's people say Amen, that's not saying all God's people say it's the end. We can go home.

I know that's what you think because that's what happens. It's the end. But it's your declaration that you believe in the truth of Jesus Christ and you're acquiescing to that truth.

That has been shared and that has been sung and that has been prayed over and that you will go from here with that truth.

And the person of the truth that Jesus himself, whoever invokes a blessing on the land will do so by the God of the Amen.

[24 : 40] He is the Amen. He's the God of it. And so may it be that this declaration that we make, the end of each service, is more than just a conclusion, a corporate conclusion, but is a recognition that we're saying He is true.

I give my life, I give my heart to Him and may His truth may it be. It will happen because of who He is. Amen. Amen. Let's bow our heads. Heavenly Father, we pray that we would understand more about who you are, that we would understand this solidity, this strength, this firmness, this trustworthiness of the God that is described with this word.

And may we know that He is faithful, that He is true, that He doesn't lie, that He doesn't cheat, that you don't tell us things that will not happen, that you know our past, you know our present, but you also know the future of this world in which we live, because you're the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

And you know the end from the beginning. Lord, mighty truth, scary truth at some levels, but hugely comforting when we look forward to tomorrow and we don't know what a day will bring, we don't know what will happen and we know the mortality of our own life and we know and appreciate that this broken world constantly takes us round corners that we just didn't expect and that we couldn't imagine and we don't know for ourselves what lies ahead, but we know that when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, that our lives and our eternity is safe, that we are forgiven, that we are cleansed, that we are made right with God and that we become part of your family.

May that truth give us joy and thankfulness and praise. And forgive us when so much of our lives can be filled with grumbling, with moaning, with complaining, with unfulfilled longings, with sometimes covetousness and envy of others, and a lack of thanksgiving and a lack of praise and a lack of joy.

[27 : 00] Lord, help us to fix our eyes on Jesus to enable us to be more rejoicing and more filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit. For Jesus' sake, amen.