

“Creed: What Christians Believe and Why: Jesus Christ”

John 20:30-31

February 25, 2018

Rev. Dave Baldrige

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

This passage in John tells us that there were many other things that Jesus did in front of His disciples, miraculous things, that are not even recorded. Yes, most would agree historically that Jesus was alive and lived and did great things. Many perhaps would call Him a moral teacher or even a prophet. But I feel like I need to say like they do on those late-night TV info-mercials, “But wait...there’s more!!!!” **(image)**

As our scripture said, “Jesus is the Christ, God’s Son.” And not only that...that in believing in Him you will have life in His name. Yes, life in His name...the wonderful name of Jesus. Life in the name of one who was crucified, died and buried and rose again. Let’s take a look at The Apostle’s Creed and to hear what it says and also why we believe what we believe.

Last week we talked about, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” Today in our series on Creed---I believe **in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.**

The wait there’s more part is that Jesus is more than a teacher and even prophet. He is the Son of God. And notice the phrase OUR Lord. The personalization that the God of the universe has sent His son to be OUR Lord.

Even the first disciples wrestled with this.

Mark 8:27-29 Common English Bible (CEB) ²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went into the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸ They told him, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets.” ²⁹ He asked them, “And what about you? Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.”

Here is what it boils down to. Not who others say that Jesus is, but who do YOU say He is. There would be some here that would say He is the Son of God. Some here have doubts. Some could think He is simply a good teacher. Some think He is indeed a miracle worker. But what about YOU. Who do YOU say that Jesus is? Do you believe in Jesus? This confession by Peter that Jesus is the Christ was a major confession. So, it’s personal this morning. Who do you confess that He is this morning?

Jesus who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. Yes, I believe in the Virgin Birth. It is a miracle. Absolutely. For me the progression needs to be consistent. If I say I believe in the resurrection... which is a greater miracle, then how can I say I don’t believe in the Virgin Birth. Conceived by the Holy Spirit----that is, fully divine. Yet born of the Virgin Mary. Son of God/Son of Man. Explain it---I can’t. In fact, I don’t understand it. Certainly, do not anyone else born like this. But we are talking about God and His power. The God who created the universe. Could not this almighty, omnipotent God cause a young girl by Mary to conceive. I think so.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried

Now to be honest I am use to saying crucified, DEAD, and buried. Meaning the same thing. Dead, died. Died, dead. Either way...the human Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man stopped living and breathing. Now again we could play the commercial clip, "But wait, there's more!" Let's look at this phrase a little more.

Pilate's mention here is kind of like a time/stamp date. This firmly anchors the Creed in History. Pilate was known as Governor of Judea from A.D. 26-36. Pilate asked the crowd (Matthew 27:22 (CEB) "what should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify him!" And Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified.

Pilate in many ways represents the rejection of Jesus by the world. Just like Pilate we too must decide what to do with this Jesus. What are you going to do with the Jesus who is called Christ?

A sacrifice, and atonement for sin must take place. That is why Jesus was crucified on a cross. Adam Hamilton in his book "Creed" (Abingdon Press 2016) puts it an interesting way, "God did not need Jesus to suffer and die on the cross in order to save us. Rather, *we* needed it, so we could know the depth of human sin, the breadth of God's graciousness and love, and ultimately God's triumph over sin and death. Jesus did suffer and die for our sins---not because God insisted on torturing his son in order to satisfy or appease his wrath, but because by this dramatic act God hoped to finally break through to us, to affect and change us, to save us from our sin and alienation from God." (page 58)

Jesus---crucified, died and was buried---for ME.

He descended to the dead

Say what? You may have noticed that in the video earlier. Typically, we do not say this. I have the privilege of growing up in a Methodist Church. We included the words, "He descended into hell." Most usually footnote this section and omit it. I wanted to touch on it today in case you were ever at a church that included that in the Apostle's Creed and then get blamed that "Pastor Dave never said anything about this."

It has been confusing for centuries and debated and discussed by theologians. It stems from trying to figure out where Jesus "was" after crucifixion until the resurrection. Some may say "descended to the dead" or even "descended to Hades." The Jewish custom of Jesus day was that at death one's soul "lived" in the realm of the dead—which was also known as Hades or Sheol.

Some speculate that Jesus descended to the dead, in particular to claim the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets. There are 2 cryptic Biblical references to this (1 Peter 3:19-20, Ephesians 4:7-10). In fact, some would say he preached to those souls that came before Him to let them hear the Good News. So now you know...maybe not much more, but now you know a little of why some would still say this in the Creed. Next week we will return to our regular way of saying it.

On the third day he rose again

It is what we call Easter Day, Resurrection Sunday. Woo-hoo!!!!!! Already getting pumped up for Easter on April 1. Yes, Easter on April Fool's Day!!! Some are confused about the 3-day time span. Jesus died on Friday afternoon and was buried before sunset. That was day one. Friday night and all-day Saturday were considered the second day and on the morning of the third day he rose again.

I believe in the resurrection. Adam Hamilton said this, "It seemed to me, then and now, that Jesus' resurrection as not only God's response to human mortality and our fear of death, but God's response to all that is wrong and the triumph of good over evil, love over hate, and life over death. Faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ changes how we live our lives and how we face death, our own and that of others. The Resurrection is so central to our faith that if Jesus' life had ended with his burial, I don't believe Christianity would exist today." (page 75)

I believe on the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father,

After the Resurrection he was on earth for 40 days, and then in front of His disciples ascended into heaven. He is seated at the right hand. The place of honor. Often in our society we say of someone that is of great help to us that they are our "right hand." Jesus sits at the right hand of God as the great helper, the great intercessor, to intercede and even to plead our case with God the Father Almighty.

And will come again to judge the living and the dead

Here's another place that I remember saying a little differently. I remember saying: "will come again to judge the QUICK and the dead." Now I'm not to "quick" so does that not mean I won't be judged. No...quick means living. You see if you dead you wouldn't be moving and therefore wouldn't be quick.

There will come a time of final judgment for all---both the living and the dead. You see God is holy and He is loving, yes, but He is also just. He cannot, he will not tolerate sin. Also, every individual is responsible for their own actions and belief and is personally accountable to God.

Someone has put it this way:

Look backward and see Christ dying for you.

Look upward and see Christ pleading for you.

Look inward and see Christ living in you.

Look forward and see Christ coming for you.

So, we have looked at this second paragraph of Jesus and The Apostle's Creed. Now specifically, what I believe and why I believe what I believe. I don't make resolutions in a New Year. Never really have. But this year as I was praying and thinking I kept focusing on a word, a word for me that I wanted to share. That word is simply "Jesus." Jesus, Jesus. Jesus.

Also, this year I'm doing something I've never really done before. Again, it was as if it were laid on my heart. It is a Lent thing. I have been wearing my cross throughout the week. As if to focus on why this is so important and not be ashamed of the cross.

I believe in Jesus Christ who was crucified, died and was buried and on the third day he rose again.

For Him to be my Savior means I accept the fact that He died on the cross. And that He died on the cross for me. And was resurrected for me.

Philippians 2:7-11 "he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

On Wednesday heaven gained Rev. Billy Graham (**image**). I had the privilege of hearing him at a crusade with our youth group in St. Louis. I know many here have been at his crusades as well. What a man of God. What integrity. The spiritual impact he has made to millions for the Kingdom of God.

Rev. Graham said this to TV personality David Frost in an interview: "Well, I'm going to heaven," he said, "not on my good works or because I've preached to all these people or read the Bible. I'm going to heaven because of what Christ did on the cross."

I John 4:14-15, 19 ¹⁴ We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the savior of the world. ¹⁵ If any of us confess that Jesus is God's Son, God remains in us and we remain in God.

¹⁹ We love because God first loved us.

Following that final New York crusade of Billy Graham in 2005, a well-known publisher released a book with the entire text of his three sermons at Flushing Meadows Corona Park. They invited him to write some closing thoughts for the book, which filled just two pages under the heading, A Final Word from Billy Graham: "No matter what your problem is," he wrote, "if you and I could sit down and talk, I would want to tell you one great truth: God loves you, and He can make a difference in your life if you will let Him.

“God loves you so much that He sent His Son into the world to die for your sins. When we open our hearts to Christ, He forgives our sins and comes to live within us by His Holy Spirit. He also gives us strength for the present and hope for the future. This is the message of the Gospel...
(from USA Today, article on February 21, 2018 by son Franklin Graham)

Oh, what a wonderful name. The name above every name. Jesus. Yeshua. Messiah. Christ. Anointed One. Omnipotent. Emmanuel. God’s Son. Righteous One. King. Lord. No Equal. No Rival. Light of the World. Redeemer. Savior. Lord.

I believe in Jesus Christ. He loves me, and I love Him.