

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only  
Son, our Lord, who was conceived by  
the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin  
Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead. On the  
third day he rose again; he ascended  
into heaven, he is seated at the right  
hand of the Father, and he will come  
to judge the living and the dead.*

# **I BELIEVE**

**CREATOR ♦ SAVIOR ♦ SPIRIT**

**A Study of the Apostles' Creed**

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy  
catholic church, the communion  
of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.*



**First Lutheran**

discover more : together

This study booklet is written to be used in conjunction with the “I Believe” worship series from Sunday, Sept. 7 through Sunday, Nov. 2, 2025.

The sermon messages can be heard in-person during each weekend worship service or live streaming online at [youtube.com/firstlutherancr](https://youtube.com/firstlutherancr).

Recordings of the sermons can be found after Sundays on our website at [firstlutherancr.org/resources/sermons](https://firstlutherancr.org/resources/sermons).

A digital version of this booklet is also available from our site at [firstlutherancr.org/grow](https://firstlutherancr.org/grow).

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# Introduction

## **Why The Apostles' Creed Matters to Christians**

Who is God for us? What can we know of God? How does God reveal God's gracious love to us? Creeds are statements of faith used by the Church over the centuries to help us answer these fundamental questions. The three main creeds we use today are The Apostles' Creed (125 A.D.), The Nicene Creed (381 A.D.), and the Athanasian Creed (500 A.D.). "Creed" comes from the Latin "Credo" which means *I Believe*.

This study will focus on The Apostles' Creed which provides a basic summary of teaching about God. We publicly profess our faith every time we recite it. Used in Baptism, it teaches us what it means to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Tradition says this creed goes back to the witness of the first disciples.

The Nicene Creed provides a more theological and developed statement of God as the "Triune God," three persons, yet one God. Its origin included discussion (even intense debate) about the nature of the Father and of Jesus. It also develops the nature of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. Often this creed is confessed on Festival Sundays.

The Athanasian Creed has been used in public worship less frequently mainly due to its length, with the exception being on Trinity Sunday. It differs from the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed in that it includes Anathemas condemning those who disagree with its statements.

## **Why The Apostles' Creed Matters to Lutherans**

Martin Luther wrote an explanation to The Apostles' Creed that was included with explanations to the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Communion,

and Forgiveness in a booklet for Lutheran families to teach the faith to their children called The Small Catechism. There is a more developed version written for pastors and leaders called, The Large Catechism. Portions of Luther's teachings from the Small Catechism are included each week in this guide and serve as the basis for discussion.

### **Why We Are Doing This Study in Three Parts**

Martin Luther's teaching in the Small Catechism on The Apostles' Creed explains our experience of God through creation, redemption, and the gift of faith. For the sake of a simple explanation, each activity has a primary association with a member of the trinity: God the Father almighty creates, God the Son redeems, and God the Holy Spirit sanctifies, that is makes holy, by bringing faith to us. Even so, all three persons of the Trinity work together in a unified manner in creation, redemption, and making holy.

The story of our salvation is captured in the creed. In creation, the Creator gifts us with heaven and earth. In the fall of Adam, we have lost faith in God's self-giving nature. For this reason, the Son reconciles us with the Father as our Savior through his own suffering, so that we can once again have a relationship with God. This saving faith is given through the activity of the Holy Spirit.

We will explore this story of salvation in three parts:

- + Life in the Creator**
- + Life in the Savior**
- + Life in the Spirit**

We will explore our experience of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. In each of these three ways, we see the oneness of God at work.

# Martin Luther's Explanation of the Apostles' Creed

## From his Small Catechism

### **The First Article of The Apostles' Creed: Creation**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

*Martin Luther's Thoughts:* What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy — without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

### **The Second Article of The Apostle's Creed: Redemption**

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

*Martin Luther's Thoughts:* What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from

the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.

### **The Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: Sanctification**

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Martin Luther's Thoughts:* What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

### **How God Changes Us**

Martin Luther's explanation of each article of the creed describes God's work in two directions. First, the creed explains how God comes to us, how we experience God's gifts in creation, redemption, and faith. The second direction is how God changes us and what God makes possible for us. We give thanks and serve. We experience belonging and purpose. We experience God's good gifts in the Spirit.

## How to Use This Study Guide

**With Small Groups:** The guide has a study for each week of the series. It is designed to be used for the week beginning with that Sunday. Use it as a way of going deeper. These study questions work whether you were able to attend worship or not.

**Use at Home:** Use this guidebook for conversation around your table. Pick and choose those questions that encourage conversation with children of all ages.

**Pick the Questions that Interest You:** You don't have to cover every question. Pick the questions that interest you. Also, you don't have to do it every week. If you miss a week or two, no problem! Pick up the study again and skip to the current week.

**For personal individual devotion,** take one question a day, focusing on Discover and Discover More Together questions. Journal your answers in the empty spaces.

Discover Questions provide a fun way to enter the study, inviting you to share a personal story.

Discover More Questions explore the scripture passage and invite deeper engagement with the passage.

Discover More Together Questions bring a personal application home. These questions invite you to discover what this week is saying to you personally.



## Week of September 7, 2025

### I Believe: Why study the Apostle's Creed?

**The Apostles' Creed in a nutshell:** I believe in God, the Father almighty... I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son... I believe in the Holy Spirit...

**Pr. Steve's Introduction:** What does it mean to say, "I believe in God"? We begin with a distinction between believing intellectually *that* something is true and believing *in* something to be true for me. To believe *in* God is to believe with a trusting faith that who God is for me really matters. At times Luther will also say: "I believe *upon* God." Here he links faith with building my life *upon* the foundation Jesus Christ. God revealed in Father, Son, and Spirit is a foundation I can build my life *upon*.

Martin Luther's teaching on the creed shifts our focus from the "I" who believes to "God," who creates, redeems, and gives faith. God comes to us in the words of the creed as God who gives, loves, redeems, comforts. The Apostle's Creed and the Catechism Explanation are a gift to us, forming our faith, giving us the foundation stones to build our life upon. We will explore the creed as three experiences of God: life in God's creation, life in Jesus, and life in the Spirit. Even so, for each of the parts of the creed, the fulness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit show up in each of the parts.

#### John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") <sup>16</sup>From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

### **Opening Discovery**

1. What is your faith story?
2. What primary associations do you have of God? Whether of judgment or mercy? Anger or love? Distant or Close? How have those associations changed or stayed the same for you?
3. What experience of Luther's Small Catechism did you have growing up?

### **Discover More**

4. What are your experiences associated with God in creation?
5. What are your experiences associated with Jesus: his teachings, the cross, salvation in him? How do you talk about that?
6. What experiences do you associate with God the Spirit?
7. Which member of the trinity do you resonate with more?  
Why?  
God the Creator?  
God the Savior?  
God the Spirit?

### **Discover More Together**

8. What do you hope to learn through this worship and study series?

## **Week of September 14, 2025**

### **Life in Creation: Maker of It All**

#### **The First Article of the Apostles' Creed: On Creation**

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

#### **Luther's Explanation to the First Article: On Creation**

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties.

In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property; along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life.

**Pr. Steve's Introduction:** The creed and the Bible do not get into the mechanics of how creation happens. Rather they focus on who and why. God created because God is love. God continues to create and bring order because God is the one who gives, blesses, and bestows out of love.

What does it mean to have a God? Look at the verbs associated with creating. God creates. God gives. God preserves. God provides. God is a giver of gifts, that we may live with a sense of abundance and the goodness of God.

To believe in God the creator connects our present life with the beginning. In the beginning God created. We affirm God created order and goodness, and God endowed all human

beings with dignity and worth. Even now today, we continue to experience God's creative work. The bible does not imagine God as a watch maker who made the world, set things in motion, and then sits back to see what happens. God continues to be active in creation and our lives to bring blessing.

We confess what we pray. Every prayer of gratitude is a prayer for what God continues to do, for the ways God continues to provide and sustain. Nothing is taken for granted as Luther's explanation gets into the details of eyes and ears, and food and drink. We pray to God, we give thanks to God, because we believe God continues to be generous and life giving.

**Psalm 104:1, 5, 13-15, 24, 30-35**

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord my God, you are very great.

You are clothed with honor and majesty,

You set the earth on its foundations,

so that it shall never be shaken.

From your lofty abode you water the mountains;

the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle and plants for

people to cultivate, to bring forth food from the earth and

wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine

and bread to strengthen the human heart.

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have

made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created,

and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever;

may the Lord rejoice in his works—

who looks on the earth and it trembles,  
who touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
for I rejoice in the Lord.

Let sinners be consumed from the earth,  
and let the wicked be no more.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!

### **Genesis 1:1-5**

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

### **Opening Discovery**

1. What is your favorite place in creation? What makes it so?

### **Discover More**

2. What stands out to you about the scripture readings?  
What resonates with you?
3. Both the catechism and the scripture have less to say about the how of God’s creative acts and more to say about the who and the why. Look at the scripture texts again.
  - a. What do they say about Who God is?
  - b. What do they say about Why God creates and sustains?

4. How do the verbs, actions words, in the catechism explanation connect with the scriptures here?
5. What is the response of the Psalmist to God's creative work? How does the time of Gratitude fit in with this or not?
6. When it comes to God's blessings, the Psalmist does not focus so much on personal blessings, as look with a wider view to how God works in all the world. In your praise of God, do you tend to look closer to home or not? What would it mean to take a wider view like the Psalmist? What would you focus on in the world?

### **Discover More Together**

7. How do you make sense of what science says about the world and what the Bible says about God and the world? Complementary explanations? Contradictory? Disconnected? Uncertain? Doesn't matter? Other?
8. When or where do you experience your deepest gratitude?
9. SUGGESTION: During this study on the Catechism, write 15 things you are thankful for EACH day, for 63 days. (About 1000 in total). In time you will go beyond the obvious or easy, and marvel in how God provides and protects.

## **Week of September 21, 2025**

### **Life in Creation: God Our Protector**

#### **The First Article of the Apostles' Creed: On Creation**

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

#### **Luther's Explanation to the First Article: God our**

**Protector** God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

#### **Pr. Steve's Introduction:** Does God truly protect or not?

When there is suffering in the world, how can we confess God is our protector? How do we perceive God's goodness and mercy when bad things happen? Luther said in moments of doubt, we should go to the cross, where God joined us in suffering, and then revealed God's deeper purpose for love and life in the resurrection. As Paul writes in Romans: "Nothing shall separate us from the love of God." At the cross, we confess God *does* protect and preserve. At the cross, we see through the fog of current events to affirm God's love and provision. The Lord's prayer offers how God provides and protects—offering bread, forgiveness, protection, deliverance in times of need.

God cares for us in life and in creation. We experience God's abundance and provision in so many ways. What we learn is that God's care is wide and generous, based on God's love for the world. God's care is not conditional. We don't earn



our way to blessing. Blessings come because it is the nature of God to create, provide, bless, and bestow. What does the life of faith look like in response? We thank, praise, serve, obey God. We live with love and trust towards God, generosity and thanks in response to what God provides, kindness and mercy toward others in the world God made.

### **Isaiah 40:21-22, 25-26, 28-31**

Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?  
It is (God) who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to live in.

To whom, then, will you compare me, or who is my equal?  
says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
Who created these?

(God) who brings out their host and numbers them,  
calling them all by name; because he is great in  
strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary,

and the young will fall exhausted,

but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength;

they shall mount up with wings like eagles;

they shall run and not be weary;

they shall walk and not faint.

### **Matthew 6:7-13**

“When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray, then, in this way:

Our Father in heaven,  
may your name be revered as holy.  
May your kingdom come.  
May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And do not bring us to the time of trial,  
but rescue us from the evil one.

### **Opening Discovery**

1. What is a story of God’s deliverance or rescue in your life? How has God protected or shielded you?

### **Discover More**

2. Isaiah 40 is written to a people who have been in exile in Babylon for 60 years. They thought God had forgotten them.  
Look again at the passage and underline 1-2 areas where the prophet is saying God has not forgotten you. How does that speak to you?
3. Isaiah 40 makes this argument: Yes, our individual lives have their ups and downs, but in the bigger scheme of things, God is in charge, God will prevail, and you can rely on God. How does that make you feel?

4. One way of studying the Lord's Prayer is to notice how the petitions come not from a position of strength, but of need. Look again at each line (petition) of the prayer. Take your time as a group on this.
  - a. What is the need implied? It can be something outside us in the world. The need can also be a shortcoming within.
  - b. What is the promise about God offered?

### **Discover More Together**

5. Sometimes we don't like God's unconditional generosity in creation, because sometimes the unjust are blessed. In the Lord's Prayer, for daily bread, Luther writes, "God provides daily bread to all people, though sinful...." How is God's generosity a good thing or something hard to accept?
6. How does the story of God sharing in our suffering on the cross on the way to Easter provide hope for you in troubled times?
7. Do you believe there is a limit to evil in the world because of God's love, or does it feel like evil has the upper hand? What gives you hope in troubled times?
8. The creed describes both who God is for us in creation AND who we are as human beings, created in the image of God. What are specific ways you do each of the following?
  - a. Thank God—live in gratitude
  - b. Praise God—enjoy God
  - c. Serve God—by serving the neighbor
  - d. Obey God—live accountable to God

## **Week of September 28, 2025**

### **Life in the Savior: Who is Jesus for Me?**

#### **The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed: Redemption**

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,

**Luther's Explanation:** *What does this mean?*

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.

**Pr. Steve's Introduction:** The first part of the creed on Jesus describes what God does at Christmas. God becomes human in Jesus. The message of the angels to shepherds becomes the confession of the Creed: This baby is Christ the Lord.

Who is Jesus for me? Luther answers: Jesus is my Lord. Next week we will look at what Jesus did on the cross and how Jesus is Lord because he saves me, makes available God's grace for me.

This week, we look more closely at who Jesus is for me. When we confess that Jesus is both true God and a true human being, the creed brings two realities together. One: Jesus was a human being who suffered a real death. Two: Jesus is the very presence of God, who suffered, was crucified, died and was buried. Jesus doesn't just talk about God, but God is fully present in Jesus.

We say we have life in the name of Jesus—this human being Jesus is the very presence of God offering eternal life. That is why we say “my Lord.” The word “my” points to a relationship of faith and trust in Jesus, as the one who saves

me. I build my faith upon the foundation of Jesus as my Lord.

### **Hebrews 1:1-3a**

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup>He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.

### **John 5:16-27**

Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the Sabbath. <sup>17</sup>But Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working."

<sup>18</sup>For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the Sabbath but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

<sup>19</sup>Jesus said to them, "Very 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. <sup>20</sup>The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing, and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. <sup>21</sup>Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. <sup>22</sup>The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, <sup>23</sup>so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

<sup>24</sup>Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.

<sup>25</sup>“Very truly, I tell you, 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. <sup>26</sup>For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, <sup>27</sup>and he has given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man.”

## **Opening Discovery**

1. What do you like about the Christmas celebration?  
How is it meaningful to you?

## **Discover More**

2. Reflect back on the Gospel stories: How are these confessions a kind of work in progress, combining both understanding and a lack of understanding.  
Matthew 16:16—Peter. Notice what happens next.  
John 4:29—Women at the well. Dawning awareness.  
John 20:28—Thomas. Climax of the Gospel: “My Lord and My God.” Believing Thomas comes after doubting Thomas.
3. “Jesus is Lord” points in two directions. One direction points towards God, the inner relationship between Jesus and the God the Father. Jesus is both a human being and the very presence of God. When you think of Christ, do you tend to focus on the humanity of Jesus or the divinity of Jesus? Why?
4. The second direction of “Jesus is Lord” has to do with who Jesus is for me, that is “my Lord.” Are there stories of Jesus that draw you closer to this sense of “my Lord.”
5. Follow-up question: Which stories of Jesus are most important to you? Do they speak more to the humanity or divinity of Jesus?

### **Discover More Together**

6. When did Jesus become Lord for you? What or how did the shift happen from Jesus being a figure of history to Jesus being important for your faith?
7. Who is Jesus for you?
8. Is this easy to share with others or hard? Why is that so? What is hard about sharing “Jesus is my Lord,” whether with friends, families, or others?

## **Week of October 5, 2025**

### **Life in the Savior: What does Jesus Do?**

#### **The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed: Redemption**

(I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord)

...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day (Jesus) rose again....

#### **Luther's Small Catechism:** *What does this mean?*

(I believe that Jesus Christ) has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

**Pr. Steve's Introduction:** Jesus is my Lord, because I experience what Jesus does for me on the cross: he redeems me, he frees me. Throughout his ministry, Jesus was a friend of sinners. Jesus befriended those who needed help. I might wonder if I need such help. When I step back from the cross and what happened to Jesus in his death and resurrection, I gain a new perspective on our human need. What does it say of my life, if Jesus dies for me? Though innocent, Jesus is condemned. And though I try to justify myself, now I see I am the one who is lost and needs help.

Jesus is the one who dies, but not even death will have the last word. God's victory on Easter is not just about Jesus, but God's victory over everything that diminishes human life—our sin, our death, and the power of evil. Jesus is my Lord, because God offers life through Jesus. If you want to know who Jesus is for you, remember how he was treated on Good Friday, and remember how God has the last word on Easter.



## **1 Corinthians 15:3-6,12-14, 17-22**

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures <sup>4</sup>and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. <sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised, <sup>14</sup>and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain and your faith is in vain. <sup>17</sup>If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. <sup>20</sup>But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. <sup>21</sup>For since death came through a human, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human, <sup>22</sup>for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

## **Luke 23:39-43**

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” <sup>40</sup>But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? <sup>41</sup>And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” <sup>42</sup>Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” <sup>43</sup>He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

## **Opening Discovery**

1. The creed moves to the events of Holy Week, from Passion Sunday, through Maundy Thursday, Good

Friday, to Easter. What are your favorite services of Holy Week? (or) What are memorable moments associated with various Holy Week services?

### **Discover More**

2. The catechism shifts focus from what happened to Jesus to the deeper meaning of what Jesus accomplished. Luther uses a parallel construction: to redeem means literally to purchase and set free. What does it mean to you that you have been set free?

Let's look at each element in turn.

3. How does Jesus free you from sin through the cross?  
How does God's forgiveness set you free?  
Have you ever had an experience of forgiveness with God or another person, where that word of forgiveness gave a sense of freedom?
4. How does Jesus free you from death?  
How does the cross and Easter resurrection speak to you at a funeral or time of death?  
How does Easter speak to you when you think of your own mortality?
5. How does Jesus free you from the devil and power of evil?  
In other places, Luther describes Jesus as going to battle with the devil and the powers of chaos at the cross. Easter announces God's victory. We know the end of the story, even as we live through these present times. How does that provide comfort or not to you?

### **Discover More Together**

6. Why do you think the creed and the catechism skips any mention of Jesus teachings or miracles during his earthly ministry? How do you feel about that?

## Week of October 12, 2025

### Life in the Savior: Why Does Jesus Matter?

#### **The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed: Redemption**

On the third day (Jesus) rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

#### **Luther's Small Catechism:** *What does this mean?*

He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally.

**Pr. Steve's Introduction:** To confess Jesus is my Lord is to say that Jesus changes me. At the heart of the experience of faith is this: "Jesus sets me free." There is freedom when I am forgiven. There is freedom to love and serve the neighbor. Luther had a very specific notion of freedom. To be freed in Christ means I am set free to be the human being God intended for me from creation. I am set free from the chains of sin, death, and the evil one.

The catechism spells out what this freedom in Christ looks like in terms of belonging, purpose, and identity.

- + **Belonging:** I experience belonging in Jesus. Faith is a life-giving relationship with Jesus.
- + **Purpose:** I experience purpose in Jesus: I participate in his kingdom. I orient my actions towards Jesus: what serves God's purposes in life,
- + **Identity:** I am a forgiven child of God. I experience forgiveness in these ways: 1) being made right in God's righteousness, 2) living with renewed innocence, 3) receiving God's blessing.

The confession of “Jesus is my Lord” concludes with a confession of resurrection. Because Jesus lives, everything that Jesus is, and has done, and means for me can truly matter for me.

### **Colossians 1:11-20**

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, so that you may have all endurance and patience, joyfully <sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. <sup>13</sup>He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. <sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, <sup>16</sup>for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

### **Opening Discovery**

1. How are you different now from what you were in college or some younger time of life?
2. How are you the same person? (In both good and not so good ways!).

## **Discover More**

Luther describes the ways Jesus changes me.

3. “That I may be his own”...I experience belonging in Jesus.
  - a. How is faith a life-giving, life-changing relationship with Jesus for you?
  - b. What does it mean to experience belonging in Jesus?
  - c. How does Paul’s notion of “the church as the body of Christ, and we are members of that body” relate here?
4. “Live under him in his kingdom”...I experience purpose in Jesus.
  - a. How does following Jesus give you a sense of purpose in life?
  - b. Here is where the teachings and example of Jesus come in....which teachings, parables, stories of Jesus speak most to you?
  - c. When is it challenging to live God’s purpose made known in Jesus?
5. “Serve Jesus in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.”...I am a forgiven child of God, I experience a new identity in Christ.
  - a. How does our identity in baptism connect to this?
  - b. What are elements in worship that support your experience of forgiveness?

## **Discover More Together**

6. How are you different because you are a Christian?  
How does Jesus change you?

## **Week of October 19, 2025**

### **Life in the Spirit: Making Belief Possible**

#### **The Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: Sanctification:**

I believe in the Holy Spirit...

#### **Luther's Small Catechism:** *What does this mean?*

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

**Pr. Steve's Introduction:** What does it mean to say, "I believe I cannot believe?" Faith is not an abstract or general faith in a divine being. Rather, faith is a personal relationship of trust in Jesus as my Lord. How does such a faith come about? Left on my own, I would never get there. This is why God comes to me through the Gospel message of forgiveness in Jesus that makes possible my response of trusting faith. And the response of faith itself is a sign of God Spirit at work in my life.

When it comes to faith, we confess what we pray. We turn to God in time of doubt and need, and we ask for guidance. We pray for faith. When faith and the gifts of wisdom and mercy are experienced, we thank God. There is no sense of God sitting in the heavens waiting for humans to believe, rather God takes an active present part in my life through the movement of God's Spirit.

## **1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were gentiles you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, <sup>5</sup>and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, <sup>6</sup>and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup>To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another the working of powerful deeds, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

### **Opening Discovery**

1. What Bible verses or stories of Jesus speak most to you and your faith? What do they say to you?

### **Discover More**

2. What do you think Luther means when he says “I believe I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus, my Lord”? What is at stake here?
3. In Corinthians, Paul is talking about the church, which is both a human gathering of people with many abilities, and a gathering made possible by the Spirit. What does

the Spirit do in this passage? What does the Spirit give? Underline 2-3 phrases and discuss.

4. In the culture of Corinth, there was a tendency to make judgments of one another on the basis of gifts and abilities, some were better than others, or had greater prestige. How does the church as a creation of the Spirit change our perceptions of one another?
5. What would be the distinctions Paul would go after today in our church or our world?

### **Discover More Together**

6. How has God been a part of your story of faith? What are the interventions, nudges, movements of the Holy Spirit in your story of faith?
7. For some, Luther's explanation about the origins of faith in God raises a question: If someone is not a believer, who is at fault? Why is there unbelief?
  - a. Some would argue that it is the unbeliever's fault. They are stubborn of heart and they will be judged unless they believe.
  - b. Luther offers another response. We don't know why someone does not believe. Unbelief is held in the mystery of God in the world. What we do know is that we are given the opportunity to pray and to witness. What we do know is that when faith shows up, we give thanks to God.

When it comes to friends or relatives who do not show an outward sign of faith, what do you do? How do you respond in prayer? In Witness?



## **Week of October 26, 2025**

### **Life in the Spirit: Church & Community**

#### **The Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: Sanctification**

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins...

#### **Luther's Small Catechism:** *What does this mean?*

In the same way (the Holy Spirit) calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

**Pr. Steve's Introduction:** There is a lot that happens this weekend. We celebrate Reformation Sunday, and the scriptures point to a new relationship with God, written on our hearts by the Spirit, a relationship made possible by the forgiveness of God in Jesus, a relationship that leads to new life and freedom in Christ.

On this Reformation Sunday, a group of young people affirm God's promises and call given in baptism. We have called it "Confirmation Sunday," but better to say, "Affirmation of Baptism." The light of faith is passed from the parents to these young people.

Luther's teaching in the catechism makes explicit what is said in the creed: the Spirit of God forms the church. We know the Spirit of God by what the Spirit does. Rather than a description of what the spirit looks like, the Catechism describes what the Spirit does and how God takes action in the world. The Spirit is God as a verb. The Spirit is God Almighty active in the world. The Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies (makes holy), and joins people to Jesus. Christian Spirituality is a Christ centered spirituality.

Jesus is now present in the world through the body of Christ formed by the Spirit.

The work of the Spirit is often called sanctification or making holy. For Luther, this is not how I become holy for God, not how I show that I am a true believer for God. Rather, sanctification describes how the Spirit works to bring Christ to me in a daily experience of faith.

We live in an age where spirituality is often seen in individualistic terms. In the catechism and in the Bible, spirituality happens in community. As Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am.” God is relational, and God draws people into relationship with one another and Christ through the Spirit. The church is many things, but above all, the church is community formed by the Spirit, where forgiveness of sins is given and received.

Why community? One to say, I confess, another to say, God forgives. One to put out their hand in communion, another to say, “the body of Christ for you.” The Spirit creates the Church so that we might experience the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ.

Though we live in a time of many denominations, with different understandings of the Spirit, we confess that deep down, there is only one church, only one body of Christ, just as there is only one Lord and one Spirit. That means while we may hold on to our denominational differences, we hold them with a light hand.

### **First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

<sup>31</sup> The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though

I was their husband, says the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

### **Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28**

<sup>19</sup> Now we know that, whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> For no human will be justified before him by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup> But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed and is attested by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, <sup>23</sup> since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup> they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> it was to demonstrate at the present time his own righteousness, so that he is righteous and he justifies the one who has the faith of Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded.

Through what kind of law? That of works? No, rather through the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

### **Gospel: John 8:31-36**

<sup>31</sup> Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” <sup>33</sup> They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?”

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

### **Opening Discovery**

1. What is your personal story of involvement/participation in a congregation?
2. What kinds of experiences/engagements made it more compelling or meaningful?
3. Less compelling or meaningful?

### **Discover More**

1. In the creed, the Holy Spirit makes the church: in quick order we confess in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins. We experience God in community. How has that been true for you?
2. We are taught that the Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies.”
  - a. How has God called you through the Gospel? How has the story of Jesus given you faith?

- b. How has God gathered you? What is your experience of being two or three in Christ, and the sense of Christ is with you?
- c. How does the Spirit enlighten you? How has God provided insight, intuition, wisdom, courage in your walk of faith?

3. This week we celebrate the Affirmation of Baptism, or as some say, Confirmation Sunday. Affirmation means “yes.”

When we were baptized as infants, our parents and sponsors took responsibility to live the covenant of baptism. Affirmation means I hear the call of the Gospel and participate in the church, the communion of saints, and the forgiveness of sins.

What do you remember of your confirmation, if you experienced that as a teenager?

4. Sanctification, being made holy, has been viewed in two ways in the history of the Christian church.
- One way describes how we draw close to God by the attitudes and actions we do to show we are growing in faith toward God.
  - Another way describes how God draws close to us so that we experience in a daily way the truth of God’s forgiveness and life. We grow in faith, but rather than seeing it as a personal achievement, we bear witness to the movement of God in our life.

How has your faith deepened over the years?

Was there a certain time in the past when you felt more fully alive in faith. Why was that so?

## **Discover More Together**

Why do you think it is harder to be the church today than when you were growing up? What are the challenges facing the church to be church today?

## **Week of November 2, 2025**

### **Life in the Spirit**

#### **Life in the Spirit: Fulfilling God's Promises**

##### **The Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: Sanctification**

I believe in the Holy Spirit....the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

##### **Luther's Small Catechism:** *What does this mean?*

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

**Pr. Steve's Introduction:** "Life" is a recurring word in scripture and in the explanation of the creed. In the beginning, the Spirit of God moved over the waters, and God created life. In Jesus, we are offered eternal life, which is both about heaven and a quality of life we experience on earth. The embrace of the Spirit's work is great enough to include our living and our dying, our everyday life today, and the mystery of life beyond our mortal life.

Why talk about the resurrection of the body? God wants all of you, the whole you. Resurrection life is not limited to some spiritual part of you, but is meant to embrace the whole of you, the fulness of what makes you who you are. Rather than get snagged by the mechanics of what that looks like, think more of the poetry of who you are fully. God restores the whole of you.

We celebrate All Saints Festival this week. In the promise of everlasting life, God is there to meet us when our life on earth ends. It's not just about the future. All Saints gives us new eyes to see our present life. God vindicates the faithful. God's ways are true and enduring. We can be faithful to God in this earthly life, because God is faithful to God's children in heaven.

In addition, notice how the language of God the Spirit is connected to the triune God. The Spirit offers God's eternal life as the Spirit draws me into community of Christ and the reign of the risen Lord. The catechism looks at life from perspectives of life in creation, life in Jesus, and life in the Spirit. And in each perspective, we see the fullness of God showing up to give us life in the full.

### **Ephesians 1:11-23**

<sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; <sup>14</sup> this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

<sup>15</sup> I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason <sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, <sup>18</sup> so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may perceive what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. <sup>20</sup> God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. <sup>22</sup> And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over



all things for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

### **Luke 6: 20-31**

<sup>20</sup> Then [Jesus] looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup> “Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup> “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup> Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

<sup>24</sup> “But woe to you who are rich,  
for you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup> “Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.

“Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup> “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

<sup>27</sup> “But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

## **Opening Discovery**

1. When you think of those who are in heaven with Jesus, who comes to mind? Why?
2. Who has been an example of faithfulness for you? Who are the Saints in your life?

## **Discover More**

3. Of the blessings (Luke 6:20-23)
  - a. Which speaks most to you?
  - b. Which is most challenging?
4. Of the woes (Luke 24-26)
  - a. Which speaks most to you?
  - b. Which is most challenging?
5. Jesus talks about non-violence as a way of living (Luke 7:27-31). How easy or hard is this to do? What are stories of Christians who have lived this?
6. Jesus describes the values he brings to the world. How have these values shaped your actions and attitudes?
7. Ephesians suggests that God's victory in Christ, both secures our future in Christ, and makes a difference in our hopes and actions today. How does your future in Christ change how you live this present day in Christ? What difference does Jesus make today for you?
8. We confess: "I believe in the resurrection of the body..." Why the body and not just the spirit of a person? What more is denoted by the body? Why is the body important?

## **Discover More Together**

9. What does the promise of everlasting life mean to you? How important is it for you?
10. We have journeyed 9 weeks with the catechism. What is a key insight you have gained?



Who is God for us?  
What can we know of God?  
How does God reveal God's gracious love to us?

Creeds are statements of faith used by the Church over the centuries to help us answer these fundamental questions. "Creed" comes from the Latin "Credo" which means "*I Believe.*"

Martin Luther said, "The Apostles' Creed sets forth everything that we expect and receive from God. To state it quite briefly, the Creed teaches us to know God fully."

Over the course of this 9-week study the sermons preached by our Pastors, along with the scripture passages and the writings of Martin Luther contained in this guide, will help us closely examine the rich statements of belief and deep meaning found within the Apostles' Creed.



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