

FATHER ALMIGHTY; FROM THERE HE WILL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD. I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE HOLY UNIVERSAL CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS, THE FORGIVENESS
DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD; HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE
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; ON THE THIRD



I BELIEVE

A SERMON SERIES JOURNAL



LENT 2024

Ash Wednesday | February 14

At all Campuses | 7-8:30pm

HOLY WEEK

Maundy Thursday | March 28

Stations of the Cross

March 28 | 12-7pm

Westerville Campus

Good Friday | March 29

Stations of the Cross | 10am-9pm &

one hour after Good Friday Service

Westerville Campus

Good Friday Service | 7-8pm Westerville campus only

EASTER SERVICES

Saturday Service | March 30

Viña Grandview | 6pm

Sunday Services | March 31

East Campus

10am

Grandview Campus

6:30-7:45am Sunrise

9:15 & 11:15am

Sawmill

9:15 & 11:15am

Viña Westerville

11am

Westerville

9 & 11am

THE APOSTLES' CREED

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

He descended into hell; the
third day he arose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand
of God the Father Almighty;
from there he shall come to judge
the living and the dead.

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



SERMON SERIES JOURNAL

For centuries, Lent has marked the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter when Christians reorient their lives toward God by engaging in new practices and abstaining from old ones. During this time, we identify with Jesus' 40 days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness.

This year, we are doing a series over Lent called *I Believe* that is based on the Apostles' Creed. This series will reflect on our historic faith that has endured through countless generations. So many Christians affirm a historic belief, but it doesn't translate into a changed life. In this series, we also want to emphasize how belief in the Creed should turn into concrete change in our lives and in the world around us. During Lent, we want to invite you to fast from some things that might draw you away from God and engage in things that bring you towards God. One thing we want you to consider engaging in this season is being a part of a small group. Community is a practice that can really make a difference in your discipleship. If you're not currently in a group, we're hosting BIG small groups at all of our campuses to make it really easy for you to get started.

This journal is a guide to complement our teaching series throughout Lent. You can use this personally, and it can also be used as a resource for your small group discussion. We're praying that this is a season for you to take a next step in your relationship with Jesus!

I BELIEVE

February 11, 2024

The Apostles' Creed ✠ *A Sermon Series*

I Believe.

For decades, it has become more popular for those who are joined in marriage to write their own wedding vows. Oftentimes, these personalized vows serve as a moment within a wedding ceremony where we all lean in and listen. Our collective hope is to catch some of the intimacy of the couple's connection and devotion to one another. These are precious moments for sure. If only personal wedding vows are shared there is something missing that has been shared across the centuries – traditional wedding vows.

Traditional wedding vows serve to bind a couple to their community. When the couple shares these vows aloud they place their voices alongside all those who have gone before them in marriage. They are entrusting their commitment of love and fidelity to the care and support of their closest friends and family. Traditional vows serve to place the couple within community.

When it comes to the "I believe" of the Apostles' Creed it is important to be mindful that we are professing something deeply personal, but its real significance is that our voice is joining all the voices throughout the ages of the church. The "I believe" of the Apostles' Creed is impossible to say apart from the community of faith of those who have professed their belief in Jesus Christ. It is a communal proclamation of belief.

We can say this with confidence because the Apostles' Creed was formed very organically within the worship and practice of the early church. Specifically, the early practice of Baptism. In his short book, *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism*, Ben Myers shares the following:

"In baptism nobody is invited to come up with their own personal statement of belief. All are invited to be immersed into a reality beyond themselves and to join their individual voices to a communal voice that transcends them all. The truest and most important things we can ever say are not individual words but communal words. . . . In confessing the faith of the church, I allow my own individual "I" to become part of the "I" of the body of Christ. It is then that I am saying something of deep and lasting importance. It is then that my words have roots."

The Apostles' Creed Tapestry



Our words become rooted when we join our voices to the communal proclamation of our faith. We invite you to read Hebrews 10:19-25 and reflect on how our faith is rooted in the past and the present:

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith”

1. What beliefs do you hold about God in your heart with confidence?

2. What beliefs do others hold about God that you long to embrace but find that a full assurance of heart and mind is hard to attain?

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering”

3. How do you see your proclamation of faith impacting your hope?

4. How has witnessing others confess their hope helped you when you find yourself wavering?

“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good deeds”

5. Who are some of the people in your life who “stir up your love and good deeds”?

6. Who in your life is in need of your “consideration”? How might you “stir up another’s love and good deeds”?

I BELIEVE

February 18, 2024

The Apostles' Creed ✠ A Sermon Series

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

There is great promise in the power of God to create. It is through experiencing God's creative power that we learn to trust that God is worthy of our belief. In the creed we recognize that God, the Father Almighty, is an invisible and omnipotent source of all life. Within the Apostles' Creed, this is the first of three phrases that express God's power to bring life to all of creation: the Father Almighty brings heaven and earth to life by the power of His word, Jesus enters creation in the womb of Mary, and the Holy Spirit enlivens the communion of saints throughout the church all around the world.

The Apostles' Creed embraces the whole of our material world. We know from the testimony of the early church that this phrase in the creed is a response to Gnosticism. The Gnostics believed the material world was bad and were intolerant of the universe, life, and humanity. These were viewed as lesser things that needed to be escaped to find the "knowledge" that led to a spirituality of self-fulfillment. Gnosticism's hope of escaping this world stood in stark contrast to the beliefs of early Christians who walked and talked with God through the person of Jesus.

In his book, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, Eugene Peterson highlights the idea that intimacy with the person of Jesus connects us to the material world. Commenting on the "I believe" at work here in the confession, Peterson writes this:

"Saying 'I Believe' for instance marks the difference between life and death. Our words accrue dignity and gravity in conversations with Jesus, for Jesus does not impose this new creation as a solution: he narrates us into this creation through leisurely conversation, intimate personal relationships, compassionate responses, passionate prayer, and putting it all together a sacrificial death. Keeping company with Jesus we become insiders to the creation. It is not something 'out there' that we can adopt or ignore as we will. We cannot walk away from creation in order to attend to the spiritual life. We are embedded in the creation, we are integral to the creation."



Our humanity becomes “more true” when we embrace being created in the image of God. We invite you to read John 1:1-14 to reflect on the creative power of God:

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1. What is the significance of John’s gospel opening with, “In the beginning”?

2. What characteristics of “the Word” does John share with us in these verses?

3. How does John describe the power of God in these verses?

4. Why is verse 14 so comforting?

5. When do you find yourself thinking your spiritual life needs to “escape” creation?

6. How does your relationship with Jesus “embed” you in creation?

I BELIEVE

February 25, 2024

The Apostles' Creed ✠ A Sermon Series

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell.

Professing that Jesus was born of a virgin is a reminder that Jesus' birth, life, and death are the culmination of Israel's hope for a coming Messiah. Early Christians were acknowledging that their faith was rooted in the story of redemption as told in Israel's Scriptures. Throughout the pages of the Old Testament the promises of God are often highlighted by a barren woman becoming pregnant and giving birth. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Samuel are all examples of this pattern. In the New Testament this pattern continues with the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. The birth of Jesus is the final fulfillment of God's promise to Israel.

The Christian life is a relationship with the person of Jesus. The apostle Paul stresses the vitality of our union to Jesus in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Paul is writing about the centrality of our personal relationship to Jesus as we live out our faith. Our faith is not in a set of principles but in a particular person in history who suffered, was crucified, died and rose again from the dead.

Following Jesus leads us into a life informed by the cross. Sarah Codon, of Mockingbird Ministries, shares about the intersection of joy and sorrow in her life resulting from a deadly car crash that took both of her parents,

"People mean well when they say that God is uninvolved in the terrible things that happen. But people meaning well does not mean people are well . . . All this to say, I do not need bad theology

when my life is at its worst. It might make the false theologian feel better, but it will make me feel abandoned. When we suggest that God is surprised by the bad things that happen in our lives, then we offer suffering people a creator who has no plan, and no capacity to respond when the bottom falls out . . . When we declare that God is only involved in the good things that happen, we take away divine action in our lives at every level. When we follow such a biblically baseless claim to its natural end, we find a God who does not know what will happen from one moment to the next, a Risen Lord is somehow taken unawares by the weight of sin that was placed on His shoulders. And this is no good for me. At this moment, my life feels so intersected by joy and sorrow, so cruciform. Only in the intersection of the horizontal and the vertical will I find God's heart breaking for mine, only there will I recognize a Jesus who knew the cross was coming."



Our suffering makes more sense as we look to Jesus for hope. We invite you to read Philippians 2:5-11 and reflect on the humility of Jesus:

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, 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.

1. Paul tells us that Jesus took on flesh and lived with us; how does this impact your thinking of who God really is?

2. Why do you think that Jesus' death on the cross is described as an act of obedience?

3. How does Jesus' humility influence you concerning a relationship in your life that needs to change?

4. What comfort do you find in the words, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth?"

5. How does reflecting on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection change your "attitude" about life?

I BELIEVE

March 3, 2024

The Apostles' Creed ✠ *A Sermon Series*

I believe in Jesus...

The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

For early Christians, proclaiming the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus meant acknowledging the power of Christ above all things. All worldly powers throughout creation answer to Jesus. Jesus is no longer confined to a bodily presence but is now present for all people everywhere who assemble in his Name. There is great comfort in knowing that on the ultimate day of justice and judgment we do not answer to one another. Instead, we will all answer to one final voice, full of grace and truth, that judges the living and the dead.

Jesus' supremacy over all things captivated the imaginations of early Christians. His life, death, and resurrection promises power that serves and sacrifices. Jesus brings heaven to earth, not just in taking on flesh and walking among us, but also in bringing heaven to earth by empowering us and interceding for us while seated on the throne of Grace. It is a good reminder that the ascension of Jesus makes Him more present with us than we could ever dare hope or imagine.

Brain Walsh brings *the supremacy of Christ and the power of Christ in the church* to life when he shares poetically,

"In a 'show me culture' where words alone don't cut it, the church, the flesh and blood, here and now, in time and history, with joys and sorrows, embodiment of Christ...as a body politic, around a

*common meal, in alternative economic practices, in radical service to the most vulnerable, in refusal of empire, in love of creation... the church reimagines the world in the image of the invisible God. In the face of a disappointed world of betrayal, a world in which all fixed points have proven illusory, a world in which we are anchorless and adrift, **Christ is the foundation, the origin, the way, the truth and the life.**"*



Our lives have more integrity when our imaginations are captivated by Jesus. We invite you to read Colossians 1:15-20 and reflect on the supremacy of Jesus:

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.
¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

1. What images, brands, or people in today's culture captivate your imagination?

2. What part of the today's culture would you like to re-imagine so that Jesus' supremacy was more evident?

3. How does the influence of Jesus over all of creation impact your current outlook on life?

4. What parts of your life are you neglecting to believe that Jesus holds together?

5. How do you experience the fullness of God in the church?

6. Where in your life have you experienced the most powerful display of reconciliation?

I BELIEVE

March 10, 2024

The Apostles' Creed ✠ A Sermon Series

I believe in the Holy Spirit.

The disciples were full of sorrow when Jesus told them that He must return to the Father and that they would see him no longer. The early church learned through experience that Jesus' absence from them became the Spirit's presence in them. The Holy Spirit comforted, bringing peace, unity, and reconciliation to relationships; it also illumined, reminding and gracefully teaching the truth of sacred texts that became our Scriptures; and empowered, pouring out the gifts so that the witness of the early church spread throughout the world.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth bringing conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to confront the oppression of sin, sickness, sorrow, disease, and death. The Holy Spirit destroys spiritual strongholds of arguments or lofty opinions raised against a knowledge of God. Melba Maggay, highlights the importance of her relationship to the Holy Spirit in her work to address the social, economic and political problems in the Philippines:

"There is a hardness to evil, a mystery to its persistence, that cannot be fathomed nor remedied by mere politics. We continue to fight. Yet we need to mine more deeply the resources of our faith if we are to make even a small dent in the monolith of injustice that fazes us...I need a deeper rootedness in God, a closer walk with him so that I am able to hear the thud of his football in our history. Amid the gore, and grime, and grinding poverty, among people who serve quietly in the armpits of the cities, making space for grace in the squalor and violent hate, life springs forth from the Word, bringing a fresh blast of wind, carrying the weary and wounded on its wings...While all my professional expertise is useful,

it cannot hold a candle to the clean white flame that descends on us when the Spirit speaks. I had not noticed that through my years I had become technically proficient, like a highly trained monkey performing tricks. Confronted once again with the wonder of his Word, I feel shame at how I had allowed myself to coast along, just sailing with my usual stock in trade."

In the creed we profess that God is present with us in our world wherever we find ourselves in whatever circumstances. His presence assures us that we are children of God. His presence is our hope as we wait for all creation to be restored. His presence groans with us in our prayers interceding for us. He is present empowering our work in his kingdom—bringing heaven to earth!



Our hope is restored when we walk in step with the Holy Spirit. We invite you to read John 16:1–15 to reflect on Jesus words to us about the Holy Spirit’s empowerment in our lives:

¹“All this I have told you so that you will not fall away.
²They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. ³They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. ⁴I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, ⁵but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. ⁷But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

¹²“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

1. What are some ways God’s “absence” in your life has brought you sorrow?

2. How might Jesus’ absence and the sorrow of the disciples keep them from understanding God’s bigger plan?

3. How does Jesus describe the advantage of His going away and sending the Holy Spirit?

4. How is the role of the Holy Spirit as a “Helper” significant to you?

5. What three things does the Holy Spirit accomplish?

6. Which of these three roles of the Holy Spirit have you experienced and learned to appreciate?

I BELIEVE

March 17, 2024

The Apostles' Creed ✠ *A Sermon Series*

I believe in the Church.

Martin Luther King famously said in his work, *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*,

"There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period that early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was the thermostat that transformed the mores of society."

The early Christians' confession of a "universal" church announced to the world that the power of the gospel stretches to every people everywhere. Social distinctions and divisions were redefined within the life of the church—all were considered to be sons and daughters of God. The early Christians' unity in faith, hope, and love transformed individual lives into a radical new expression of the family of God living in community.

Rodney Stark, a historian and sociologist, who studied the impact of early Christianity within the Roman Empire points to the following quotes from antiquity that demonstrate the powerful witness of the early church:

The impious Galileans (Christians) support not only the poor, but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us...
– Roman Emperor Julian 360AD

(During the great epidemic) most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves...Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ...Many, in nursing and

curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead...The (pagans) behaved in the very opposite way. At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled even from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead...

– Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria 260 AD

The early Christians took these words of Jesus to heart, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." With people gathering for worship from over 120 different countries here at Vineyard Columbus we are a microcosm of God's plan for redemption to reach every family on earth. We do reflect "the holy catholic church" as a diverse multi-ethnic church, but there is still "more." There is always "more" in the Christian life as we follow Jesus who runs ahead of us and leads us to love. The "communion of saints" always pushes us to love and challenges us to live out justice and mercy to transform society.



Our witness as a church becomes a transforming power when we embrace the “universal” call of unity for the church. We invite you to read Ephesians 3:14–21 to reflect on the Apostle Paul’s prayer for the church:

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

1. In this prayer, how does Paul ask the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to work in our lives?

2. What lessons can we learn from the Apostle Paul’s prayer to influence our own praying?

3. What makes this prayer feel like it is ever-widening in inclusion, comprehensiveness, and expansion?

4. What importance does the power of love play in God’s family according to the prayer?

5. How do you expect to change as you become more assured and confident of God’s love?

6. What does Paul invite you to ask for or imagine in the conclusion of his prayer for the church?

I BELIEVE

March 24, 2024

The Apostles' Creed ✠ *A Sermon Series*

I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

It is hard for most of us to imagine a world where the act of forgiving one another was viewed as unnecessary or weak. History records for us that the early church was often ridiculed for the belief that God forgives and asks us to forgive as well. Although forgiveness was a familiar concept in the sacred text and story of the Jewish people, it was a completely foreign idea to most of those outside of the early church. It was radical to say that God would forgive your weaknesses or shortcomings let alone your broken human condition of sin.

Forgiveness is an amazing gift from God. The creed offered the early church the opportunity to acknowledge to one another they were a people in need of being forgiven. In Scripture forgiveness is described as: debts being canceled, a penalty overturned, relationships restored, a heart restored, retribution surrendered, and a victory completed. Forgiveness is one of the most practical acts of sharing God's love for us with one another. The world is simply a better place when we forgive.

One remarkable story of forgiveness is told by Corrie ten Boom in her book, *The Hiding Place*. She shares that after surviving the Holocaust she learned that one of her Nazi jailers became a Christian. She shares that she struggled to forgive him and that she did not want to meet him, but she prayed "Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness." Upon eventually meeting the jailer she describes the experience with these words,

"As I took his hand, the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me."

Forgiveness is often a place we experience intimacy with the power and love of God all at once.



Our fellowship is enriched when we practice forgiveness. We invite you to read I John 1:1-10 to reflect on God's gift of the forgiveness of sins:

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.

⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

1. Why do you think John emphasizes the way he experienced Jesus in such physical terms?

2. How does John connect his interactions with Jesus to his audiences' fellowship with God?

3. What does it mean practically to walk in darkness versus walking in the light?

4. What effect is implied that walking in darkness has on our relationship to God and our fellowship with one another?

5. Why is the "if" of verse nine so important to our practice of confessing our sins?

6. How have you experienced the purifying power of God's forgiveness of your sin?

I BELIEVE

March 31, 2024

The Apostles' Creed ✠ A Sermon Series

I Believe in the Resurrection and Life Everlasting.

We need reminded that many in the early church were connected to those who saw and interacted with resurrected Jesus. In I Corinthians 15:3-8 we learn that Jesus appeared to Peter, the twelve disciples, to more than 500 at one time, to James, to all the Apostles and then to Paul himself. Throughout history the evidence for Jesus' empty tomb, post-mortem appearances and the origin of the disciples' faith in the resurrection has been found to be a convincing argument that the resurrection is a fact of history. Although not all scholars agree on the historicity of the resurrection most agree the evidence is sufficient. The most convincing reality is that our Risen Lord continues to bring dead hearts to life transforming unbelief to faith in Himself.

Commenting on the I Corinthians 15:19-21 "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man." William Barclay summarizes the hope that Jesus' resurrection proves to us: truth is stronger than falsehood, good is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate and life is stronger than death. The promise of resurrection not only assures us our body and soul is raised to life immortal and imperishable for eternity, but also empowers us to participate in the work of the Kingdom.

Kent Hughes shares the beauty of God's power at work within us now and forever,

"It's humbling to accept Paul's declaration, 'But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us,' is not a formula for our power. The equation for power is: my weakness plus God's power equal's God's power. It's humbling to hear that all my acknowledgment of weakness will not make me strong—embracing weakness leads to more weakness. But it is also beautiful and so liberating to know that God's power in our lives does not come from our pursuit of power... How beautiful that this reflects the life of Jesus in us, 'always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.' How heartening to know that when you live this way, death is at work in us but life is at work in those whom God has called us to serve."



Our lives are empowered by life of Jesus in us. We invite you to read John 11:1-44 and reflect on Jesus' words "I am the resurrection and the life." Below is a portion of this scripture.

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

1. How does Jesus delaying his travels in the face of Mary and Martha's appeal for help, "Lord, the one you love is sick," inform your own prayer requests?

2. How are Jesus and Martha talking past one another about the reality of the resurrection?

3. What impact does Jesus weeping alongside Mary and the others have on your understanding of Jesus' power?

4. What do you make of Jesus' prayer before he calls "Lazarus, come out!"?

5. Why do you think Jesus asked for others to "take off the grave clothes and let him go" after he raised Lazarus from the dead?

6. Where do you find yourself most longing for Jesus' love to come and bring life?

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



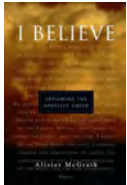
Know the Creeds and Councils (KNOW Series)
by Justin S. Holcomb



Know Why You Believe (KNOW Series)
by K. Scott Oliphint



Know How We Got Our Bible (KNOW Series)
by Ryan Matthew Reeves
and Charles E. Hill



"I Believe": Exploring the Apostles' Creed
By: Alister McGrath



Lent: The Season of Repentance and Renewal (Fullness of Time)
by Esau McCaulley



Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion (The Gospel Coalition)
by Rebecca McLaughlin



After Doubt: How to Question Your Faith without Losing It
by A. J. Swoboda

APOSTLES' CREED TAPESTRY

Learn more about the Apostles' Creed tapestry at
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/468567>