

“AS WE BELIEVE, SO WE SING:
II - ‘I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD . . .’”
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This morning, as we begin, I have a question for all of you to ponder, and it is this: what are the most important words you ever said? Think about that for a second. What are the most important words you’ve ever said?

They might have been, “I love you.” For many of you, they might have been, “I do.” Or maybe, words like, “Yes, I want to be a teacher,” or “Yes, I’ll go to seminary.”

Well, each one of us has our own unique answer to that question. There could be as many different answers as there are people in this room.

But there’s another way of looking at that question in which we all have the exact same answer, and it is, as Christians. The most important words a Christian ever says are the words that are the topic of today’s sermon, “I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.” For those words are the crux of the matter. For we who carry the name Christian, that’s the heart of the matter - we believe in Jesus Christ our Lord.

So today, in this second sermon in my series on the Apostles’ Creed, we’ll look more closely at Jesus - fully human, fully divine - and at what he did and said, and what he means for our lives even today. We’ll do it in a little different way. As you can see from the bulletin, we’ll look at four different parts of his life through scripture and song, and for each section I’ll have a little something to say.

So let’s begin at the beginning - actually, let’s begin on the heels of last week’s sermon about God the Father Almighty.

In the beginning, God created, and all that God created was good, including humankind. God delighted in creating humankind, and delighted in giving humankind dominion over His creation. God gave humankind everything we ever would need, but time and again, we turned our backs on Him. The scriptures are full of accounts of the waywardness of humankind. No matter what God did, humanity would turn away.

What could God do to show us how much He loved us? To what lengths would God go to show us His care and concern for us?

Well, He shared Himself with us in a way we would understand. He sent His only begotten Son into the world to share life with us, to lead us, to show us the way to live, to serve, and to sacrifice.

And He did it in a surprising way. One would have thought that the Savior of the world would be a mighty warrior, or a conquering hero. We would have recognized that. Instead, God surprised us all. He sent this Savior to us in the most tender and vulnerable way possible - in the form of a baby.

Hear now again, the very familiar, but always awe inspiring words of Jesus' birth from the Gospel of Luke. After we hear them, we'll sing together a lovely Christmas tune, "Away in a Manger." And as you sing, I invite you to really think about the miracle that God sent to us, really think about the amazing life that lay ahead for that little baby born to Mary.

Read Luke 2:1-7. Then "Away in a Manger."

After the story of Jesus' birth, we don't hear much about him in the scriptures for a number of years. Oh, there are a few stories, like the time he got separated from his parents while they were traveling, and the time spent in the temple learning from the elders and sharing his knowledge with those gathered there.

Where we really catch up with Jesus, is at his baptism, as an adult, in the River Jordan. His cousin John baptizes him, and it is at that moment, that the Spirit descends upon him, a voice from heaven reminds everyone that he is God's son, the beloved, and from there, he steps out into ministry.

He goes into the wilderness and shows us that he is just like us, facing temptation and fighting it. He comes out of the wilderness stronger than ever, and goes forth in ministry.

He picks twelve persons to be by his side, the twelve apostles. He surrounds himself with them and good friends, like Lazarus, Mary and Martha. And he begins to touch the world in powerful ways - teaching, very often in parables, so that people could figure things out for themselves; healing, so much so that great crowds began to follow him around; praying, because he always relied on his father for guidance and strength; serving, for that he what he came to do, and show us how to do.

Listen now to what Luke had to say about the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
Read Luke 4:14-21.

Throughout all of his ministry, Jesus did indeed bring good news to the poor, set people free from whatever held them captive, healed those who were infirm,

sought justice and righteousness wherever he went, and showed us what love looks like.

There's a wonderful hymn called "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus" and there are so many wonderful stories - each of us probably has a favorite. Perhaps it's the feeding of the five thousand, one of the healing stories, the calling of the disciples, walking on water, stilling the storm, the many wonderful parables he shared. Whatever your favorite, you know, that all of them wrapped up into one, made for an incredible life - a life showing us the very love of God in so many ways, in the perfect way.

Perhaps no other hymn helps us celebrate all the aspects of Jesus' life than one that I know is a favorite of many of you - "Lord of the Dance." Let's sing it now and remember all that Jesus did in his time on this earth.

Sing - Lord of the Dance

While Jesus did a lot that brought joy, health and wholeness to so many, he also did much that made people angry - especially people in power. He preached a new way of living, a way that was threatening to the powers that be. He said "turn the other cheek" when the world wanted "an eye for an eye." He preached sacrifice when the world encouraged taking care of number one. He saw corruption and he called it what it was. He saw legalism and preached grace.

He made people mad. And when more and more of the people turned to him, the people in authority were threatened, and determined that he needed to go. There was no earthly reason that should do that to him, he hadn't broken any laws. They had to bring him up on trumped up charges, and even then, nobody wanted to do the dirty deed. He kept getting passed back and forth between his accusers because nobody wanted to take responsibility for his demise. In the end, it came to mob rule. The crowd cried out "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Hear now again the sad story of his final hours as recorded in the Gospel of John.

Read John 19:16b-30

Once again, just as had happened before, humanity had turned on God. This time, the ultimate price was paid for us. God's only begotten Son, died on the cross to pay for our sins. He suffered and died, that we would be free, that we would have eternal life. He suffered and died, he gave up his life for you.

As we sing together now, "Were You There?" think about that. Think about the price paid for your life. Give God thanks for His incredible gift of Christ for you.

Sing - Were You There?

After Jesus died, Joseph of Arimathea laid him in a tomb, and off everyone went to grieve this unbelievable loss. The man who had changed their lives was dead and gone. The man who had turned their world upside down was no more. What would they do? Where would they go? On whom would they lean? They were absolutely devastated, to think that all he had done was for naught, that things we go back to the way they were. They were beyond hopeless.

And then, Easter morning came, and with it, resurrection. In my opinion, there is no greater scripture lesson than the one we're about to hear - because it has within it the greatest news ever heard. Hear now again the Easter story from the Gospel of John.

Read John 20:1-18

Death did not hold Jesus - He was alive that first Easter morning, and He is alive today! And that friends, changes all of life! If death could not hold Jesus, death cannot hold us and those we love. If death, the worst thing we can imagine, has lost its power, life as we know it changes. Nothing can ultimately take us down. Nothing! Not sadness, not hardship, not disease or any worldly struggle. Nothing. Jesus' victory is our victory. Thanks be to God!

As this wonderful hymn we're about to sing says, "because he lives, I can face tomorrow, because he lives, all fear is gone, because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living, just because he lives." That says it all, my friends, it's all because of Jesus.

I know that most of you here have, at some point in your life, said these most important words, "I believe in Jesus Christ" and you have invited him into your heart, surrendering your life to him. But I know there may be some here who haven't. Let this be the day you receive him. Let this be the moment. As you sing these wonderful words, say "I am your's Lord. I give my life to you."

And if you've already given your life to Jesus, recommit it now as you sing. Say "Lord, as I did then, so I do now. I give myself to you anew that you may be Lord of my life."

As we sing together this final hymn, let us celebrate that "we believe 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, and on the third day he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven!"

So now, let us sing together, offer our prayers of commitment to Christ, and most of all, let us rejoice! Please stand for this wonderful hymn.

Sing - Because He Lives