

APOSTLE'S CREED ...SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED
 "Isaiah 53.1-9"

We continue this week with our series on the Apostle's Creed.

The creed begins with **"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."**

I want you to count the number of words in this line about God.

I get twelve.

Now compare that with the words about Jesus;

**"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;
 The third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven,
 And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
 From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.'**

I count sixty five words.

So then I have to ask, "Why does Jesus get 5x's more press than God does?"

Is Jesus more important than God?

No, we don't believe that to be true.

So why more words?

Here is my two cents; almost everyone would concede that there is a God, a higher power, a creator, but this whole business of Jesus being fully God and fully human; that's a bit harder to understand let alone accept.

Jesus has been, is, and probably always will be the most controversial person of our triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Think about it, if you agree about some particular person or issue, you nod your head, go unhun, and comment.

But if you disagree with mom or dad, son or daughter, a friend, the teacher or coach you usually use a few more words to make sure the other person gets it right-right?

Last week Pastor Eldon talked about the line in the creed

"...his only son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary."

Why is it in there?

First to remind us what we as people of faith believe

and because of the false teaching and heresies in the early church denying the divinity of Christ.

And it also proves providential today as he pointed out because of the attack on the issue of the Virgin Birth.

In Jesus time he angered the Jews with his claims to be God.

To the people and to his followers he was a mere man doing good.

Well, to them maybe Jesus was more than a mere man.

He was a miracle man. He was the conquering king, a super hero,

the one who could perform mighty feats and miracles.

He was a man with God-like power, but still a man.

He cast out demons, cure people's ills, and conquered the death of their loved ones.

Matthew 8.27 tells us that after Jesus calmed the winds
of a furious storm on the Sea of Galilee
His disciples were amazed and asked,
“What kind of **man** is this? Even the winds and waves obey him.”

But the disciples learned that Jesus was God.
As you learned last week Peter got it.
When asked by Jesus who do you say that I am?”
He says, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

We know that Paul and the disciples got it, they sang, “He is Lord.”
We know many people got it but not everyone.
So, the need to write down that Jesus was the Son of God.

Well today the issue we’re talking about is not the divinity of Jesus, but the humanity of Jesus.
The humanity of Jesus has been under attack for 2000 years
so it is providential for us to have the words today that tell us Jesus was human;
“he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.”

Evidently that heresy was pretty prevalent in the early church.
I John 4.1-3, tells us there were a lot of false prophets
and encourages us to test for the genuine Spirit.

Here is how, **“Everyone who confesses openly his faith in Jesus Christ
-the Son of God, who came as an actual flesh and blood person-
comes from God and belongs to God.
And everyone who refuses to confess
faith in Jesus has nothing in common with God.**

So serious is this that he ends verse three with,
**“This is the spirit of the antichrist that you heard was coming.
Well, it’s here sooner than you think.”**

The first century disciples had no trouble believing that Jesus was a man,
they had hands on experience, they walked and talked with him.

And if they forgot, he simply reminded them,
Mark 8.31 is a good example,
**“He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders,
chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed...”**

Isaiah 53.8, told the people that Jesus would suffer and die,
“... he was cut off from the land of the living...”

Second century Christian theologian and martyr Ignatius
had no trouble believing Jesus was both God and man.
He had trouble with a heresy called Docetism which means “to seem to appear.”

It’s like David Copperfield who creates illusions.
Something may seem to be there but actually isn’t.

Take the person that is afraid. They are gripped by terror and screaming on the inside but on the outside they appear, or so it seems, cool, calm, and collected.

Or take the person that expresses some concern with words or with actions but on the inside they don't care. They've given the appearance that they care.

Jesus gives more than the appearance of caring.

Ignatius writes, "Jesus experienced all that the New Testament ascribes to him, including truly, and not just in appearance, being born, suffering, dying, and rising.

Different sects of Docetics believed that the Spirit came into Jesus at Baptism and left before crucifixion.

Mohammed acknowledged Jesus as a great man, as anointed, as a prophet but claimed God took him off the cross before he died and whisked him away to heaven substituting Judas for Jesus.

Docetism is a spin off and fits perfectly with the heresy, Gnosticism. Gnostics believe that the things of the spiritual world are good and matter or things of the physical world are evil and don't matter.

God the spirit is good but not personal.

In fact he must be as far removed as distant from creation as possible. Salvation for a Gnostic is found in attaining "divine knowledge" and this divine knowledge or high truth is only for the elite and privilege.

If this is suppose to be part of Christianity red flags should fly. Do we think of our God being impersonal? Do we think that God only selects a few to follow?

John's Christmas story simply says,

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1.14)

John 3.16 tells why, **"For God so loved the world** (does that sound like God is removed from his creation?)

that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever (whosoever, not just the elite and privileged, but young and old, men and women, rich or poor, smart and not so smart, anyone from shepherds to magi) **believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

I John 4.10 concurs, **"...but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God."** Isaiah says, **"like a sheep he was went to slaughter."**

There are old age and new age faiths that subscribe to the tenants of Gnostic philosophy but the greatest heresy in the church today also negates the suffering and death of Jesus.

Dave Campbell calls it, "If anyone gets to go to heaven, it's Aunt Susie."

And the reason Aunt Susie gets to heaven is that she is a good person.
Cambell says that 83% of Evangelical Protestants in America believe that good people, despite their religious affiliation will go to heaven.

Uh oh, more red flags.

What happened to the need for Jesus to suffer, be crucified, die, and be buried.

What happened to saved through grace by faith with works to follow?

What happened to Isaiah's understanding that **"all we like sheep have gone astray?"**

What happen to Romans 3.23, **"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God?"**

And Romans 6.23, **"The wages of sin is death..."**

And Hebrews 9.22, **"Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins?"**

The writer of Hebrews says it this way, 7.14-17 (MSG)

"Since the children are made of flesh and blood

**it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood
in order to rescue them by his death.**

By embracing death, taking it to himself,

he destroyed the Devil's hold on death

and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death."

Paul keeps it short and sweet, I Corinthians 15.3,

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance;

that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, that he was buried..."

Did you catch the line, "according to the Scriptures?"

Roughly 1/3 of Matthew, Mark, and Luke speak of the suffering and death of Jesus.

Almost 1/2 of John tells us something about his suffering.

It's said many times in many ways in the Bible.

According to Deuteronomy and Galatians he took the curse of death.

Colossians tells us he cancelled the debt of our sins

He suffered not only physically, but emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.

Isaiah 53.5,

"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man suffering, and familiar with pain.

(I'm sure many of you have felt despised and rejected by others.)

Like one from whom people would hide their faces,

(has anyone ever gone out their way to avoid you?)

he was despised and held in low esteem."

(He was put down and ridiculed, that's suffering)

We remember the people in power at that time were threatened by Jesus.

They were so afraid of him they became so obsessed with him

that they took every opportunity to intimidate him, embarrass him, and humiliate him.

Crowds were fickle. As long as he waived his finger of favor on them, he was ok.

Hallelujahs were shouted and arms held high on Palm Sunday

but less than a week later the crowd cried crucify him and pointed fingers of condemnation at him. All that is painful.

Remember his mother and brothers even thought he was crazy. That hurts.

And his friends. They were behind him...way behind him.
And when the going got tough, they got going, the other way.

There are a collection of ways he suffered under Pontius Pilate.
Pilate questioned Jesus' integrity and rejected his authenticity. That has to hurt.
And Pilate was the one who ordered him scourged, and ultimately crucified.

He tried to wash his hands of his responsibility but it doesn't work that way.
It doesn't work for us either, to stand on the outside, as on lookers,
objectively commenting on what is going on.

The cross confronts us as well.

We are culpable as well for it is our pain, our suffering, and our sin that Jesus is taking on.
Isaiah 53.5 (MSG), **"But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him..."**
In the NIV it is, **"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was on him, but his wounds (stripes) we are healed."**

From our point of view God bears some responsibility, Isaiah 53.4,
"...bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted."

And God would say we're right, it's part of the plan, Isaiah 53.10,
"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer."

And Jesus knows that as well, in another kind of pain.
Luke 22.42 records that on the cross he cries, **"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me."**

Jesus even confesses his willingness to suffer. On the Mount of Olives he prays, Luke 22.42,
"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done."

The writer of Hebrews tells us he suffered willingly, Hebrews 12.2,
"who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning it's shame,..."
He endure the suffering and shame for the joy to be found.

Isaiah 53.7 (MSG), **He was beaten and, he was tortured..."**
He suffered so that he might know our suffering, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually.
He endured all the bashing, bruising, beatings that he might identify with you and I.

When life seems unfair, when you been beaten, bashed, and bruised by life's experiences,
when you feel deserted and alone, and you start to sing,
"Nobody knows the trouble I've seen;"
Keep sing, because "nobody knows but Jesus."
He has been there, he has done that and he done more.

One last question. Why do we need to remember that Jesus was buried?
Simply put to prove that he had died.
You see there are heresies that say he really didn't die and if he didn't die,
Then he didn't need to be resurrected, and if there is no resurrection,
Then for you and I there is no hope.

Here are three things we know.

Isaiah 53.9 tells us that, **"He was assigned a grave with the wicked and the rich in his death,..."**

John 19. 38-42 tells us that Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man by the way;
with his friend, Nicodemus, Sanhedrin's closet Christian buried the body.

Matthew 27, 62-66, adds that Pilate honored the Pharisees' request for a guard at the tomb.

We'll stop here, leave Jesus in the tomb for the week
But I want to leave you with this;
Living Jesus loved you, suffering, Jesus knows you, dying,
Jesus saves you, and being buried, Jesus frees you.

If you believe that Jesus suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried for you;
Please stand with me and affirm that;
**I believe Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried..."**

Now let's live for Jesus'
Continue to remain standing and we'll sing Living For Jesus.