



THE FAITH WE SHARE

A STUDY OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

Week Three: "...in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary" Luke 1: 26-38

Opening Question: What is something you said "yes" to in your life that ended up being important for some reason? Or what is one thing you want to say "yes" to this semester or in this current season of your life?

CONTEXT

A quick look back: Read through the Apostles' Creed together. How do the words "father" and "almighty" work together to describe God? What did we learn last week about the ways God meets us when we are tired and weary?

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

**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.

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.

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

Today's Passage: Today we turn our attention to Jesus- the second person of the Trinity. Before we focus on what Jesus will DO, the Creed points us to the truth of who Jesus IS- fully God, fully human. Lord of the Universe AND child of a young virgin named Mary. Our passage today comes from the gospel of Luke. Luke was not a disciple of Jesus, but explains in the introduction of his book that his telling of the life and work of Jesus comes from all kinds of trustworthy eyewitnesses- those who walked and lived and loved and ministered with Jesus. This passage gives us front-row seats to the miraculous story of a God who chose to come close to humanity in the most vulnerable, human, and intimate way. But it also allows us "peek behind the curtain" and see the Trinity at work, bringing forth the most powerful evidence of God's forever intention to be "God with us"- the incarnation of Christ.

CONTENT

Read Luke 1: 26-38 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text? What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group to share and discuss your observations, writing them in a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, lists, words. For this passage, it might make sense to illustrate these two dimensions of God- as Father and Almighty Creator. When everyone has completed their art, come together to share and discuss what you drew and why.

Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. What words or descriptions in vs 32-33 help us understand Jesus as “Lord”? How is his reign different than any other ruler before or after him?
2. What word is repeated twice in vs 27 and again in vs 34. This word was also chosen to be included in the Creed. Why is this word and concept so important in understanding Christ’s birth and who he is?
3. There are only a few times in Scripture where we clearly get to see the three persons of God revealed together in one moment or event (though we believe that this is always the reality). Luke 1 gives us one of those moments. Look at vs 35 and talk about how we see the Trinity revealed here.
4. What words would you use to describe Mary’s responses or development during this short interaction with the angel Gabriel?

APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.

- Have you ever witnessed a miracle in your own life- a healing, a change of heart, an unexplainable ability to say or do something you thought was impossible, a person coming into your life at just the right moment, an event in creation- that helped you understand the angel’s declaration (vs 37) that “nothing is impossible with God”?
- Mary is invited to be part of an unimaginable story in this passage. Her ability to say “yes” to God’s invitation seems to be connected to her sense as God’s servant- someone who is here to love and serve and participate in God’s unfolding story. Have you ever had a time you said “yes” to something that you felt came from God, but that you didn’t totally understand (or maybe still don’t)? Share with the group.
- This passage describes a God who is not satisfied to be distant from those He created and loves. The Holy Spirit rests on Mary, the Most High wraps around her, and the Son of God grows within her. There is no part of her that is not held and filled with and by God. When you think of God’s relationship with you, do you more often picture “God out there” or the “God with us” described in this passage? How does your picture of God shape how you interact with God in prayer or worship? How you talk about Him to others? How you feel connected or disconnected from Him?

PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your “wonderings” from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

Father, Son, and Spirit-

We thank for your unstoppable determination to be a God who is truly with us in every way. We confess that so often in our lives, we try to hold you at a distance. We try to hide our truest selves from you. We fear opening ourselves to your intimacy.

But in the incarnation of Christ, we are reminded that your intention to be near us is not determined by our action or inaction. Because no matter what we do, your love, your mercy, your grace, your kindness, your goodness, come over and around and within us. We will never understand how the Lord of the Universe can love us this much. But we thank you that it is true. May we be people who never grow tired of proclaiming the miraculous truth that you really are Immanuel, God with us. We pray this in the name of Christ- your Son, our Lord- Amen.

