

THE FAITH WE SHARE

A STUDY OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

Week Five: "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 Corinthians 15: 1-8, Philippians 2: 5-11

Opening Question: What recent experience has brought you unexpected joy?

CONTEXT

A quick look back: Based on what we have learned together so far, how might you use the Creed as a tool to share the gospel story? As a way to worship? As a way to connect with other believers? What did we learn last week about Jesus' relationship with sorrow and grief?

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: Last week, we learned how Jesus' death became the once-and-for-all sacrifice for the totality of the world's sin. But that sacrifice would mean nothing if three days later, Jesus did not rise from that grave. The ultimate declaration that sin was not only paid for; it is defeated. That death was not only reversed; it is conquered. That he was not only the suffering Lamb; he is the reigning Lord. Everything hinges on the resurrection of Jesus, not just because it gives us life with him "someday in heaven" but because it gives us a new kind of life with him today. In the resurrection of Jesus, the "someday" kingdom of God rushes right into this world, infusing hard and dark and impossible places with hope and light and justice and the promise that Jesus is and will always be in control. Today we will use two passages from the apostle Paul to examine this resurrection miracle and the ongoing work of Christ. Paul did not know Jesus during his earthly life, but his encounter with the resurrected Jesus changed absolutely everything about who he was and how he saw this world. Because of this, the resurrection of Jesus became a central theme in many of his New Testament writings.

CONTENT

Read I Cor 15: 1-8 and Phil 2: 5-11 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with these passages.

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. When everyone has completed their art, come together to share and discuss what you drew and why.

Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:

I Corinthians 15:1-8:

1. Paul writes that he wants to remind his readers of the “gospel”, which literally means “good news.” Look at vs 3-5. What are the 4 parts of this good-news message?
2. What phrase ends vs 3 and 4? Paul and his listeners did not yet have the New Testament gospel accounts in writing, so what is he referring to here? What does this tell us about Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection related to the big story of Scripture?
3. What word is repeated several times in vs 5-8?
 - a. What do you notice about who Jesus appears to? Why do you think these appearances are so important to the gospel story?

Philippians 2: 5-11

1. This beautiful poem (which was probably a hymn of the early church) is often used to illustrate Christ’s full humanity and full divinity. What parts of the passage reveal Jesus as fully human? What parts reveal him as fully God?
2. The Creed says that Jesus is seated at God’s right hand (a symbol of authority and power) and is the judge of all those who have lived and will live. What further pictures does this passage give of what Jesus’ kingdom reign looks like?

APPLICATION

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

- Imagine a friend or family member is in the middle of something really difficult and painful in their lives right now. How do you talk compassionately with that person about resurrection power, about Jesus being on the throne, in a way that really honors the reality of their experience?
- Talk again about the 4 parts of the gospel message that Paul writes about. When you think about the story of Jesus, which of these parts is most prominent in your mind? Are there any that haven’t really been part of how you think about the good news? Are there ways in which any of these parts of the story might expand the fullness of the gospel story in your heart?
- Jesus’ resurrection launches a new pattern in the world, one in which we should now expect to see life in places that seemed dead. Are there any places in your life where you are seeing little or big signs of God doing something new? Bringing new life, joy, hope or light to a part of your life that has felt dark or complicated?
- The largest section of the Creed is given to the person and work of Jesus, and yet there is no way to capture in these few short phrases the fulness of who Christ is. Remember, the Creed was only meant to be a launching point for people to teach and share and talk about the BIG story of God’s work in the world through Christ. Is there a particular story from the life or ministry of Christ that is especially important to you? Why does this story resonate in a meaningful way?

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 prayer:

God of resurrection light,

When we look around at this world- at its aches, its groans, its injustices- we can sometimes forget what happened at the tomb. That in the resurrection of Jesus you declared that darkness and death and grief and heartache will never have the last word. And so today we picture Jesus on the throne- our powerful, loving, compassionate king who sees the reality of this world and of our lives and says to us, “Beloved ones, this is not the end of the story.” God, we trust and long for the day when you do indeed at last turn all things right. May that sure promise shine light into our today, and may we have the hope and courage to continue to believe and share that in Christ, we are surely part of a resurrection story that is good, good news. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our Servant and our King. Amen.