

SERMON – 2nd - 6th MIDWEEK LENT – CREED – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2012

Dear friends in Christ,

We are looking into the connection between the catechism and the cross in our midweek services

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And as we go through each of the parts of the catechism, what we find is that the connection is always there, and very evident – for the Gospel itself which is intrinsically woven in with the cross, is the truth with which all the other teachings in the Bible are connected.

That should not be surprising – for while it is true that the Word of God had quite a few different authors, what they penned was inspired by one and the same God – a God whose plan for mankind has always been one and the same – for He is the one true God from all eternity. We do not have a God of confusion – in that what He says can be correctly understood one way here and a whole different way there – as is the case with other world religions. We do not have a God who changes – who said one thing at one time, but later on had his message change in some way or another – also the case with some of our world's false religions.

Who this one true God is is something which He has laid out in His own revelation. The true God is the Triune God. There is but one God – “The Lord our God, the Lord is one” – “I, only, I am the Lord.” And yet while He is clearly one God, it is just as evident from His Word that there are 3 persons who comprise that one God – the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles' Creed is the part of the catechism which is our focus tonight – and it is in this part of the catechism that the basic Biblical truths concerning the Triune God are laid out in short, concise form.

The Scriptures themselves give us a taste of the framework for what we have in the creed. In the Scripture text I read this evening, we find the Apostle Paul giving a “creed” of sorts – “Jesus died, was buried, rose the third day, was seen...”

To this day it is not known who wrote the Apostles' Creed – it has the name because it is an exposition of what those apostles believed.

This practice of writing “creeds,” statements of what is believed, is still part of our practice to this day. Typically it seems that a creed comes out of a difficulty or doctrinal disagreement of some sort. The Nicene Creed came out of the Council of Nicaea, at which the issue of Jesus divinity and humanity was at issue. The Athanasian creed addressed the issue of the Trinity. Today we have statements of faith such as “Concerning Church Fellowship” and “the Brief Statement.”

So – what about this Apostles' Creed – what is it that we are confessing? We are confessing that absolutely everything you and I need for our salvation is done for us by God Himself!

We start with the Father. In the beginning He had created an absolutely perfect world in six days. But that crown of His creation, the man and the woman, completely ruined what He had made

when they fell into sin, following along with the temptation of the devil who came to them in that serpent.

And so now that demand of God which Adam and Eve had been able to keep, we no longer can at all – God says, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”

But God the Father did not simply turn away from His creation in well deserved condemnation – He to this day “still preserves me, richly and daily providing everything that I need for this body and life.”

Instead of simply getting rid of what we had sent into a tailspin of sin, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

God the Father saw the sin problem that we have and moved forward with “His plan from all eternity,” to send His Son – and “when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

And in His becoming a human being, true Son of Man, Jesus, also as true God, was able to successfully do everything that His Father demanded of Him.

He actively lived a perfect life in our place – so then when it came time for Him to die on the cross, He was able to offer Himself up as the absolutely perfect “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” The price He paid for our sins was not “gold or silver, but His holy precious blood and His innocent sufferings and death.”

But God’s love for us doesn’t stop there. Not only does He fulfill the requirement of absolute perfection for us and pay the penalty for our sins, He also makes it possible for all that Christ did to become our very own personal possession by faith.

For here too, we are completely unable to do anything for ourselves. It is true, what Paul and Silas answered that jailer in Philippi – when he asked them, “What must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!”
In order to be saved, you and I must believe!

But as Luther put it, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him...”

Just as my sin rendered me completely unable to live holy before God, so my sin also renders me unable to come in faith to the Lord for His salvation!

So here again, God takes care of things for us – “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” As it was with the holiness that God demands, and gives, so it is here – the faith which God demands of us, He gives! “The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel.”

So it is that we who by nature were headed straight to hell, who were lost in the darkness of unbelief, who were born to die, are now converted, enlightened, and re-born as a part of God's family!

And as God has done for you, in the same way He has done for each and every believer, building us as "living stones" into the building of His Church, giving us a role to fill in His body.

So it is not surprising that our Lord who has made us His children, would encourage us to do two things –

1) that we "do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together – that we consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" – for in this way we who are believers may help each other in keeping close to our loving Lord and Savior – and "so much the more as we see the Last Day approaching!"

And 2) that we "go out into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!" It is God's desire that "all men be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And it is that "ministry of reconciliation" that we have been given – that we share the Gospel with others so that they may have what we have been freely given.

So yes, as we look at the CATECHISM and the CROSS tonight, especially focusing on the Apostles' Creed, we have seen again the close connection.

The Father who created the world, saw the problem of sin and sent His Son to the cross. The Son willingly came as the Redeemer, giving His sinless life on the cross to pay the price of sin.

And the Holy Spirit has come to us through the Gospel, the Good News of forgiveness through Jesus' death on the cross, giving us faith by which everything God has done for our salvation becomes our own!

This is most certainly true! Amen.