

Love Confesses, I Believe...

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Dear congregation, when the Lord God almighty says to us, "I am the Lord thy God," then believers, by grace in faith reply, "I believe in God the Father. I believe in God the Son. I believe in God the Holy Spirit."

And as we have been considering together the Apostles' Creed then we have to remind ourselves that it is a confession of faith, a confession of true faith, the kind of faith that saves, comforted faith, living, loving faith in the triune God.

It order for sinners to be saved, in order to be washed and cleansed from our sin and to be redeemed and forgiven, this faith is necessary. In order to be called God's child, in order to have a place in the new heaven and the new earth, in order to be comforted in this life, that faith is absolutely necessary. It is necessary for us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is right now seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty, to believe that he is coming again to judge the living and the dead. That is included when we say, "I believe in God. I believe in Jesus Christ."

When God who is love says, "I send you my only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life," then faith in love replies and confesses, "I believe."

I want to look at that this afternoon, too, as we continue our consideration of the Apostles' Creed. We do so from Lord's Day 19 and Psalm 110 verse one. First Psalm 110 verse one, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."¹ And Lord's Day 19 question 50, 51 and 52. "Why is it added 'and sitteth at the right hand of God'?" The answer, "Because Christ is ascended into heaven for this end that he might appear as head of his Church by whom the Father governs all things.

Question 51. "What profit is this glory of Christ our head unto us? First, that by his Holy Spirit he pours out heavenly graces upon us his members and, then, that by his power he defends and preserves us against all enemies."

¹ Psalm 110:1.

Question 52. “What comfort is it to you that Christ shall come again to judge the living and the dead?” And the answer, “That in all my sorrows and persecutions with uplifted head I look for the very same person who before offered himself for my sake to the tribunal of God and has removed all curse from me to come as Judge from heaven who shall cast out all his and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall translate me with all his chosen ones to himself into heavenly joys and glory.”

Love confesses, “I believe that Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father almighty.”
Love confesses, “I believe that Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead.”
And love confesses that my life is now hid with Christ in God. Those are our three main thoughts.

First, then, love confesses that Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father.

“I believe in Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.”

The article reminds us that according to Scripture Christ Jesus has been exalted. He is glorified. He is honored. To him has been given all power and authority and majesty over all. For 40 days after his resurrection from the dead he appeared to his disciples and remained on this earth and then he ascended into heaven where God seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, Ephesians one verse 20.

Children, do you know what Old Testament verse is most often quoted or referred to in the New Testament? It is Psalm 110 verse one.

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”²

It is quoted over and over in the New Testament in full or in part. That tells us how important this fact really is because when Jesus Christ sat down on the right hand of his Father this verse is fulfilled. He is sitting there and he will sit there until God has made his enemies his footstool. And that will finally take place completely on the judgment day.

What is so important about sitting at the right hand of God?

In Scripture to be seated at someone’s right hand is a mark of honor. We read in the book of Chronicles where Bathsheba came to her son Solomon that he stood up to meet her and bowed down to her and had her seated at his right hand, the place of honor.

Now Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God and the right hand of God signifies his highest power, his omnipotence, his highest dignity and honor and majesty. That is where Christ is and that is where he remains. That shows us that the power, the omnipotence of God is Christ’s. All the dignity, the honor, the majesty, the kingdom, the power, the glory of God is Christ’s. That is why he is there at the right hand of God and

² Ibid.

that kingship of Christ Jesus is now reality. Today Christ rules over his own people and over the whole universe. He is seated at the right hand of God. He is the head of the Church. That tells us that there is a spiritual kingship, a royal rule over his people, the Church of Christ. And he rules that Church by spiritual means with a spiritual goal and a spiritual expression. It is the rule of Christ in the hearts and the lives of his people that redeems the chosen ones for whom Christ died, those who are born again by the blood and Spirit of Christ, those who believe his gospel. They are his kingdom. They are his subjects. They receive their orders from him and him alone by means of his Word and Spirit.

And the goal of Christ's rule is the salvation, the complete salvation of his people. And we, today, we may see that rule, we may see that put into practice wherever we see the governing and the protecting and the perfecting of the Church. That means we see it right here this afternoon. Christ Jesus the King is ruling as we gather together to worship him.

When Christ ascended and sat at the right hand of his Father and he publicly there takes his throne and he begins to exercise that kingship, that doesn't mean that prior to that he was not king. He had kingdom and power and glory before this. You look at the Old Testament times and we see that he carried on his work as a spiritual king through the judges, the kings of Israel. It began immediately already that kingship after the fall in paradise. And in the New Testament that rule of Christ was first exercised through the apostles. We are seeing that in the book of Acts, has Christ has trained his apostles to take the leadership during those early Church years. And gradually over time the job has passed on to elders and deacons. And today Christ rules his Church through lawfully elected office bearers. When Christ comes again then Christ's spiritual rule will be without the use of humans. But Christ's spiritual rule is forever, from eternity, to eternity, he rules his Church, Hebrews one and verse eight.

And because Jesus is the head and king of his Church, then the Church here must be managed according to his will. The Church here as individuals and as corporate bodies of believers must submit to the Lord, the will of God as revealed in the holy Word. That means we must preach the pure gospel of Christ. That means we must administer the sacraments as Christ has instituted them. And we must exercise Christian discipline in order to restore sinners. And the Church must go and make disciples of all nations because that is what Christ has commanded us.

But now what is the good for individual believers that results from Christ's being our spiritual king? He pours out his heavenly graces upon us his members. Christ does that as the head of his Church, sending his Holy Spirit whom he has sent once he was seated at God's right hand. From that place, the right hand of God, Christ gives gifts to his Church.

What kind of gifts? You read, for example, Ephesians four verse 11 speaking of Christ being ascended and seated at the right hand of God he gave some apostles as a gift to his people. He gave some prophets. He gave some evangelists. He gave some pastors and

teachers. And then he tells us the purpose for which the Lord gives those gifts. Ephesians four verse 12:

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ until we call come in the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto he measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.³

Christ gives his Church these gifts because he wants his people to grow. He wants his people to grow up to become mature, to be like him as the ascended Lord seated at the right hand of his Father. He gives these gifts to his Church so that its members can serve each other in love and build each other up in the faith.

What is the good of this kingship of Christ? What advantage? What benefit, what comfort do we believers get from it?

Well, think of this, what it says in Ephesians one verse 22. “And God has put all things...” All things means the entire universe under his feet, “And gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”⁴ That means that Christ’s universal kingship is for his Church. All the events of world history is subordinate to Church history. Everything that happens in this world is for the benefit of Christ’s Church, of his people, of his chosen ones. Christ rules supremely all individuals and nations to defend us and to keep us safe from all enemies. The devil and his hosts, the world, even our very own flesh are always conspiring to attack believers to defeat us, to lure us away from the faith. And God has given Christ all the authority and all the sovereignty so that he is able to control all the powers and the forces and all the movements in this world. And he does that to protect his own against all the powers of darkness.

So, dear believers, we may have confidence that our enemies can never thwart Christ’s purposes. He will accomplish what he has set out to do. We have this confidence. Many powers threaten to destroy Christ’s Church, but the Church will endure forever because the head of the Church is the ruler of the universe and he has all of the wicked, all power, all glory, all authority is his. And he has it, dear believer, for you, for you as a believer. He sits at the right hand of God the Father.

And, secondly, love confesses that Jesus Christ is coming again to judge the living and the dead. He is not going to sit there forever.

“I believe Jesus Christ shall come again to judge the living and the dead.”

It is a reminder for all of us that this life and this world will end. Existence as we presently know it is not everlasting. But the kingdom of God is everlasting. It should remind us that our treasure should be in heaven where our head is and not on this earth. The day is coming when Christ shall return. He will come from heaven, Matthew 24

³ Ephesians 4:12-13.

⁴ Ephesians 1:22.

verse 64. Scripture places great emphasis on that event and on its public nature. Most of the time it is called his appearing, the appearing of the Lord, as in Titus two verse 13. His sign will be in the sky. He will come on the clouds. Trumpets will announce his arrival, Matthew 24 verse 31.

And when the Lord comes everyone will confess he is Lord. Everyone will confess his greatness. Every knee shall bow before the King of kings, Philippians two verse 10 and 11.

He who was judged by Pilate and the Sanhedrin will sit in judgment over all people, Acts 17 verse 31. He will come again to judge the living and the dead and every eye shall see Christ indeed is King and Lord.

Scripture's teaching on the judgment fills the hearts of many people with terror. They dread that day. For others the Bible's teaching on the final judgment has a restraining influence on their life. They go through this life thinking, "Some day I have to answer for every thought that I have thought, for every word that I have spoken for every deed that I have done, for all my motives, for all my attitudes." And that thought that they have to give account restrains them from certain sinful, evil actions.

But when we have a confession of faith that says, "I believe Christ is coming again to judge the living and the dead," we are not talking about fear and terror. We are not talking about it as being a means to restrain us from sin. What we are talking about is comfort, comfort, question 52. "What comfort is it to you that Christ shall come again to judge the living and the dead?" That is a most unusual way to think about judgment.

Children, can you imagine if there is a convicted thief or murderer or rapist expecting comfort when he is brought before the judge? Imagine each one of us. We all have a sinful record. And standing before Jesus Christ our Judge, would any of us dream of comfort in that situation?

Yes. Many of us do because we read it very carefully.

"What comfort is it to you that Christ shall come again to judge the living and the dead?"

What is our comfort in the midst of all our sorrows and persecutions?

"With uplifted head, turning my eyes toward heaven I look for the very same person who before offered himself for my sake to the judgment seat of God and who has removed all the curse from me to come as Judge from heaven."

To better understand it we have to consider. Think about the attitude of a guilty person in a courtroom. He knows he is guilty of the worst possible crime. And the sentencing judge is in the seat. That person, unless his conscience is seared, fears his judge. He is scared of him. And when we consider that the judge is the almighty, the all knowing Son of God then that fear of that guilty one is magnified many times over. We are all guilty of

sin and evil. Our Judge has more than enough evidence to convict us and to pass the sentence of death upon us. He doesn't have to look too hard for proof of our guilt. And so our attitude towards him as Judge should be fear and trembling, but for believers it isn't. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ don't fear our heavenly judge. In fact, we are looking forward to that day. We are anticipating the day when he appears on the clouds.

How can that be?

You know how that can be, children? That can be because believers by faith have seen this Judge before. We have met him already. We have seen him by faith as a baby lying in a manger as one of us. We have seen him walking in this world living a perfect life, obeying God perfectly and we have seen him walk into Pilate's courtroom accused as a defendant. We have seen him already when he was executed for crimes that we committed. We saw him suffer the torments of hell for Satan of God for us. And, dear believers, when we stand in the final judgment and we look up to see who it is that is seated on the Judge's seat, who do we see? We see a friend, a friend. We see Jesus our Savior, our mediator, our substitute sitting on the Judge's seat.

Dear believers, we have nothing to fear on judgment day. Why? Because our Judge is our Savior. Or you could put it the other way around. Our Savior is our Judge. Our Judge has gone from the defendant's chair to the Judge's bench. He himself has been judged for our sins and our evil. He himself was found guilty. He has been punished for what we have done. He suffered the torments of hell in our place already.

And that is why Paul can say in Romans eight verse one, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,"⁵ because Jesus has been condemned already in your place, dear child of God. So you have nothing to fear when Christ returns.

We can have confidence that a worthless sinner like me will survive his rigorous judgment, not because of any worthiness of me. Then it would be hopelessly lost. But because he has already stood trial in my place before God and so he has removed the curse from me, the whole curse is removed from me. That is real comfort.

Our Judge is our Savior. So for judgment day, dear believer, there is nothing to fear. And everything to look forward to. That day Christ Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead.

When Christ will return to judge the living and the dead all his enemies and mine, he will condemn to everlasting damnation. I read in 2 Thessalonians one verses seven through nine, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁶ Those are his enemies. They know not God. They obey not the

⁵ Romans 8:1.

⁶ 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.

gospel. “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”⁷

To these people Jesus Christ the Judge will say, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,”⁸ Matthew 25 verse 41.

His enemies and mine he will condemn.

Do you know that there is such a complete union between Christ and believers that his enemies are my enemies and my enemies are his enemies?

You think about that as believers. How careful we ought to be walking, is it not, to make sure that his enemies are, indeed, my enemies. If you think of 2 Thessalonians one verse eight, “[They] that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,”⁹ those are his enemies. I think of those who take his name in vain, who deny Christ Jesus the Lord. Those are his enemies. Are those our enemies, too, as believers? Or can we somehow take some twisted delight in the enemies of God?

We get comfort from Christ’s return as Judge because his enemies and mine, same enemies, will be condemned. And he will translate me and all his chosen ones to himself unto heavenly joys and glory.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,”¹⁰ Matthew 25 verse 34.

In the final judgment true believers will not be condemned by God, but rather translated, taken up to the glory of God and of his Christ. We will publicly be given the joys and the glory of heaven.

Let me ask you this afternoon. Is there comfort here for you? Is there comfort here for you? See, your answer to that question depends on the answer to another question. Is Christ your Savior? He will be the one who judges you. And if Christ, my dear friend, is not your Savior, if you do not believe the gospel, if you do not trust Christ Jesus, if your hope is not in his perfect obedience and his perfect sacrifice, there is no comfort for you, but only fear in this teaching that some day Christ will come to judge the living and the dead. If you do not know Christ as Savior now you will know him as your sentencing judge then. If you do not by grace believe that Christ is your substitute on the cross and if you stubbornly continue to refuse and reject him in the day of grace you will be rejected and convicted and condemned by him on that day when he sits as your judge.

⁷ 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

⁸ Matthew 25:41.

⁹ 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

¹⁰ Matthew 25:34.

Now he offers himself to you as your Savior, a free offer of grace to all who hear the gospel. The gospel call comes. Come to Christ. Believe in him and you shall be saved.

On that day there will be no gospel call. It is the judgment day. But if Christ is your Savior, my friend, oh, then praise him for his sovereign grace. Be comforted that he is coming. Your Savior will return to judge the living and the dead. And that faith that Christ is seated right now as King of his Church and that he is governing all things perfectly, sovereignly, completely and that he shall come again to judge the living and the dead, that not only gives comfort to the elect, those who believe the gospel. That not only profits us for the future eternal joys and glory of heaven, but that has great impact on how we live our lives here on earth today.

A third thought:

“I confess that my life is hid with Christ in God.”

Please turn to Colossians chapter three, we did last Lord’s Day. You remember last Sunday in connection with our confession that he ascended into heaven. We began to consider how that impacts the way believers ought to live here. As we looked at Colossians three we focused on the first three verses.

“Since then you are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection, set your mind, your thoughts on the things above, not on the things of the earth because you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

And then we saw in verse 11, “Christ is all, and in all.”¹¹

And for a believer Christ is, indeed, all. He is all my hope. He is all my righteousness. He is all my expectation.

And Paul continues to say because of who Christ is and because of who you are in Christ in verse 12, “Put on therefore...”¹² Because Christ is all to you and because Christ is in every one of you, believers, as the elect of God holy and beloved, that is what God calls you, elect of God, chosen from before the foundation of the world in Christ.

“I have chosen you,”¹³ he said. “And I have set you apart from the millions and millions of others” and you are loved of God, loved of Christ because of who you are in Christ. And that influences how you live in this world. Not only are we to be putting off sins of the flesh like we heard last time and sins of our attitudes, not only does that position that we have in Christ determine the things we do not do as we saw last time, but also and especially the things we do do.

¹¹ Colossians 3:11.

¹² Colossians 3:12.

¹³ John 15:16, 19.

“Put on therefore,”¹⁴ he says, “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.”¹⁵ You notice that that is just the opposite of all the things we were told last Sunday to put off, “anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”¹⁶

Put on “mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another.”¹⁷ Forbearing means being patient with each other even if it means that we have to endure difficulty because of it.

“And forgiving one another.”¹⁸ Forgiving one another.

“Any man have a quarrel against any...”¹⁹ And that means that if someone blames you for something you know you have not done, forgiving one another, he says, just forgive him. Forgive him.

How? How must I forgive? “Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”²⁰

How does Christ forgive our sins? He lifts off that burden of your sins and he never mentions them again. When we forgive each other, when we say to someone, “I forgive you,” then we never bring the matter up again. That is how Christ forgives. It is done, never to be mentioned again.

“And above all these things put on [love].”²¹ The most important matter, put on love. Faith, hope and love, the greatest of these is love.

You want to see the character of a believer, the character of a person whose life is hid with Christ in God, the character of a person whose head is already in heaven, whose mind is set on things above, not on the things of this earth, you can summarize it in one word. He is a person of love. The most important matter is love which is the bond of perfectness. That is the bond. That is what brings together and unites and holds together in unity the Church, the love God which Paul says, has been “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”²²

That love of God and that returning love to God and that love to each other, that is the love. It binds all of us together in perfect unity. Let the characteristic of our church be love.

¹⁴ Colossians 3:12.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Colossians 3:8.

¹⁷ Colossians 3:12-13.

¹⁸ Colossians 3:13.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Colossians 3:13.

²¹ Colossians 3:14.

²² Romans 5:5.

“Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”²³

Without going into what it means to use it as an occasion to the flesh, you can go straight to the end. “By love serve each other.”²⁴ That is the characteristics of the Church, not a long list of dos and don’ts. Make sure you do this all in the right order and don’t step there and don’t do this. But from the desire of your heart, from the love that God has planted there, by love serving each other, being renewed after the image of Christ as we heard last time.

We are becoming more and more Christ like. And if there is anything we learn from the gospel according to Mark, that means that we are becoming humble servants who serve God and who serve each other in love.

Can that be said of us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? They are people who humbly serve in the kingdom, humble servants of God. Do you think that is an impossible task to do. That is too high of a standard for you, you think. I remind you of one advantage that we looked at last time, one advantage of Christ’s resurrection, he sends us his Spirit by whose power we seek the things which are above.

We don’t do this in our own strength. We do this by the power of the Holy Spirit in total dependence on him. Your life, dear child of God, is now hid with Christ in God. He sends his Spirit to you as a guarantee that you one day will be with him eternally. And in the meantime our life here on this earth is marked by loving humble service in whatever sphere the Lord places you. That is how we as Christians, as members of Christ’s body, live this life. Love to God, because he first loved us and love to our neighbor flowing out of that love of God, flowing out of our bond with Christ.

Next time in connection with, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” we are going to look at verses 15 through 17. But let’s leave it here for today.

Yes, we are as believers comforted when we think of the judgment because the Judge there is our Savior. And in the meantime we will live this life as humble servants.

“And above all these things put on [love], which is the bond of perfectness.”²⁵

Amen.

Let us pray.

Oh Lord our God, as we come to the close of this service then we do thank thee, oh Lord, that thou hast prepared all things for thy people. As we look to Christ Jesus the Lord we may know that he has done it all. And, Lord, we may live our lives here on this earth out

²³ Galatians 5:13.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Colossians 3:14.

of him and unto him through the power of thy Holy Spirit. Lord, would thou increase our faith, cause us to grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Grant that we may ever more and more be loving, humble servants of the Lord. Bless thy people in this week, Lord, that we may walk this way before thee and before our neighbor. Be with those among us who as of yet do not know the Lord, who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and grant, Lord, that this day, maybe, indeed, the day of thy great and glorious power when thy Holy Spirit brings them to live, then they shall live for sure. Lord, help us to do our work this week in a way that gives honor and glory to thy name. In all this business we do pray, Lord, that thou would strengthen and uphold all of us. Bring us safely back here Tuesday evening and again on the coming Lord's Day and all the meetings in between. We pray these things and that thou would forgive our many, many sins in Jesus' name. Amen.