

January 28, 2024
The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Pastor Matt Duerr

The Confessional Church-Jesus

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. As you know, we are on a sermon series titled “The Confessional Church” and in our first week we looked at Almighty God; omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, holy, righteous, just, grace and mercy loving God; who we call Father because last week we looked at Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father. And we saw how important that word begotten is. He literally is the one who has the gene pool of God. He is God, and more than that even. He is the Logos as we read in John chapter one; the ultimate answer, the final answer, the One who answers all philosophical questions. When we look at that. You could say, really, Pastor Matt? He's all that? And my response and the response from the guys at the Council of Nicea would be. You bet and then some!

Again, begotten - He has all of the genes, all of the characteristics, everything of God. And as we continue in the Nicene Creed, we read, begotten of His Father before all worlds. So, Jesus was in existence before everything. In other words, He's eternal. One of those little genetic things about God. But it continues, He is God of God. They were really making this very clear, and this is the terminology that you would have had back in AD 325. He's God of gods, like my son is of his father. He has my genes.

But then we start to take it a step further. Jesus is Light of light. What is meant by that? Well consider Genesis, what's the first thing that God said? Let there be light. And there was light. Light in this universe ;before there was even the sun' light, physical light. Where did it come from? God who is light. And yet we go to our gospel reading this morning, and we have one of the great I Am's of Jesus, where the I am is the name of God, Yahweh. And He says, “I'm the light of the world.” Light of light, God gave us physical light. Because He is light. God gave us spiritual light, His only begotten Son our Lord.

Jesus takes it a step further and then says, “whoever follows me will not walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” And what is light ultimately? Salvation. Eternal Life. We get that contrast in Matthew chapter 25, where Jesus talks about judgment. There are those who are with Him, and they're taken to be with Him in the light of heaven. And the others are, well, Matthew 25 verse 30 says they are “Cast into the outer darkness.” Darkness, there is no light. There is really the ultimate definition of hell. Hell is where God is not. There's no light. There's nothing to shine on anything.

But the Nicene Creed continues on, “Very God of very God.” To them very is the equivalent of what we say today as truly. Truly God of truly God. Jesus says in John 10 verse 30. “I and the Father are one.” He's very God of very God. John 14 verse 9 Jesus says to His disciples, to Phillip in particular, “whoever has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ If you've seen me, you've seen God the Father.”

And then the Nicene Creed continues on, the very God of very God. Begotten (again) not made. He wasn't created by God. In fact, they continue on just making this point. “Being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made.” So, Jesus is not created. Being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made. They're picking back up on John chapter 1, verse 1; In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. And everything was created through Him. So, there's where the Council of Nicea went with Jesus in arguing against Arias and Arianism.

But now we get to the biggie, love. We heard last week God is love. We heard it the week before. God is love. But now that love gets the definition. “Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate. Literally-in the flesh. So, we've just seen He's truly God. But now He's truly man. How can that be? By the Holy Spirit.

Now some people like to say about Lutherans, ‘Oh, you guys will make up doctrine for anything.’ Ther is no making up, this is straight out of scripture; again this is where the Council of Nicea went. Consider what we read in Luke in the Christmas account. Gabriel comes to Mary and

says, “you will conceive and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.” You know Mary's response. “How will this be since I am a virgin?” Gabriel's response, and listen carefully, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” Overshadow, what is meant by that? Well, it is speaking of her virginity and her human limitation. That's a shadow because we're human. We don't have light. Shadow is literally by scientific definition, a lack of light because the light has been absorbed by something. And if you have a lack of light when it comes to God, you have a lack of power because you don't have God. But with God, all things are possible. And so, Gabriel says. The Holy Spirit's going to overshadow you. You're going to have a child. And He will be, I quote, “the Son of God.”

So, to sum up: God was made man, or allowed Himself to be limited to the confines of a human body. But He was still very God of very God. And now we take that love part just another step. Remember, who for us men and for our salvation was, I quote, “Crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He was confined to the body of a baby, and yet there's more, crucified for our salvation. “Crucified under Pontius Pilate.” Man's rule versus God's rule. A common problem we see yet today. Where man wants to tell God. Sorry, God, you got it wrong. We know better than you. And that is sin. And what do we know about sin, and when man puts himself in God's place? Well, we know number one, Romans 3:23. “The wages of sin is death.”

Why is it death? We can go back to Genesis and our scripture reading this morning, Genesis 2:17 “In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.” There, that word day is referring to a framework of time. If you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a new day, a new time will arrive. It will be the time of death. And that's what came. And that's why the wages of sin is death. Because God told mankind in advance, if you break my law, my commands, the penalty is death.

And yet, the crucifixion was more than just a payment, a fulfillment of that. It was also a fulfillment of prophecy. Prophecy that was made to confirm for us that this Jesus truly is the Christ. And so, we look at Isaiah 50 verse 6, a prophecy concerning the Messiah. “I gave my back to

those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who plucked out my beard. I did not hide my face from shame and from spitting on.” And Jesus put His back there for the Romans to whip. We read that they spit upon Him and mocked Him. Just what Isaiah said. Isaiah 53. “Certainly He has born our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.” In other words, we're all sinners. And the Lord has laid on Him - Jesus, the iniquity of us all. Jesus took all our sin on His back and was stricken, smitten, afflicted by God for our transgressions. That's why the crucifixion.

But why else? Continuing the theme of prophecy, “To fulfill what we read in our introit Psalm 22:16. “They pierced my hands and my feet.” This was written before crucifixion was invented. Anybody that looked at what David was writing would say, what are you talking about? This prophecy? This is what's going to happen. Back to Isaiah 53, verse 12. He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors. One you know, criminal here, another criminal here, Jesus in the middle. Yet He bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors, That would be you and me. All of these are prophecies concerning Jesus written beforehand, and it's why He went to the cross, and was stricken, smitten, spit upon, and was hands, feet, pierced, pouring out His soul unto death to save us.

And yet it was more than just fulfilling prophecy. And it was more than just because of the wages of sin. It was also to fulfill righteousness. Because God the Father Almighty is just and righteous. So again, we go to the prophet Isaiah who lays it out, “Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush Him, He has put Him to grief. When a soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offering, He shall prolong His days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Out of the anguish of His soul, He shall see Him be satisfied. By His knowledge shall the Righteous One, Jesus, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous. He will bear their iniquities.

He did this! Because God the Father Almighty demands it. It is not like our day and age where you can walk into a target, pick stuff up and walk out with it and not have any consequence. No, that's wrong. I think you all would agree with that. And then when we look in the mirror, we have to say, 'I am a sinner, I deserve death, I deserve to be separated from God. Jesus says 'here, let me take care of that for you.' So, He died under Pontius Pilate, but you know, He rose on the third day according to the scriptures.

If you look at the Gospels, you will see that there were 21 times where Jesus mentions rising on the third day. Luke 24, verse 16. "Thus, it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise." What's he referring to? Where's that written? Hosea 6, verses 1 and 2. "After two days He receives us. On the third day He will raise us up that we may live before Him." Now there are those who will say no, no, no, no. Hosea is speaking about exile and the children of Israel returning from exile. But this is about God. This is not how God works. God is orderly. Not disorderly. God doesn't change. So, when we look at, for instance, Exodus 19, we see this is how God works; because it was on the morning of the third day that the children of Israel were around Mount Sinai that God came down and gave them the Law. And so likewise, it's His timing that Hosea is speaking of here. The law is fulfilled and on the third day He rises and lives so that we might live before Him for all of eternity. This is what Jesus was speaking about. The fulfillment of God's way, the Resurrection, our eternal hope.

But wait, there's more. He ascended into heaven. Check. He did exactly that. But why? Well, that's where I love Jesus's discourse with his disciples in John chapter 14 and poor doubting Thomas. Because, He said. "I'm going to prepare a place for you so that where I am you may also be." Jesus, He's been preparing a place for us in heaven for about 2000 years. It's where we're going to go when He comes again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, and for the living; whose kingdom will never end.

We destroyed God's perfect creation. Perfect, Because He gave us free will. He didn't make us robots. But in love, God the Father almighty, saved His creation at the greatest cost of all. His only begotten Son who died to pay the price of our sin and fulfill God's righteous, just requirements. But then rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and prepares a place that we may live with Him forever.

Now remember, "I, the Lord do not change," is what God says. He hasn't changed a bit. That was exactly His intent when He created this world, that He would walk with us, talk with us, in His garden, in His creation, forever.

We messed that up. But he says, I love you. And so I'm going to undo what you did, for you so that you may walk with me in my home forever, Amen.