

44-03-01.wpd --Our Trust in Christ's Victory
 Apostle's Creed, faith, Gospel, crucifixion, resurrection, testimony
 Acts 3:11-16
 The sufferings of Christ brought our victory in Christ.

INTRODUCTION:

--Our Scripture reading today told of a lame man healed in Jesus' name, and Peter used that occasion to tell the Gospel to the crowd who witnessed the healing. We have the same opportunity to explain our faith whenever the hand of God is seen in answered prayer, in the beauty of nature, or in the "God-incidences" (not "coincidences," but miracles) that occur in life. We can say, "I believe God is behind that." But we can also tell what we believe about God, and about His plan for us. This is why we need to be able to explain what we are confessing in the Apostle's Creed. Today we come to the words: "I believe . . . (Jesus) suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead." This describes our trust in Christ's victory, the **title** of this message. Actually, this is the heart of the Gospel, that **HOM.idea**.

I. Jesus Suffered under Pontius Pilate

- A. This is an important statement, because everyone knew that the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, was against putting Jesus to death.
1. He was warned by his wife-- Mat 27:19b, "Don't have anything to do with that **innocent** man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."
 2. He knew an unjust execution under the high standard of Roman civic law could jeopardize his official position-- Luke 23:21-22a, For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty."
 3. He showed publicly that he did not find Jesus guilty-- Mat 27:24, When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"
- B. What Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate" was injustice. (All who know the story of the Cross realize that Jesus died unjustly.)

TRANS: But our faith states that this happened for a reason-- 1 Pet 3:18a (NKJV), For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might

bring us to God." The innocence of the Lamb of God is the reason that the sacrifice of that Lamb can "take away the sin of the world." It's our salvation.

II. Jesus Was Crucified, Dead, and Buried

- A. The Creed was formulated to stop Gnostic ideas from infiltrating the church [Gnostics taught that Jesus only appeared to be human, that He did not really die on the Cross, and this His appearance of a body dissipated into thin air in the tomb.] These 3 words denied those heretical ideas.
- B. But the 3 words, "crucified, dead, and buried," also identify Christ's sufferings with the original curse upon Adam's race, by these 3 words: tree, death, and earth.
1. It was from a tree that sin's curse began, and it was on a tree that sin's curse was taken by Christ-- Gal 3:13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."
 2. Sin brought death to Adam's race, but through the death of His incarnate body, God's Son took our sins upon Himself-- 1 Pet 2:24, He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (Christ's death became our victory over sin and death.)
 3. The earth along with humans was cursed by Adam's sin. Christ's burial in an earthly tomb, identified Him with the first Adam, whose body after death returned to the earth, which, along with us, longs for liberation from the curse.

TRANS: "...crucified, dead, buried"a tree, death, the earth: Perfect parallels. But to make the identification with humanity complete, Christ had to go where death took humanity. I want to read 1 Pet 3:18-19 (NKJV), For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison." This is what the Creed says....

III. Jesus Descended into Hell [Hades, "the abode of the dead"]

- A. The Creed doesn't say what Jesus did in Hades, but this verse says He "preached." For 3 days in death, He did what He'd done in life.
- B. "Does that mean people can change their minds after death?" That question isn't answered by the Creed nor by theology. My personal opinion stands on what Peter says in 1 Pet 4:6, For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be

judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit. (I don't know fully what that means, but I know what it says in Rom 1:16, ...the gospel ... is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. If people can still choose to believe after death, then they can be part of the "everyone" in that verse.)

TRANS: That "*Jesus descended into Hell*" is a victory for humanity, for it means God underwent the whole gamut of human experience, from *birth to death*, and even *after death, as a human spirit without a body*. His preaching of the Gospel to other disembodied human spirits was "good news," because it not only said, "*God Himself paid for your sins*," but "You get your body back." That's the ultimate human victory....

IV. The Third Day Jesus Rose Again from the Dead

- A. The Incarnation of God in Christ was not a temporary sojourn with humanity; God intended through His Son to share forever our human journey, and He sealed that intention by the Resurrection. (The Incarnation is the most human-friendly concept of any faith, and the Resurrection made that human-friendliness permanent.)
- B. The *Resurrection* was not only Christ's victory over death but the absolute validation of everything He taught about Himself and about God's will. (If He was not raised from death, then His words were only words; but **if He was raised**, as we declare in this Creed, then His word is truth and He is humanity's only Savior).
- C. The Resurrection also identified Jesus with the first Adam, because, as the first Adam came to life from the earth, Jesus, who is called the second Adam, came alive from an earthly grave. It is the new Adam and the Savior and King of a new race of humanity.

CONCLUSION:

-- Jesus suffered injustice, a torturous death, and a three-day trip to the gloomy abode of the dead. That God in human flesh experienced those sufferings is in itself a victory for humanity. But an even greater human victory is that this God-Man is alive in that human flesh, and will be for eternity. Our hope is forever secure. This is our faith. This is our Creed.

Acts 3:11-16 (NIV) While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. {12} When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? {13} The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. {14} You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. {15} You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. {16} By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.