As I prepared for this series of messages, I listened to pod casts, sermons, read J.I Packers book, “The Apostles’ Creed,” and prayed about it. One thing I like to do is write out the scripture passage by hand, repeatedly. Which I did. Typically, I would look the scripture up in several different versions of the Bible and consider different word usage. We have the NIV in our pews and here at the pulpit. But with over 5,000 different translations of the New Testament out there, a little comparison it is a worthy endeavor.

I missed that step this time though. The Apostle’s Creed is not in the bible. Its beliefs come from biblical teachings, but the creed itself was written by man **and is not** considered to be the word of God, **the same way the bible is**. It was created by man to correct erred understandings and to provide a tool for teaching. That is why some churches, as I mentioned last week, though they would affirm the contents of the creed, do not recite it **nor acknowledge it** as part of their rituals. It is also noteworthy, as long as we are talking about what the Creed is and isn’t, it is important to know that it is **not an incantation**. Reciting it is not akin to a spell or magic. You can know the creed intellectually and recite it all day every day and it isn’t until you know it, in your heart, until you believe Christ is your savior, that he came, died, was resurrected, and will come again … that the creed takes on special meaning.

 When **that** understanding happens, when **that** belief is found, that’s when your heart leaps when you recite it. In it you find promise, hope, and an indescribable faith in God and his endless possibilities. You find peace. It’s kind of like coming home, if you home was a place of unconditional love, where your every need was cared for and you did not know worry or fear. It makes me think of Corrie Ten Boom and her family depicted in the book, “the Hiding Place,” that hid the Jews and the strength of their convictions.

 So, to be clear. The Creed is not in the bible, but based on the teachings of the Apostles would accompanied Christ… AND … it isn’t going to allow you to pick the winning lottery numbers. (Unless that was the will of God, and while I have personally met three lottery winners in my life, I am ever confident that that their prosperity was not a result of saying the at the counter of the 7-11 when they bought their ticket.

 So let’s move last week into the next stanzas … Let’s talk about Jesus …

 I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord

 Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,

 Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;

 He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead;

 He ascended into heaven,

and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father almighty;

from thence he shall judge the quick and the dead

Yes, Let’s talk about Jesus indeed. How often is that a conversation starter in your family, social or work environments? Truthfully, it is a rarity in mine. As I admitted last week, it is usually only in response to an inquiry. If you are like me, waiting to be asked, what are we doing? Or rather, not doing? We are waiting for someone who may not have accepted Christ as their savior, isn’t familiar with the teachings of the bible, may have heard the basics – yet with little to no grasp of their meaning – we are waiting, expecting this individual to come to us … and ask us questions. Come to church we say. Not let me tell you about church, about my religion, about Jesus.

Isn’t it more more likely, when someone doesn’t understand something and may not feel the need to, they ignore it. They don’t often say to themselves, “Ya, I’m not too sure about that whole, God, Jesus, Holy Spirit thing. So I am going to go and ask someone who does.” More likely, the topic gets put into a box and sits on a shelf, gathering dust. The words, the names, Jesus, God, Fatehr Almighty … might pop up every now and again in random conversation, perhaps something from the news, or a joke about hiding from the nicely dressed folks knocking on your door. But it quickly gets put back into the box. No one likes to admit they don’t know something, that they may think others commonly recognize.

 Admitting ignorance, for lack of a better word, is difficult for us. Did you know, for instance, that America was named after a little-known Italian man, who had the confidence and humility to be able to question Columbus deduction that he had merely arrived at an island, and instead declared, “We don’t know, ” In doing so, Amerigo Vespucci, added the new continent to the world map. I found an article online, titled, “Admitting ignorance” that talked about how Columbus went to his grave holding fast to his belief that *he knew the whole world, and even his momentous discovery (of a very large continent mind you) failed to convince him otherwise.*

 Perhaps, if we felt more comfortable talking about our faith, even with each other, we could participate in and maybe even initiate the conversation, instead of expecting them to. **Jesus** is a great place to start. Who is Jesus to you? Do you think the stories of the bible are real? Do you think he is coming back? It was a long time and many years into my intentional faith, that I understood why Jesus **had to come**, had to die and **had to** rise again. It wasn’t until I had read the bible, cover to cover – though truthfully, my retention of some of those chapters and books was quite limited … but having a glimpse at the big picture, **the full picture**, along with attending church and participating in group studies before it became clearer to me. As a youth, I pondered why God wasn’t enough. Easy answer for one who had attended catechism, was, God was and is enough. Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one after all. But that is a complicated answer to one unfamiliar with our triune God, and it’s really a cop out if you can’t take it any further than that.

Now, into my 50s, I can say with confidence that **Jesus’ coming fulfilled scripture**. The Old Testament laid the groundwork for this new king what would come and lead his people out of slavery.

It was Moses that led his people out of literal slavery, when after the many plagues in Exodus 12 we hear that, “During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites. Go, worship the Lord as you requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said and go.” But that reference to slavery was also foreshadowing, for us today. For those who are slaves to a paycheck, an image, a persona, an addiction. 2,000 years later, we still need saving from slavery. This is the kind of conversation we can have when we start talking about Jesus.

 Being conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,

Jesus came to spend time with his people. Face to face. Let’s talk to people about a God that gets it, because he has lived it. So much that when we feel like no one understands our pain, we are reminded of Jesus and how

 He suffered under Pontius Pilate

 Was crucified, dead and buried

He knows. That means there is always someone we can talk to that can relate. The physical pain of an injury or illness. Crucifixion, dying on the cross, is one of the most excruciating ways to die. It isn’t quick and is the opposite of painless. It was almost too much to watch the Passion of the Christ on television, because what they depicted was so accurate – suffering pain and agony.

# Mental anguish, Matthew 4 tells us of Jesus’ temptation in the Wilderness. Hear this:

**4**Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23211a)] by the devil. **2**After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. **3**The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

**4**Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23214b)]”

**5**Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. **6**“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,
    and they will lift you up in their hands,
    so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23216c)]”

**7**Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23217d)]”

**8**Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. **9**“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

**10**Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+4%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23220e)]”

**11**Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

### Emotional suffering? Feelings of abandonment. Unable to trust those closest to you. He gets that one too. In Matthew 26 we are told how he was betrayed by one of his besties, a faithful disciple. One of the Apostles. To make matters worse, this event took place after Jesus had shown his love for them by washing their feet, at the table of the Last Supper. While at the same time telling them he would return.

**31**Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

“‘I will strike the shepherd,
    and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2026%3A31-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24086a)]

**32**But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

**33**Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

**34**“Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”

**35**But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

And not much later in the same chapter, we’re told: after denying Christ three times, the rooster crowed and

Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

And don’t forget Judas, identifying Jesus as the claimed messiah to the guards, for thirty NNN

What that betrayal must have felt like. So when we ponder, how can Jesus knows what it’s like when you’ve been cheated on … lied to … discounted and dismissed … he KNOWS.

Moreover, we too know these truths.

 Truths, that if we pause, take a deep breath and lift of a heartfelt prayer for the Lord’s leading, truths that we can – and must – share with those around us. Talking about these truths is essential. Sometimes even within the walls of this church we don’t’ want to talk about our beliefs. But God wants us to. Each and every day we should be reminded of Jesus’ last command to his believers, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching then to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of age.” It isn’t enough to gather here on Sunday and to chat with each other over coffee. Living out this command may be one of the hardest challenges we face as Christians. It can be uncomfortable, scary even. For one, it puts us in a position of facing rejection, or worse yet persecution.

 But be reminded of another truth, that stands as firm and solid as the Apostle’s Creed – from the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 – “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kids of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” It all comes full circle. That is a truth we know and can talk about – and live out. It goes on, “You are the Salt of the earth. But if the sale loses it saltiness, how can it be made salty again. It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before me, for they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

 When we avoid sharing our story, our faith, God’s truth, to those around us … our salt loses its saltiness, and our light is hidden. I share this from personal experience and hope that in doing so, I can encourage others to strike up these conversations and I am using the Apostle’s Creed as an example of a starting place.

He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Hell, boy that’s always a good conversation starter. Hell, as it is referenced here is not the gigantic wood stove that housed Robert Service’s, Sam Magee. No dude in a tight red suit and cape with horns and a spear. That’s Ghenna. A better translation from the Greek, Hades, or the Hebrew Sheol. Place of the disembodied. Dead. The use of descent doesn’t mean down into the earth. Instead, it means less than, or beneath in stature. Less that the full life, heart, mind body and soul all together in harmony.

 Having celebrated Easter just two weeks ago, the rising from the dead should be fresh on our minds. We will celebrate Ascension Sunday in the coming weeks. More stories to talk about, stories to tell, questions to ask.

 And for those places where our knowledge isn’t deep enough to give us the confidence to speak about … not unlike the way I moved past “conceived by the Holy Ghost and Born of the Virgin Mary,” it’s okay to admit you don’t have all the answers. But I do stand firm, in Luke’s proclamation in 1:37, “for nothing will be impossible with God, ” ***so why couldn’t Mary birth the Christ without having been with a man***. If you need a simple reminder that God knows no constraints, look to the heavens on a clear night. Then be reminded of Job words,

By his breath the skies became fair;
     his hand pierced the gliding serpent.
**14** And these are but the outer fringe of his works;
     how faint the whisper we hear of him!
     Who then can understand the thunder of his power?

Another one of those places where our understand and our denomination may leave us feeling a little more vulnerable to being wrong even … ”Ascended to Heaven” is another prime example. Not the ascension, on that, as Christians we all agree. But Heaven. My vision of heaven is different than Ryan’s. Personally, as much as I love the idea of my folks sitting up there is high back chairs sharing a nod of pride or a shake of disgust when they see the things I do and say, **I don’t really believe that**. But that shouldn’t keep us from talking about it. I read, or Ryan shared, a suggestion from one of his studies, many years ago, a suggestion to write out your vision of heaven, every day for a week. What a great idea. Ponder eternity in the presence of God, bodies restored. It may bring to light some things that may be hindering you from living out the Gospel here and now. Now there’s a conversation to be had? And knowing there is heaven, what about hell?

My religion tells me both exist. And the Creed that I believe in my heart and proclaim with my mouth speaks to Heaven, and where Christ can be found today … and that he will come here, amongst us, once again. And that it is HE that will judge the quick ( ) and the dead. Not me. Not Ryan. Not the Pope of the Catholic faith or the Fist District Superior Court Judge that resides in Juneau. No, it’s Christ.

Knowing the truths of God and Jesus, form my belief structure, that in essence guides every decision I make. The good choices I celebrate. The poor ones, because I know they are contrary to God’s will in my life, give me cause to ponder. Ask myself, why did I do that. Without the structure of my religion though, left to my own choices, I fear I would reach for the apple.

Next week, forgiveness, the catholic church (small c) and the Holy Spirit – whom I saw at work this morning in my very own living room.