

The Creed: Second Article: Redemption

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Second article of the Creed and it's meaning.

And [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, died and was buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death; that I should be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns forever and ever. This is most certainly true.

Boys and girls, Merry Christmas! I pray that you are doing well today. What do I have here? I have a cross. Why do I have a cross? Because, as we continue to celebrate our Jesus' birth, it is important to remember why He came. Jesus is True God and true man. He came to save us from sin, death, and, the power of the devil. How does Jesus save us? How does that continue to give us joy this Christmas season and all our lives?

Ponder that question as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

To the First Article of the Creed, Luther added the title, “Creation.” We talked about that when we discussed the First Article, how our God not only created all things, including the holy angels, including you and me, through our parents, but how He also continually preserves His creation. But the human part of God’s creation fell into sin and the slavery of sin and the power of the devil, very soon after the universe was created, subjecting the whole creation to the curse.

How will the creation be delivered? Creation’s deliverance depends on the deliverance of human beings. How will human beings be delivered, so that we, who had once broken our relationship with God the Father Almighty, might be restored to sonship? For that, we need the deliverance described in the next two articles of the Apostles’ Creed.

Today we focus on the Second Article, which Luther entitles, “Redemption.” We take many weeks to go through this article bit by bit in Catechism class, but today we will take a brief look at the whole thing.

We can break up Luther’s explanation into three sections: The Person of Christ, the Work of Christ, and the Purpose or the Goal of Christ’s work.

Luther begins simply with the Person of Christ. What does it mean when I say that I believe in Him? It means that the One I believe in as “my Lord” has two distinct natures, each with its own origin. He has a divine nature. He is true God. Where did His divine nature come from? He was “begotten (or born) of the Father from eternity.” So “believing in Jesus” is not like believing in a politician, not like believing in St. Paul, not like believing in Muhammed, not like believing in Santa Claus. It’s acknowledging that He is the true God, the Creator and Ruler of all things, together with the Father and the Spirit.

But He also has a human nature. Where did His human nature come from? He was begotten or born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. So “believing in Jesus” is not exactly the same as believing in God the Father. God the Father was begotten of no one and was never born as a Man, either. But Jesus is twice-begotten, of God the Father in eternity and of Mary His mother in time, so that His divine nature and His human nature are inseparably joined in one Person, both my God and my Brother, my Lord, in whom I believe.

And, when I say that I believe in this Jesus Christ, I also mean that I know what He has done for me as true God and true Man. I know the work of Christ. In a word, He has “redeemed” me. What does that mean? First, it means that I recognize that I needed redeeming; I was a “lost and condemned person.” I was born in sin, a slave of sin, destined to die, both a bodily death and an eternal death, and I was under the power of the devil in the devil’s kingdom. I was entirely unable to redeem myself. Nothing I did or ever can do, could buy my way out of my predicament. I stood condemned before God’s righteous judgment.

But He has redeemed me. He has brought me back. He has paid the price. That is, He has **purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.** With what did He purchase me? **Not with gold or silver;** not with earthly money or riches, but **with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.** The price for my redemption, for the world’s redemption, was very high, so high I could never pay it, not even a little bit of it; so high no mere man could pay it for me. But the blood of Jesus, who is true God, is precious, valuable, of infinite worth. The whole Old Testament taught the lesson that is spelled out in Hebrews 9: **Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.** If a sinner is to be forgiven, then blood must first be shed. In other words, a death must first occur, as a substitute for the death of sinner, who deserves to die. In the Old Testament, it was animal blood, an animal’s death, that the Lord accepted, but only because He was teaching Israel that a much more precious death had to occur to make atonement for sin, so that our sins

could then be forgiven. The blood of Christ, the death of Christ, true God, and true Man, was the full atoning price for the sins of the world, the full payment for all sins, so that God can and will forgive any sin to the one who claims the atonement made by Christ, to the one who believes in Him as the Redeemer.

Finally, when I say that I believe in this Jesus Christ, I also mean that I know that He accomplished this work of redemption with a purpose or goal in mind. You see, paying the price of redemption was not the end goal of Christ's coming. He did not die just for the sake of dying. He did not make atonement just for the sake of atoning. No, He provided the atonement that the world needed, for a purpose. What is that purpose? **that I should be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns forever and ever.**

“That I should be His own.” When I speak the words of the Creed, I am saying that I know Christ did all this—became true Man, lived an innocent life, suffered, and died—not just for everyone else, but for me, because He wanted me to be His own. He wanted me to live under Him in His kingdom, under Him as the King, free from fear, free from guilt, free from the clutches of the devil, and ultimately immune to death. And, free from the ugliness of sin, from the obsession of sin, free to serve Him in righteousness and innocence and blessedness—a service which isn't perfect yet, but is in the process of being made perfect.

But how can I believe all this? And how can I live in service to Christ my Redeemer? And how can I possibly persevere in this faith, when I know all too well that I was born into this world “dead in trespasses and sins,” and that even now I am weak because of my sinful flesh and still surrounded by the enemies of the devil and the world? For that, there is only one remedy: I need the help of the Helper, the Holy Spirit, who is the subject of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, which we'll consider together on June 30th since Easter is March 31st, by the grace and blessing of God.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.