

Adult Confirmation Study Pentecost 2020

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Week 7

July 12 - 18

The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed

As we approach the Second Article, we have to talk about context. First the context of the original writing of the creed and second about the context of Martin Luther's writing.

When the creed (earliest version around 180 CE) was first written there were many ideas about what it meant to be a Christian and who and what Jesus really was. Some believed that Jesus was not born but just appeared as an adult. Some thought that Jesus was a disembodied spirit and not really human at all. And others, held that Jesus was created by God and was divine but not *as* divine as God. These beliefs all became known as heresies: Docetism, Gnosticism, Marcionism and more. The Second Article refuted these claims. The Nicene Creed gives a clearer rebuttal, but all those claims are addressed in the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed as well.

Now fast forward to Luther's writing of the explanation to the article. Luther was also setting the story of Jesus straight.

"Luther certainly knew his Christology, and therefore (as all Christians did) confessed Jesus to be true God and truly human. Luther also knew that affirming certain claims about Jesus meant that – inevitably – you also had to say no to other claims. But some of Luther's thought about Christ were new and led in fascinating new directions. One of those directions was his emphasis on the *personal* nature of the confession of Christ. Luther freely confessed the objective facts about Jesus: that he was begotten, that the begetting is eternal, that he is truly God, and so forth. But all this matters because Jesus is *my Lord*. He chooses to exist in relation *to me*. Unlike much speculative theology of the scholastics in the Middle Ages, Luther did not reflect exclusively on what kind of "thing" God is, not only on what kind of "person" Jesus Christ is. Luther's question was often "What is *it to have a God?*" or "Who is Jesus Christ *for me?*" the key is the relationship of trust. Faith in Christ means trust in his promises." By Heart, pp 90

Faith, doctrine and theology are all full of metaphors. Even the explanation from Luther is full of metaphor. One often confusing metaphor is that of "redemption".

The Hebrew understanding of to "redeem" is to be set free, not to buy back. We are called to "repent" and change direction and we are called to respond to Jesus sacrifice with service to our neighbor.

Jesus lived to give us an example of the way to live in the Kingdom of God. Jesus died to set us free from sin and death. He rose to give us the promise of his victory over death.

Bogotten – this little word caused such a fuss. Begotten eternally – well even more trouble. Constantine, emperor in the time of the writing of the Nicene Creed (325-328) did not like the idea that Jesus was fully divine (Begotten) because then his self proclaimed divinity was not equal to that of Jesus'. Without "begotten" then Constantine could claim greater power (that became another heresy called Arianism).

Marcus Borg, a 20th century theologian now deceased challenged Christians to understand the "Creedo" (to believe) as better understood as "to beloved". In this way, a person gives their heart and soul to the statements of the creed. It keeps the creed as statements of faith instead of as a litmus test or pledge of allegiance kind of document.

We study this little document called the Small Catechism, based on teachings from Luther from scripture and history. Don't ever think it was easy. There is blood on those pages. Doctrine causes division. Theology creates questions. As most middle school confirmation students know, 99.9% of the time, the answer is - Jesus.



Questions:

1. Most secular creeds did not say anything that would put place and time as the Christians Creeds do when they say, "suffered under Pontius Pilate". Why do you think the early fathers did this?
2. The history of the creeds adds levity. Do you feel that seriousness when you say the creed in worship?
3. Do you feel "freed" when you recite the creed?

Prayer:

My God, I believe and am fully persuaded that you live and reign in me. Rule over all my interior tendencies and exterior movements, so that I may not be master of any of them. Since you, O God, have established your reign within me, it is your right to direct all of these movements. Amen. (John Baptist de La Salle 1651-1719)

+Did you know that all the images included in these studies are copies of the original wood cut images from Luther's First Small Catechism?