

Over the past 10 weeks we have been exploring some of the basic elements of Christian faith and discipleship, we have been exploring some of the basic frameworks for understanding the Story of God. We have explored worship – why and how we do it; we have explored prayer using the Lord’s prayer as a framework for understanding this crucial act of faith; and finally we are in the midst of exploring what we believe as Christians, using the Creeds as a framework to understand the Story of God better and how understanding this framework impacts our lives as a church and as disciples of Christ on a daily basis. Today we continue our series exploring the Creeds and turn to the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ – the Son of God.

If the Trinity is the Christian doctrine which distinguishes Christianity from other religions, than Jesus is the figure which makes our discussions about the Trinity possible, but also necessary. Jesus is after all why we are gathered here today, Jesus is why we identify as ‘Christ-ians’, a word which derives from the Greek word *Χριστιανός* (*Christianos*), meaning followers or more accurately ‘slaves’ of Christ. We identify ourselves as belonging to Christ - strong language particularly in our culture which so emphasizes and prioritizes individual autonomy and freedom – and so understanding who this Christ is who we belong to is paramount to the task of discipleship. Since Jesus is (presumably) the reason we are here gathering to worship God in this particular way on a Sunday morning, it makes sense that our Creeds spend so much time focusing on him, focusing on his role in God’s Story: who he is, what he did, what he is doing and what he will do. This is perhaps one of the underappreciated strengths of the Creed, that each week it reminds us of the whole narrative scope of Jesus’ ministry, it reminds us of the whole breadth of the events of Jesus’ life that in turn create the basic framework for our Church year: from Christmas (born of the virgin Mary) through to Good Friday (crucified under Pontius Pilate), Easter (on the third day he rose again) and Ascension Day (ascended into heaven). So on a very basic level the Creed connects the stories we hear about Jesus each week to the larger Grand Story of Salvation, the Creeds ensure that our understanding of our scripture readings and our understanding of Jesus is rooted in the whole story, and not just seen in isolation.

While the Creeds provide us this connecting point to the greater story of Jesus week-in and week-out, they serve a far greater purpose in describing who Jesus is, and rooting out faith in the Jesus revealed to us in the Scriptures. One of the lines of the Nicene Creed that is so easy to overlook is the line which reads “in accordance with the Scriptures.” While this is dealing specifically with the notion of the Jesus’ resurrection on the third day, it is important to note that the Early Church Fathers who had a hand in developing the statements in the Creed over the first three to four centuries of the Church’s history, were devoted to reflecting the Jesus encountered in the Scriptures – and by Scriptures we mean the Old and New Testaments. The theology of the Creeds seeks to reinforce the notion that all of the Scriptures point to Jesus, that we must use Jesus Christ as the lens through which we read all Scripture, and not just when we are reading stories about Jesus in the Gospels. If following Jesus as Lord is to inform our whole life in discipleship, then it should impact how we read and engage with the Bible too!

The Creeds provide us with a succinct and clear representation of the Scriptural Jesus, without going into the details of his life and ministry. Instead the Creeds very clearly tell us who (and what Jesus is). And here is perhaps the most important reason of all to proclaim and pray the Creeds every week. In the Creeds we affirm the fullness of Jesus’ divinity, and the fullness of his humanity. We affirm that he is Lord, that he is the Only Son of God, begotten of the Father not created, that he and the father are one, and that all things were created through him – all things pertaining to divinity; but we also affirm that he was born of the Virgin Mary and made man, that he suffered death and was buried – all things pertaining to his humanity. This might seem inconsequential to us today, but in fact it is of utmost importance to our lives of faith. On one hand we can overemphasize his divine nature, we can over-emphasize the miraculous and superhuman events and characteristics of Jesus. On the other hand we can over-emphasize Jesus’ humanity, leading us to ignore or completely devalue the scriptural witness to his divinity.

When we make the mistake of thinking of Jesus as only divine, we miss the parts of the Story where Jesus is clearly human – we ignore his birth (however miraculous it was) by his mother Mary, we bypass the temptations in the wilderness, we miss his deep anguish at the death of his friend Lazarus, and ultimately we end up ignoring his real suffering and isolation on the Cross. For our own life of faith and discipleship, it is essential that we affirm and believe the humanity of Jesus – for as one of the Early Church Fathers, Gregory of Nazianzus, wrote “that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved.” In other words for us to experience the totality of Jesus’ salvation he had to be fully human, his full humanity had to be united to his divinity for us to experience reconciliation with God. Affirming and believing in the humanity of Jesus also reminds us that God is accessible, that God chose to dwell among us, in the midst of our life here on earth. In Jesus we can embrace the transcendent God who is above all things, as truly immanent, as truly here among us. Holding the human incarnation of Jesus, reminds us that our humanity is sacred, reminds us that in Jesus we experience what it means for each of us to be made in the image of God, in Jesus we see the fulfillment of our humanity. In Jesus’ humanity God is able to speak to us in our language, in our lived and shared experience. While Jesus and his human existence also provide us

