

“Suffered, Crucified, Died, Buried”
Philippians 2:3-8
June 18, 2023

[Intro] This summer we’re look at different sections of the Apostles Creed. It’s a statement of beliefs that Christians for 2000 years have professed - not because the Apostles wrote it, but because it accurately represents their teaching.

As a church ever baptism we recite the Apostles Creed, and do you know why? Because in the 2nd century, the early Christians would do that on Easter morning. And so just like we are baptized in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit, so also the creed has 3 sections where we confess our beliefs in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We’re looking at the section “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.”

Before we begin, a caveat. One is, as we talk about the life and death of Jesus, normally we should talk about the forgiveness of sins. That Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for us. He is our substitute. He became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God. The cross is where justice and mercy kiss and our sins are forgiven. However, later this summer there is a section of the creed that we believe in the “forgiveness of sins” and, let me see, Rev. John Wood will be preaching on that. So instead of having 2 sermons on forgiveness of sins (and so you guys won’t have to compare which one you liked better...) we’re not going to focus much on forgiveness of sins this morning.

Additionally, not going to talk about the resurrection because my section ends in death. So why are we here?!? Hopefully by meditating together on the suffering life and death of Jesus, we might see more of who he is, how much he loves us and his commitment to us.

We’ve already read sermon passage but I’m going to read another one and buckle up, we’re going to use a lot of Scripture.

Luke 24:26, As I read, ask self, **“Why was it necessary?”**

I’m reading Harry Potter to my children at night. My British accent has not really improved with all the practice but here we are. I will spoil something so if you don’t know the story, cover your ears and I won’t be offended.

Harry Potter and his friends Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley attend Hogwarts, a school for wizards. Albus Dumbledore is the Headmaster and the most powerful wizard alive. And he’s good. The only one rivaling him is Tom Marvolo Riddle, which if you switch those letters around, spell Lord Voldemort. He and his followers, “death eaters” as they are called are the bad guys in the book. Well, there are 7 books in the series and at the end of the 6th book, Death Eaters have infiltrated the school and have Albus Dumbledore cornered on the top his office outside high above the castle grounds. Harry is hidden in the shadows and doesn’t know what to do. There are too many. And Severus Snape, a teacher of whom there is mutual dislike and disdain between he and Harry, has just arrived on the scene.

Severus used to be a death eater but no longer and Albus Dumbledore, the good guy, trusts him and so even though as the reader we have no reason to trust Severus, the good guy tells us to so we’re conflicted about it. Well, the next thing we know, Dumbledore looks at Severus and says “Please Severus” and Snape yells “Avada Kedavra” - a killing curse - and Dumbledore is thrown from high parapet and dies.

Harry is watching this whole thing happen and is filled with rage. He hates Snape. All hope is lost, and it seems like evil has won because they killed their main hope.

But you see, it’s not until the at the end of the 7th book that we get some information. Dumbledore had destroyed something very valuable to Lord Voldemort, a ring. And in doing so he took a curse a sickness into himself. As the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard would say, it was a “sickness unto death”. He only had a year left to live.

And so, Dumbledore had Snape kill him so that Lord Voldemort and his death eaters would trust Snape and he could be on the inside as a spy to help take them down.

Here is the point. Dumbledore was going to die anyway, already bearing the sickness of death, so instead he chose how it was going to happen and in doing so, orchestrated it in a way that eventually leads to the downfall of the enemy.

I say all that because it must’ve felt that when Jesus, the Messiah, the one who was to vanquish the Romans and reestablish an Earthly Israelite Kingdom, when Jesus died, it must have felt like all hope was gone. His suffering, crucifixion and death would’ve been devastating to the early disciples.

But what they didn’t realize, is that this was all part of God’s plan. Luke 24:26 “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer?” It was necessary for him to die to heal the world, and he chose the exact way it was going to happen.

So as we look briefly at the suffering life and death of Jesus, I want us to know that God chose this path. It was intentional and necessary. And what does that reveal about who God is and what he's like? And what he thinks of us?

HE IDENTIFIES WITH US

Not Ashamed

The incarnation of Jesus tells us that he took on flesh and blood and became like us. God became man. Wild to think about. He did that because he's not ashamed of us.

There's this great passage in Hebrews 2:10-11... **Hebrews 2:10** *For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. **11** For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,*

Not ashamed to call us family. He identifies with us.

I hope after I share this we'll still be friends and you won't judge my parenting... but early on in my 3rd child, Peter's life, he watches a lot of football on Saturday in the fall... who doesn't... and he kept noticing one team, anytime they were on... would win. And he became a fan because winning is fun. The only probably is that this team is the Alabama Crimson tide. Now here's what's great. We live in Knoxville, GO VOLS. But on jersey day at school, Peter wore his Alabama jersey. He was not ashamed to identify with Alabama, even in hostile territory. Got to give him credit for that.

Jesus is not embarrassed by you, or ashamed of you. He's not like, *Ah man, I guess we have to let this guy in because he believes in me but let's put him in the narthex of heaven so no one knows.* He became like us because is not ashamed of us. He is wearing the human flesh jersey.

Required Humility

Only one time in Scripture do we have Jesus describe his character or an attribute about himself. It's in Matthew 11:28-30 where he says "Come to me all who are weary for I am gentle and lowly in heart." Anyone else that would say "You know one thing about me? I'm really humble" we would think the opposite. But if God himself says it and we believe it, then that just remarkable. That he wants to identify as someone gentle.

[Phil 2] verses 3-8 says it like this...**3** *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 **And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.***

You see it's easy for us to forget that the cross was mostly for slaves and the lowest of economic classes. Most wealthy people were able to avoid such. A death. But Jesus doesn't. He chooses, because of his humility, to identify with not just humans but the lowest, and poor, and forgotten.

[Fleming Rutledge] *"This was the destiny chosen by the Creator and Lord of the universe: the death of a nobody... Thus the Son of God entered into solidarity with the lowest and least of all his creation, the nameless and forgotten."* (P 76)

Identifying with Us, not being ashamed of, exercising great humility, **lead to a shameful Death.**

And I use the qualifying adjective "shameful" in front of death deliberately. Because have you ever thought about why crucifixion? There were many ways Jesus could've died. Why did he choose this mode?

What's interesting too is that the NT writers don't really go into the gory details of what crucifixion all entails. It could be that they expected the original readers to know them already, but one theologian made the insightful comment that perhaps the NT writers didn't want us to focus on the physical and mental pain... but wanted us to focus on something else in regards to the death.

And that is this: crucifixion was all about publicly shaming the victim. This is why Jesus was naked. This why the soldiers mocked him with a purple robe and crown of thorns. This is why they made you walk through the city so that crowds could gawk at you. This is why the soldiers and pharisee hurled insults on him as he was raised up.

The cross was not the most efficient way to kill someone because that wasn't the point. The point was degradation. Publicizing shaming Jesus was a way to declare to the world that he is worthless, not worthy to even be human being in society.

The cross is a symbol of godlessness. And so God became godless. Christ the human was dehumanized.

[Illustration] In 1998 in Laramie, Wyoming, a young gay man in his 20s named Matthew Sheperd was beaten to an inch of his life because of his sexual orientation. He was then tied to a fence and abandoned in the cruel Wyoming winters. 18 hours later a passerby finds him but originally thought he was a scarecrow. He was taken to the hospital but didn't recover, dying 5 days later.

One local resident said, *"There is incredible symbolism in being tied to a fence. People have likened it to a scarecrow. But it sounded more like a crucifixion."*

You see, the perpetrators could have killed Matthew Shepherd but they wanted to humiliate him, publicly shame him and dehumanize him.

Y'all, Jesus CHOSE the cross. He took on flesh and blood to identify with us because he's not ashamed of us and because of that he suffered unto obedience and died - even death on a cross Paul tells us in Philippians 2 because of how much he loves you and is committed to you.

This leads to a much shorter 2nd point.

HE UNDERSTANDS US

Experiences of Jesus

You see, going through similar experiences enables connection. Not necessary but people who go through the same experiences - easier to relate and have a relationship because you understand. You've gone through it.

My wife has given birth a few times and I didn't really know what that was like until I had a kidney stone, size of a grain of salt. Incredibly painful. Now I know... JK!

Experiences of Jesus being a human and living life enables us to connect with him, relate to God, because God first related to us. Objectively, again, the substitutionary death of Jesus opened up a way for humanity to be brought back from alienation from God, to have our guilt atoned for, sins forgiven, and to be in the presence of our King without shame.

AND existentially, right now, we can have a deep, personal relationship with Jesus and ya'll. He understands.

This is what Hebrews 2:18 - **18** **For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

e.g. #1 - family issues... Jesus family thought he was crazy and tried to get him to stop doing ministry! They had a plan for his life and were disappointed in him. Family pressure to be someone and not meets family expectations... He understands family issues.

e.g. #2 - loss of a loved one or a parent ... Joseph isn't mentioned and most scholars believe it's because he died when Jesus was young. And he grew up in a single parent home. He understands losing loved ones.

e.g. #3 - tired, and afraid of the future? Jesus in jOhn4 says he was tired. IN the garden of gethsemane he's afraid of his impending death. He understands your fears and anxieties. He's not ashamed of you. He empathizes. He understands.

e.g. #4 - talked about behind his back- pharisees just said all this nasty untrue things about him... if you've had people talk about behind your back and you find out about it... it hurts... Jesus understands

e.g. #5 - never married - human male he would have desires and attraction that he would not have fulfilled because God had another plan for him. Unfulfilled desires. He understands.

I would argue the one thing Jesus didn't really have to experience was aging... I'm 36 and this is when Jesus died. I already feel like Rice Krispy cereal... like I wake up and snap crackle and pop... BUT he did die for the sins of the world SO... I guess that's okay.]]]]

These experiences of Jesus leads to intimacy with Jesus.

Intimacy with Jesus

Rebecca McLaughlin holds a PHD in Renaissance literature from Cambridge University and a theology degree from Oak Hill college. She was a former Vice President of Veritas Forum and she wrote this book "Confronting Christianity... 12 Hard questions for the world's largest religion". She has a chapter on suffering and she's something quite insightful...

She says that someone trying to comfort you who doesn't understand isn't really that comforting. It's nice and you can receive it with kindness but it's not a balm to your wounds. Real comfort and healing come from someone who really

understands. This is why there are so many support groups for people going through specific tragedies... because you want comfort from people who understand.

This is why Christ CAN comfort us. 2 Corinth's 1 calls God the Father of mercies and God of all comfort ... why? Because Jesus understands.

She says, "***Our suffering matters enough to bring tears to his eyes***" (p 202) refereeing when Jesus wept tears of sorrow and anguish over the death of his good friend Lazarus... ***Our suffering matters enough to bring tears to his eyes***"

She goes on to say, "***Pain is a place of special intimacy with him.***"

One of the saddest realities about having children is you know they will suffer. But intimacy can often come with your children when they suffer to be like, "yeah I'm so sorry. I had this happen to me when I was your age. It was really painful. Want to talk about it" You see the pain rather than being something to avoid, actually becomes a place of intimacy and connected.

Jesus understands what it's like to be human, to experience the joys and griefs, a man of sorrows a man of pain, but also for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.

What does this mean for us?
