

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Last week, we began our sermon series on the Creed focusing on the first part of the Creed: “*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*” So, if you are asked what does this mean, you can say: “*I believe that God is the Creator, who has given to me my body and soul, all members, all physical goods, all possessions. Therefore, I owe it to Him to serve, thank, and praise Him.*”

Tonight, we continue with the Second Article of the Creed, which is the heart of the Christian faith:

*[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 thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.*

The Second Article of the Creed describes Jesus’ work of redemption for us. But why must Jesus redeem us? Well, that answer is sin. Again, the problem isn’t that we are creatures. The problem is not that this world is a material world. Remember, creation is God’s good work and His good gifts. The issue is human sin.

The problem is that we have used the best things that God has created and used them in the worst way. We don’t use bad things in the worst way; we use the best things in the worst way. So, what am I saying? These best things that God has given us are: our bodies, our lives, our family, our work, our income, and the list goes on. And what does it mean that we use these best things in the worst way? It means that we idolize them. We idolize created things. We force them to do things that they were not created to do. We try to get our security and happiness from them. And when we do that, we further misuse them by keeping them for ourselves rather than serving our neighbor.

So, what happens? We become enslaved to and entrapped by these best things. Or, worse yet, our desires for them entrap us.

God says: ***“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”*** (Genesis 1:28a). God affirms His love for life all throughout His written Word. He says: ***“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward”*** (Psalm 127:3). For God, human life isn’t just good, it’s ***“very good”*** (Genesis 1:31). God says: Get married and be fruitful and multiply!

So, human life is very good. But do good ends – *children* – justify immoral means? This is a question that has received much attention within the past week. Is In Vitro Fertilization good? Is IVF ethical? If we believe life begins at conception, which you ought as Christians, that embryo in that laboratory container is, indeed, human life. We all know people who struggle with infertility – *and whatever the circumstances or mechanisms of conception, every child is a gift from God*. But there are still questions: what about “selective reduction,” which is aborting some embryos to improve the resources and chances to have the desired child? What about those “left over” embryos that are considered “medical waste”? Again, every child is a gift from God, no matter the circumstances or mechanisms of conception, *including rape, incest, or IVF*, but do good ends justify immoral means?

Some other, less heavy good things are sports and social media. Professional and amateur sports teams are good, but we can become enslaved to them if we try to get our security and happiness from them. Social media is good. It’s great that we can connect with people. But social media can also enslave us if we try to get our security and happiness from it. So, any of these best things cannot give us what we seek from them. Satan has lured us, who are God’s beloved human creatures, into captivity.

But just as we are enslaved to the devil’s deception, the Second Article of the Creed enters in. Since God has created this world, He refuses to let go of His creation. After all, God created everything as good. He loves creation. The world is not the problem. Sin is the problem. So, God sets out to reclaim and restore His creation – beginning with us, because the problem began with us. He who created us is He who redeems us – true God and true Man.

How does God redeem us? First, God dives down into the depths of His creation, to take up residence in it and fix it for good. Now, God has always been present and active in His creation, but here, He does something different. He takes a created body into Himself and He lives a creaturely life. He makes room in His life to take on a human body and all that it entails – a human mind, a human history, and human DNA that goes all the way back to Adam. He is *“the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man”* (Nicene Creed).

Jesus is the Creator of the universe and a creature within that creation, all at the same time. Who would have ever imagined this?

Second, Jesus’ incarnation affirms the goodness of creation like nothing else. God is saying that His creation is good and important to Him. And Jesus does more than just take on a human body to live in the midst of sin and evil. He becomes human in order to destroy, and to overcome sin and evil and everything that pollutes and disfigures His beautiful world.

Jesus redeems mankind from sin, from the devil, from eternal death, and from all evil. Before Jesus did any of that, we did not have a Lord, instead, we were held captive under the devil’s power, condemned to eternal death, entangled in sin and spiritual blindness.

Sin is deeply personal to God. Sin offends God because it shows our rejection of Him and His good purposes for us. Sin shows our betrayal of God. And yet, God in the most personal way enters His creation, personally takes our sin and rebellion upon Himself, personally does away with it, and personally conquers it. Jesus becomes our Lord.

As our Lord, Jesus has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection, so that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness.

As our Lord, Jesus is our Redeemer. This means that He is the One who has brought us from Satan’s dominion to the Kingdom of God, from eternal death to eternal life, from sin to righteousness, and He preserves us.

Jesus, who is our Lord and our Redeemer, paid everything so that He might win us and bring us under His dominion. This is why He became man, was conceived and born without sin, from the Holy Spirit and from the virgin Mary, so that He might overcome sin. He made satisfaction for you and me, not with silver or gold, but with His own precious blood. He did this all in order to become your Lord.

These words hammer it home: He “*suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.*” But three days later, He “*rose again from the dead.*” He rose again in His same body. He rose, so that we, too, shall also rise from the dead.

In the First Article of the Creed, we cannot deal with God apart from His creation. Now in the Second Article, we cannot deal with God’s graciousness in redeeming us from sin apart from the creaturely human body of Jesus. Through this physical human body, we encounter our Redeemer and Lord.

As we recite the Second Article of the Creed each week, we proclaim the redemption we have in Christ Jesus “*that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

Jesus created us and He preserves us. He redeems us and raises us. Upon this Second Article is the entire Gospel and that upon this article our salvation and our happiness rests. Amen.

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

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**