

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! December is here. We've had a long, full year of remembering the Reformation and that it was, and is, all about Jesus. The year of the 500th Anniversary is coming to an end; but not our celebration of the Reformation, or of its point, which is the key point of all of Christianity—that Jesus came to earth to live and die and rise again for you and me. This, as we'll read, is also one of the last points Luther makes about the Creed, which we'll find together below.

“No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known the Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” (John 14:6b-7) ←It's STILL All about Jesus!

Last month we were considering the “resurrection of the flesh”; this month, we look at the Creed as a whole. “Here in the Creed you have the entire essence, will, and work of God exquisitely depicted in very brief but rich words. In them are comprehended all our wisdom, which surpasses all human wisdom, understanding, and reason. Although the whole world has sought painstakingly to learn what God might be and what he might think and do, yet it has never succeeded in the least. But here you have everything in the richest measure. For in all three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart and his pure, unutterable love...For...we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it not for the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge (BoC, pp.439-440).”

That is a point I've made time and again with our adult instruction students—that we have natural knowledge of God. We can see the creation: the mountains, the streams, the fields, the world, and even the universe and know that there is a God. We also have the Law written on our hearts so that our consciences accused us when we have done wrong. That is all the knowledge the world has since it doesn't have the Creed. It has a huge, powerful, creating God who is angry with us because we have done wrong, and there is nothing we can do about it. The world only has natural knowledge of God; we have knowledge of God through Jesus.

“But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit (BoC, p.440).” God the Holy Spirit has revealed to us God’s plan of salvation—His Son’s death and resurrection for our sins—through the means of His Word, from which our Church Fathers derived the Creed. Using the Creed and the Word, the Holy Spirit has instilled in us faith in Jesus as our Deliverer from sin and God’s judgment.

“These three articles of the Creed, therefore, separate and distinguish us Christians from all other people on earth. All who are outside his Christian people, whether heathen, Turk, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites—even though they believe in and worship only the one, true God—nevertheless do not know what his attitude is toward them. They cannot be confident of his love and blessing, and therefore they remain in eternal wrath and condemnation. For they do not have the Lord Christ, and, besides, they are not illuminated and blessed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (BoC, p.440).”

No other faith on earth leads people to God’s mercy and heaven. Most certainly heathens will not get to heaven because they refuse to even believe in God Himself. But even those who claim to worship the one, true God—the Jews and the Muslims—they will not see heaven either. They do not know God because they do not know His mercy in His Second Person, His Son Jesus Christ.

This month we celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ—both His first coming as the babe in the manger and when He will come again to take us home. And through the Spirit of God, we know Jesus, God the Son, and, therefore, we know God the Father and His great love and mercy for us. Without Jesus, we have no mercy from God, we do not know God completely, and we would be condemned. So, dear friends in Christ, celebrate Christmas. Celebrate knowing God the Son and the mercy of God the Father which we learn through the Spirit. The Reformation, this year, this Christmas, and the entirety of our lives are all about rejoicing that we know Jesus, our Savior and our God. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh