

“LIVING WITH JESUS AS SAVIOR” (Creed - Part 3)
by Rom A. Pegram (9/27/20)

Good morning to all ... and welcome to this time in God’s word! We’re on our third week of the ‘CREED’ worship series, continuing to ask the question: What do I believe? And, of course, we’re using the Apostle’s Creed—as well as scripture—as our guide. Today, we get into the second line of the Apostle’s Creed which reads: “I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord....”

As we get into this message, we’re going to cover a couple of theological ideas that will help us understand better what it means to ‘live with Jesus as Savior.’ In John 1:41 (NLT), it says: “Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, ‘We have found the Messiah’....” So, what does that word mean?

In scripture, there are two favorite terms for Jesus: 1) Savior and 2) Lord. You’ve seen in the Apostle’s Creed that Jesus is described as God’s ‘only Son, our Lord.’ ‘Christos’ is the Greek word for ‘Lord’—meaning divine Lord, supreme ruler, divine ruler—along those lines. Now, in days of the Early Church, the common way to describe Caesar was ‘lord.’ So the Early Church wanted to change some of the lingo they were using to describe Jesus and settled on Jesus Christ (Christos), meaning ‘Jesus the Savior’ or ‘Jesus, the Messiah’ (Messiah = Hebrew equivalent of Christos). Caesar was human, so a term used for another human being just wouldn’t do for Jesus; the Early Church realized Jesus was more than human. He was a Christos, a Messiah, a divine Savior. So, they put the title ‘Christ’ after his more common name, which meant the same as Messiah—a fulfillment of Hebrew scripture. So, for centuries, the Early Church professed Jesus was more than just a human being; he was both human and divine, as the scriptures clearly teach us.

In 325 AD, there was a major church council that settled this issue once and for all. Why did they have to meet? As you might expect, there was someone in the Church who wasn’t behaving themselves. It was a guy named Arias, who led a small group inside the Church that was teaching a heresy (heretical teaching) that said, “Jesus was NOT truly divine. He was just an inspirational human being—period.”

If you’ve ever read the Divinci Code by Dan Brown, you’ve run into some of those thoughts of Arias—that Jesus was only human, married to Mary Magdalene, had children, etc. *Very intriguing, but none of it true.* And some of Brown’s ideas may have come from an earlier work in the late 70s called ‘Holy Blood, Holy Grail,’ which espoused some of the same ideas. About the only thing Brown got correct in the Divinci Code was that there was, indeed, a meeting in 325 AD called ‘The Council of Nicea.’ In those days, Emperor Constantine got Church leaders together in a place called Nicea (NW, modern-day Turkey) and held a council to talk about Arias’ heretical teaching. Over and over again for centuries prior to that, Christians had believed Jesus was fully human AND fully divine. Then Arias and his followers came along and said ‘no’... BUT the Church, at this Council in 325 AD said ‘YES, Jesus was 100% human and 100% divine at the same time...

... which is what both scripture and the Apostle’s Creed state too. So, people have wrestled with what to do with Jesus, for centuries ... and some are still wrestling with him today. Jesus is very controversial. If he is who he says he is, then that brings up

issues for humanity, with eternal consequences. It means I must either accept him ... or reject him. So, folks, “Who is Jesus for me?” Here’s some of the disciple’s earliest memories of Jesus (John 1:35-41, NLT)...

³⁵ The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, “Look! There is the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus looked around and saw them following. “What do you want?” he asked them. They replied, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ “Come and see,” he said. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. ⁴¹ Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means “Christ”).

So, Andrew had it right in his day! And today, throughout our world, there exists an undeniable fascination with Jesus—among Christians and non-Christians alike. *Things like the Divinci Code or the movie The Passion of the Christ didn’t cause this fascination; they are the result of this fascination!* In the mid-60s, the Beatle’s John Lennon boasted the Beatles were bigger than Jesus ... and many wondered if this was true. The Beatles are still popular, but no where close to the universal appeal of one Jesus of Nazareth, a first-century carpenter’s son, from a backwards town in an obscure Roman province. For centuries, every recorded word Jesus spoke has been relentlessly analyzed. The Bible, including Jesus’ words, is the most printed, the most purchased, and the most read book in the entire world. No name is spoken out loud more than the name of Jesus (whether in praise, in jest, or in the curse). He was born into poverty, yet all the world’s chronology is linked to his birth date. Whether you believe in him or not as your Savior, it’s hard to argue that this Jesus is probably the most influential and important person who’s ever lived. But, *does Jesus matter to your life?* My answer today is a resounding ‘YES!’ If he didn’t, we wouldn’t still be talking about him today. So, folks, as my Savior, Jesus makes a real difference in my life in 3 important ways: Here are **THE 3 DIFFERENCES JESUS MAKES IN MY LIFE:**

FOR MY PAST, JESUS OFFERS FORGIVENESS. Let’s be honest. Most of us don’t like to revisit our past all that much. For many of us, our past is filled with mistakes—decisions we’ve made, actions we’ve taken, things we’ve done or said, or people we’ve hung out with. Mistakes. We all make ‘em! As human beings, none of us is perfect. We constantly mess up ... and the Bible’s word for that is ‘SIN.’ Sin literally means ‘missing the mark.’ Everyone one of us ‘misses the mark’ from time to time...

I want you to listen to me for a moment: Sin, or missing the mark, always has consequences in our lives, like hurt or shame or regret. But the most devastating consequence of sin is this: It separates us from God, from his presence in our lives right now, and from eventually from our eternity with him. Sin in your life serves as *a barrier* to God’s blessings, God’s healings, and God’s very presence in your life. And our response to sin in our lives is usually one of 3 things: 1) we try to bury it, 2) we blame

others for it, or 3) we beat ourselves up over it—none of these helpful at all. The only real escape to the consequences of sin is ... the forgiveness God offers us through Jesus Christ.

Acts 13:38-39 tells us, “Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. ³⁹ Everyone who believes in him is made right in God’s sight—something the law of Moses could never do.” There is no way you can work yourself free from the consequences of sin—not even by living a good life or being a good person...

One of my favorite people in this whole world is a man by the name of Dale Douglas. He was Jane’s earthly father. As my father-in-law, he was more like a second dad to me. I loved him. I respected him. And, as a head-strong young man, he was one of the few people I would listen to. The bottom line is ... *he was one of the finest human beings I’ve ever met!*

He knew when Jane and I picked up in Wisconsin and moved everyone to Kentucky to go back to school, something was up. He knew my father was a pastor but had no idea one of his daughters would be married to one. My mother-in-law was a church-going Christian—all her life. So, he had that example to look to, and he respected my mother-in-law very much. But, because of an unfortunate incident that took place in a Methodist church when he was a kid, in general he wouldn’t have anything to do with the church. We kept praying for him through the years.

Not too long before the summer we moved to Lomira, my in-laws finally had to move out of their own home and into an assisted living facility. I guess it was then that Dale began to explore his own faith, go to church with my mother-in-law from time to time, and finally gave his life to the Jesus who forgives ... and was baptized...

I’m telling you right now, if anyone could have dealt with the consequences of sin in their life by being a good person, it would have been Dale Douglas! He was incredible! He was the kind of guy, the kind of neighbor, the kind of friend who would literally give you the shirt off his own back if you needed it. But even he couldn’t deal with the fallen nature of humanity on his own. He needed Jesus. And he finally accepted Jesus’ gift of forgiveness, becoming a child of the Father in the process. John 1:9 says, “But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” Jesus forgives us instantly and he forgives us completely! But, the only solution to sin comes from the forgiveness God offers us through Jesus’ death on the cross!

For my past, Jesus offers forgiveness ... so I’ll be ready for both this life and for what’s next. For my past, Jesus offers this gift I do not deserve! Relevant? I think so!
And then...

FOR MY PRESENT, JESUS OFFERS SIGNIFICANCE. Have you ever had the thought that you really wanted your life to count for something? Or are you satisfied with keeping your life in neutral, not really caring about reaching a meaningful destination at all?

Throughout the ages, philosophers have theorized, and average people have wondered, if there isn't more to life than just living. There must be a greater plan to life; there must be a purpose behind it all! Perhaps the most famous philosophical treatment of this (just prior to Jesus) is the allegory of the cave, by Plato. Plato imagined people lived in caves, and always saw shadows that came because of the fire in those caves, going back and forth across the cave. But the people realized there must be more outside of the cave. One day, someone escapes from the cave and they make it into the light, and they see different colors, and richness, and fullness of life they've never seen before. Then they come back to the cave to tell the others about the new life they'd found ... only to find that what they had to share was rejected, refused, and eventually put to death. Plato went on to say that what it's like outside the cave, he does not know. But he's pretty sure there's a greater life ... in the light. There has to be a difference between existing and really living...

When Jesus came, he spoke about different levels of living. He had the audacity to say that he's the door that leads to the higher plane of existence. He said people have lived in the dark all their lives, but he was there to show them the light. There *is* a difference between existing and really living—between survival and real significance. In John 10:10, we read Jesus' words: "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." In other words, Jesus came to offer our lives SIGNIFICANCE. For our present life, we can know that significance!

In Acts 16:30, while Paul and Silas were in jail, the jailer in the story who leads them out of the jail asked them, "...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" In other words, what must I do to really live? That's the essence of this conversation. He saw in Paul and Silas a life that had been changed from the inside out. They'd found significance because of the presence of God in their lives! And God's still changing lives today! So, our present can be filled with SIGNIFICANCE. Then...

FOR MY FUTURE, JESUS OFFERS ASSURANCE. Many people have approached me with the question: "How can I know that I'm saved?" The challenge of adversity (which we're all going through right now), the temptation to sin—any low point in our spiritual walk can cause us to doubt our identity as a child of God. Whatever it may be, doubting your personal salvation is not a unique experience...

Before his Aldersgate experience in 1738, John Wesley writes that having an assurance of his identity as a child of God was missing in his life! According to his own description of his spiritual journey, it's very likely that before this evangelical conversion (Aldersgate), Wesley was probably not a born-again Christian. He was an Anglican priest, but not a Christian. Think about that! Then he writes this of that very personal Aldersgate experience (Bible study on Aldersgate Street in London/Luther's Preface to Romans was read...): "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Folks, this is putting it mildly, but John Wesley—the founder of Methodism—was a real mess ... before Aldersgate. He was preaching a faith he did not yet know personally!

But here at Aldersgate, London, he had an experience of assurance of his salvation. Wesleyans call that a 'Doctrine of Assurance' today.

But this is the gift Jesus offers us for the days ahead! We can know that we know that we know ... that we are a child of God! Jesus has our sins covered, we are forgiven, our lives are significant, and we can rest assured that all is well when it comes to our future! Romans 8:16 (MSG) made it very clear to Wesley and maybe it will help us too; it reads, "God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance!"

There may be moments when a difficult situation will remove any sense of personal assurance. Maybe lapses into sin will lead one to doubt. Nonetheless, relationships—and *being a child of God is just that*—are not broken off instantly. The same God who gracefully justifies us also preserves us in our weakness. The merit of our identity as God's children, with Jesus as our Savior, is not based on our subjective knowledge ... but on the work of Christ and his Spirit in our lives. *Assurance is nothing other than a gift—an incredible, merciful gift—of God to his children...*

So, does Jesus matter to your life? My answer is still ... 'YES!' Living with Jesus as Savior means ... I have his forgiveness for my past, his significance for my present, and his assurance that I am his kid ... for my future! Do I even have to ask? Does it get any better than that? Next week, we'll dig into what it means to live with the third Person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit. Don't miss that one, as we continue to unravel what it means to be a Christian—a Christ-follower today...