



from the desk of . . .
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#813
29 July 2018

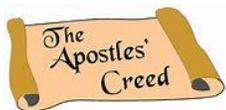
The Apostles' Creed - 7

**... HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, AND SITS AT
THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER
ALMIGHTY;**

Hebrews 12:1-3

Over the past several weeks I've painfully come to the realization that ... I have a lot of stuff. I was cleaning out the closet in my office & I came upon this folder labeled "Important Papers." I confess that I didn't even remember this folder existed, much less looked at it in the 17 years since I've been here.

Now, how important could those papers be? ... And as I'm packing, Kathy is constantly reminding me that we've got to get rid of all the extra stuff.



(X) The Apostles' Creed is the expression of our Christian faith without all the "extra stuff". It contains the essential, Scriptural elements necessary for a strong Christian faith. Its' brevity is its' beauty. Its' not weighted down with a lot of confusing verbiage.

The Apostles' Creed is on the flipside of your outline. Notice that it's arranged in 3 paragraphs.

The 1st paragraph deals with God the Father.

The 2nd paragraph focuses on Jesus Christ.

The 3rd paragraph covers the work of The Holy Spirit.

So, let's begin this morning by standing,
& saying together what we believe ...

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven & earth.

And 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, dead, & buried;

he descended into hell;

the 3rd day he rose again from the dead;

he ascended into heaven,

& sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

from thence he shall come to judge the living & the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian Church;

the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;

the resurrection of the body; & the life everlasting.

Amen

Now with that as an introduction, & since you've
come here this morning to worship, I want you to listen
to Good News, as recorded in the book of Hebrews.

Within your hearing now comes the Word of the Lord ...

As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God's throne.

Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His Heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification. Amen

"I believe that Jesus ascended into Heaven,
& sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty."

I believe that. How many of you do? ...

Most of you just said it! Well, what does it mean?

Over the past couple of weeks, we've talked about Jesus' birth, & death, & resurrection ... exciting stuff! And when it comes to Jesus, it's what we're familiar with.

But the ascension & enthronement of Jesus is not discussed as often, & for some it even seems somewhat irrelevant or anticlimactic. Well, let me explain why it counts, why it matters, & why when we ponder Jesus being at the right hand of God the Father that we shouldn't celebrate enthusiastically that He reigns.

Jesus isn't just sitting on His duff waiting for the world to run down.

He's serving & ministering on our behalf **right now**.

#1 ... Jesus is on the throne & He's our **mediator**.
He's representing us.

Let me begin by explaining to you the role of the High Priest in the O.T. The High Priest played an active part in bringing people into an acceptable relationship with God. The theological term for this is ... atonement. **Atonement** means that there has been reconciliation between God & humanity. It means that something has been done to purge away or cover our sins.

It's spelled out clearly in Leviticus 16. (X)

The Day of Atonement was the most important feast day in Judaism.



The High Priest had to go through elaborate rituals just to get ready for the ceremony ... washings ... purifications ... the right kind of garments. There were special sacrifices. A male goat was killed & its' blood taken into the Most Holy Place ... the Holy of holies.

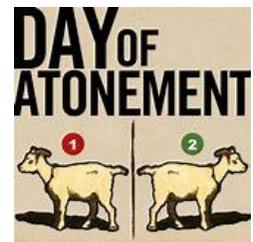


(X) This was the part of the Temple where God's presence literally dwelt. (Leviticus 16:2,29)

And nobody was allowed in there except for the High Priest on the 10th day of the 7th month of the year.

It's hard for us to imagine just how solemn this ceremony was. And if the High Priest messed anything up in the Most Holy Place, God would strike him dead. In fact, that's why they tied a rope around his waist before he went in. Because if something happened, nobody could go in after him ... he'd have to be dragged out.

So, the High Priest performs the sacrifice, says his prayers, interceding for the people, & then comes back out. (X) He then takes a 2nd goat, lays his hands on it, figuratively transferring the sins of the people onto that "scapegoat", at which time that goat is led off into the wilderness, never to return,



symbolizing the removal of sin from God's people.

And then, when all that is done the High Priest goes over to his chair & sits down. And that meant that atonement for sin had been made. But guess what ... tomorrow was coming, & with it ... new sins.

So, everyone had to wait out the calendar for the next Day of Atonement to roll around & the High Priest would have to do it all over again. But we have a higher **High Priest** who made a better sacrifice.

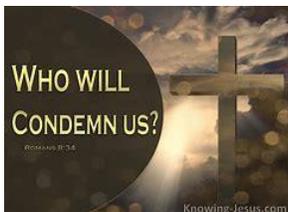
Not the blood of goats ... but His **own blood**, (Matthew 26:28) & therefore won for us a **permanent** Atonement. In fact, in this final Atonement, there's no more provision for sin that ever needs to be made,

no more **sacrifices** need to be **offered**.

Jesus, our High Priest, has sat down in His chair ... & "it is finished!" (John 19:30) Game ... set ... match. Walk off grand slam homerun. It's over ... no more work ... except what Jesus is doing for us in Heaven right now.

Ponder this ... Jesus right now, in Heaven, is on His throne, & incredibly as it sounds ... is **servicing us!**

In Romans 8, one of the great chapters in Scripture, the Apostle Paul talks about the struggles & difficulties that God's people go through. It's an ongoing thing. There's trouble, & hardship, & persecution ... coming right at us. And we wonder if these things can separate us from God? ... Paul says they can't.



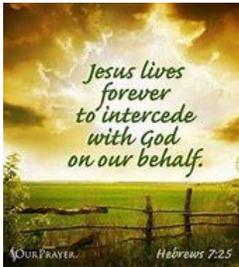
(X) "Who will accuse God's chosen people? God himself declares them not guilty! Who, then, will condemn them?

Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life & is at the right side of God, pleading with him for us!" (Romans 8:33-34)

Present participle ...

He's pleading (ἐντυγχάνει) with God right now.

Jesus is interceding at this very moment ... for you & me.



(X) "Jesus lives on forever, & his work as priest does not pass on to someone else. And so he is able, now & always, to save those who come to God through him, because he lives forever to plead with God for them."

(Hebrews 7:24-25)

"Jesus lives forever to 'plead' with God for us."
Do you hear that? ... Jesus lives to pray! I have a t-shirt with the words, "to live is to run." I've seen others: "to live is to fish" ... "to live is to shop". Jesus lives to pray! "Can't wait to wake up tomorrow morning & do some more praying. I should get up from my throne & stretch my legs ... but dang, this pleading to God is too much fun!"

I'm exaggerating, of course,
but just what do these passages mean?
Is Jesus begging God all day to do stuff for us? ...

There's some art in the ancient Roman catacombs (X) that depict Jesus before God, begging, & pleading, & sweating drops of blood, (Luke 22:44) just like in



Gethsemane, trying to get His apparently reluctant Father to do something on behalf of His children here on earth.

Well, the ancient followers of Jesus in Rome got a lot of things right ... but not that.

Jesus isn't begging & pleading, trying to get God to do something for us. No, His very presence, alive forever, on the throne, at the right hand of God, is in itself **intercession** for our need.



Here's how it works. (X) In The Revelation we read that Jesus emerges, & He looks like a Lamb that "appeared to have been killed." (The Revelation 5:6)

I take that to mean that Jesus, in His glorified body, still bears the marks of His crucifixion, (John 20:27), & I believe He'll have those forever ... scars in His hands, feet, & side, to show the sacrifice He made for us.

So, it's a constant reminder to the Father. (X) Every time He glances to His right & sees His Son there, He sees a Lamb that had been killed. And forever, the reality of that sacrifice is real in Heaven. It's right before the Father's eyes, that atonement, once & for all, for sin has been made.



And therefore, there's no other sacrifice, & no judgment or condemnation for sin, which needs to be made for God's people. Because right there is Jesus, the once & for all sacrifice ... His blood for our sins.

When the High Priest finished all the sacrificing, & interceding, & laying his hands on the goat, & all the rest ... there was one final thing that he did. He appeared before the people & blessed them.



(X) "May the LORD bless you & take care of you;
May the LORD be kind & gracious to you;
May the LORD look on you with favor & give you peace."

(Numbers 6:24-25)

Translated ...

"May the Lord be good to you.
May the joy & satisfaction of God be yours.
May God turn His face toward you.
May the gaze of His pleasure & His care & concern
always rest on you.

May you never escape the view of the Father.
May He always have His face turned right toward you.
May He be pleased with you & concerned about your
situation in such a way that you experience His peace,
His shalom, which is an all-encompassing sense of
well-being, because you're rightly related to Him.
And when you're rightly related to God
everything else takes care of itself."

That was the prayer of blessing that the High Priest proclaimed over the people. And Jesus, by virtue of the fact that He lives forever, & is seated at the right hand of God, a lamb who has been killed, our High Priest, our mediator, our representative ... every time God sees Him (which is always), these are the things that are communicated. And by virtue of Jesus' presence the **blessing** of God rests on us.

So, what do we do in response? ...



(X) "Let us have confidence, then, & approach God's throne, where there is grace. There we will receive mercy & find grace to help us just when we need it." (Hebrews 4:16)

That's what we do. We approach the throne that Jesus is sitting on with confidence & boldness, because the help & grace & mercy we need is there, & is available. That's the good ministry that our enthroned Savior is providing for us today.

2^{ndly}, Jesus is not just our mediator, He's our **monarch**. He's our Lord, & our King, & He's leading us. After all, He's in the throne room of Heaven.

Think about this, in a board room where is the seat of power? ... It's normally at the end of the table. But more accurately, the seat of power in a board room is wherever the chairman sits. He/she can sit in any chair & wherever that chair is, that's the center of attention.

Okay, where's the 2nd seat of power? ... It's not beside the chairman. It's actually right across from the chairman where they can have face-to-face conversation. But that's in a board room.

What about in a throne room? Where's the seat of power? ... Well obviously it's the center throne.

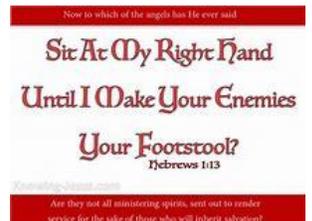
That's the seat of power, but where's the 2nd seat of power? ... It's at the sovereign's right hand.

That's the place of privilege. The King sits down, & the heir apparent sits right beside him, at his right hand.

Well, Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, the Father. God says to Jesus, (X)

"Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies as a footstool under your feet."

(Hebrews 1:13)



Paul writes ... "God raised Christ from death & seated him at his right side in the heavenly world. Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, & lords; he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world & in the next." (Ephesians 1:20-21)

Now it's not surprising that this is where God wants Jesus, but have you ever thought how this relates to us? "God put all things under Christ's feet & gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. The church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere." (Ephesians 1:22-23)

Paul continues ...

"In our union with Christ Jesus God raised us up with him to rule with him in the heavenly world." (Ephesians 2:6)

So, if the Son is at the right hand of the Father, who is at the right hand of the Son? ... Not us.

We don't sit at the right hand of Jesus Christ.

We are the **right hand** of Jesus Christ.

He's the **head** ... we're the **body**.
 We're **spiritually connected**.

I put a trampoline in my garage, & start jumping up & down. And I jump so high that my head crashes through the ceiling. And there I'm stuck, hanging by my neck, with my arms & legs thrashing around.

(You're enjoying this image, aren't you?)

So, I call to Kathy, "come & help me, I'm stuck!"
 And she yells back, "where are you?" Where am I? ...
 In the garage or in the attic? I'm in both, right?
 I'm in both places at the same time.

And that's exactly the way it is for those of us who are with Christ. He's the head ... we're the body.

He's exalted on high. We're not exalted yet.
 He's up there ... & we're down here. But we're with Him.

This is the restoration of all things to the way
 it was meant to be.

In *Genesis*, we read, "When God created the universe,"
 (*Genesis* 1:1) the world, & everything in it; He put a man & a woman in the Garden & He "blessed them, & said,

'Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth & bring it under their control.

I am putting you in charge." (*Genesis* 1:28)

You are to rule everything.

The Psalmist talks about God's creation of human beings,

"You made them inferior only to yourself;
 you crowned them with glory & honor.
 You appointed them rulers over everything you made."

(The Psalms 8:5-6)

Of course, we blew it. We threw it all away when we fell into sin. Actually, we became slaves to sin, (Romans 6:20) & worldliness. But now, with Christ, the restoration of all things to the way they were meant to be is underway.

It's not just Jesus who's sitting on the throne ... He's the head ... we're the rest of His body. We're the extension of Him. We are with Him while He reigns.

Do you understand what that means for us? ... It means power. It means authority. Jesus said, "I have been given all authority in heaven & on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere & make them my disciples."

(Matthew 28:18-19) Bring them in under my rule.

Jesus said, (X) "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, & you will be witnesses for me ... to the ends of the earth." (The Acts 1:8)



Paul writes ... "When I came to you, I was weak & trembled all over with fear, & my teaching & message were not delivered with skillful words of human wisdom, but with convincing proof of the power of God's Spirit."

(1 Corinthians 2:3-4)

The Holy Spirit is working in us, giving us power.



(X) "God's divine power has given us everything we need to live a truly religious life through our knowledge of the one who called us to share in his own glory & goodness." (2 Peter 1:3)

This is our time. Now is when God's people march out to do battle with the spiritual forces, & extend the reign of Jesus throughout the world. It's about power, & we have it ... because our head, Jesus Christ, sits on the throne. And no one will ever take Him down, again.

We just continue to do on earth what Jesus did while He was here ... because we're His body, & we're empowered because He's the King on the throne.

One last thing about Jesus Christ sitting on the throne at the right hand of Father ... He's our **motivator**, He's our inspiration.

- (song ... "Open The Eyes Of My Heart" ... end at 1:11)

What are we wishing for when we sing,
"Open the eyes of my heart"?
Why do we want to see Jesus, "high & lifted up"? ...

We are, by nature as human beings, mimics & imitators.
We're shaped by our surroundings.

If we have a hero or particularly compelling person in our life it isn't long before we begin to pick up their mannerisms, their gestures, their way of speaking, their vocabulary. We become like them.

If you're a person who spends most of the time in the world, you begin to live in its' vision & its' values & its' morals. It becomes your motivation.

That's part of the developmental nature of human beings.

What we see has a **shaping influence** upon us.

So, when we say, "open the eyes of my heart, Lord, I want to see you. I want to see you high & lifted up" ... what we're asking, or at least what I'm desiring is, to get a vision of my hero, so that I can become more like Him.

"All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; & that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

We see the whole picture of who Jesus is.

And as we gaze upon it ... it transforms us & shapes us.



(X) Francis of Assisi was born into a family of power & privilege, but he turned his back on all of that & took a vow of poverty. Because he looked at his hero, Jesus, & he saw someone who cast aside the glories of Heaven,

(Philippians 2:7) & came as a humble human servant.

Francis said ... "I want to be like Him."



(X) Father Damien was a Dutchman who had a great ministry going on. But because of what he saw in Jesus he moved to a leper colony in Hawaii.

He gave his life to working among lepers,
even contracting leprosy, himself.

Why did he do that? ... Because he saw in his hero, Jesus,
someone who was willing, not only to heal lepers from a
distance, but to come & live among them.



(X) Jim Elliot, cast aside a promising career
in the U.S. & went to minister to the Auca
Indians in Ecuador. And he took spears into
his chest from them. But he did it because he
saw in Jesus one who was willing to lay down
His life to make God's enemies His friends.



(X) Hugh Latimer & Nicholas Ridley were
burned at the stake for their faith,
acknowledging the truth about Jesus,
& declaring it boldly was worth any price.

We have an awesome King on the throne,
& His glories need to be made known.



(X) I read last week about Henry Martyn.
He was a missionary who lived back in the late
1700's/early 1800's. This man was top in his class
in Cambridge. He was an accomplished artist.
He was the apprentice to Charles Simeon,
one of the greatest English preachers of his day.
And besides that,
he was in love with a girl he met early in life.

But he took all of that & laid it aside, became a linguist, & traveled to Calcutta, translating the N.T. into the Indian tongue. And in the midst of hardship, & hostile conditions, & constant ill health, he contracted tuberculosis, & he died at 31.

Why did he do that? ...

Because he saw in Jesus someone who was willing to die in His early 30's for the glory of God.

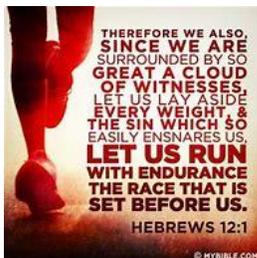
The glory of God inspired all of them.

The love of Christ compelled them.

They couldn't do anything but follow Jesus in this way.

"As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, & of the sin which holds on to us so tightly,

(X) & let us run with determination the race that lies before us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end.



He did not give up because of the cross!

On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, & he is now seated at the right side of God's throne.

Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged & give up."

Let's do just that. Think about Jesus, & what He did with His life. Fix your eyes on Him, & as you do, you will begin being transformed by Him, doing the same things He did. That's the way followers of Jesus live.

I don't know what hardship you're struggling with today, but I know you're struggling, because we all are. This has been a particularly difficult week for Kathy & me ... it's been rough.

But the one bedrock truth, the one foundational fact, the one thing we bank on in the midst of our pain is that Jesus Christ sits on His throne. And His reign demands a response. We cannot just sit here.

"You that are righteous, be glad & rejoice
because of what the LORD has done.
You that obey him, shout for joy!" (The Psalms 32:11)

"Sing a new song to him, play the harp with skill,
& shout for joy!" (The Psalms 33:3)

"Worship the LORD with joy;
come before him with happy songs!" (The Psalms 100:2)

"Come, let us bow down & worship him;
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!" (The Psalms 95:6)

"Take up your cross every day, & follow me." (Luke 9:23)

We will ... because the King of kings is on His throne.

MARANA THA

As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God's throne. Think of what he went through; how he put up with so much hatred from sinners! So do not let yourselves become discouraged and give up. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

I believe that Jesus ascended into Heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

Jesus is serving and ministering on our behalf _____

Jesus is on the throne and He's our _____, representing us

_____ means that there has been reconciliation between God and humanity

We have a higher _____ who made a better sacrifice. Not the blood of goats ... but His _____, and therefore won for us a _____ Atonement. No more _____ need to be _____

Jesus right now, in Heaven, is on His throne, and incredibly as it sounds ... is _____

Jesus is, at the right hand of God, in _____ for our need

By virtue of Jesus' presence, the _____ of God rests on us

Jesus is our _____

We are the _____ of Jesus Christ. He's the _____ ... we're the _____. We're _____

Jesus is our _____

What we see has a _____ upon us

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven & earth.

And 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, dead, & buried;
he descended into hell;
the 3rd day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
& sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the living & the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit;
the holy Christian Church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
& the life everlasting.

Amen