



from the desk of . . .
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#815
12 August 2018

The Apostles' Creed - 8

... FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

2 Corinthians 5:10

So, you're driving on the Elgin/O'Hare, coming out to visit Kathy & me in Bartlett. And as you come over the crest of the hill, all of a sudden, at the right side of the road, (X) you see a friendly state trooper, with his radar gun pointed right at you.



What's the 1st thing you do? ... If you're like most red-blooded Americans you hit the brake ... just on instinct. Why? You fear the "judgment" of the officer.

You sit down to watch your favorite couple on "Dancing With The Stars." (X) Frankie & Whitney come out & dance fantastically. You're excited. They're at the top of their game. Carrie Ann, Len, & Julianne give them great reviews. But then Bruno says that in his "judgment" they looked like they flunked out of the beginners' class at a Arthur Murray Dance Studio.



You're flipping through the channels one afternoon & you come upon one of those great TV shows ...

"People's Court" or "Divorce Court" ... (X) & this guy, Mr. Eugene Forthwright, is being accused of having an affair with his sister's aunt's cousin's neighbor. She has body piercings all over her face, & her hair is styled in a purple mohawk. And you sit there listening to Judge Judy, or Judge Mathis, or Judge Milian, or Judge Perkins, or whoever, pronounce "judgment" on this person.



Judgment is all around us every day of our life.
There's judgment in our world.

This section of The Apostles' Creed that we're going to look at this morning contains probably the most politically incorrect topic that we're going to discuss ...
judgment.

Now in my study & preparation I'm amazed at how little Bible scholars & theologians have written regarding judgment. As popular as it is secularly,
there's almost an apathy about it theologically.

Now we all know that in our society today we're not to think that one person's belief is superior to another. Especially if that means that we're correct & somebody else is wrong. We have the notion that

"it's okay for you to believe whatever you want,
as long as you don't force your beliefs on me."

(By the way, I hate the expression ...
"well, let's just agree to disagree.")

We're supposed to "believe" that all roads lead to Heaven ... & the key to everlasting happiness is to simply to find a road. That's what society is teaching right now. And sadly, many followers of Jesus haven't been theologically educated well enough to refute that idea.

Now our society certainly has a fascination with judgment. We're almost entranced with it.

We judge movies, music, & books.

Even in sports, many Bears' fans have been judging whether new coach, Matt Nagy, is the right man for the job. Or whether Jerry Reinsdorf really has a winning plan for the White Sox?

How about with food? This has been a big weekend down at Lincoln Park with their annual hot dog fest, as more than 30,000 people will be "judging" which of a dozen vendors make the best hot dog.

We have a fascination with judgment. I was watching the old Patrick Swayze/Demi Moore/Whoopi Goldberg movie "Ghost" the other night. It came out about 25 years or so ago. Do you remember it? ... It dealt with eternal judgment. It was completely fiction, but it made the audience think about what happens to our loved ones when they depart from this earth.

So, this morning, as a way to help us understand it, & because it's one of the most foundational beliefs in all Christianity, we're going to deal with 5 questions concerning the "J" word ... the word we're not supposed to talk about ... 5 questions about judgment.

But let's begin by listening to Good News from Paul to the Church in Corinth, & to the Church also here in Rolling Meadows.

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

"For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

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

Let's start right at the beginning,
with something really simple ... what is judgment?

Now the judgment I'm speaking about isn't where we're judging each other ... how a person looks, what somebody has said. The judgment I'm talking about has **eternal consequences**. It's a judgment that comes in 2 parts ... the 1st one being at the point of death.

At the moment of our passing, "as quickly as the blinking of an eye," (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) each one of us will be judged according to our **faith**. And right then we'll begin our eternity with God & His love ...

or we'll be separated from God & His love.

And that leads us right into the 2nd part ...
where we'll spend that eternity.

Scripture frequently talks about a great final judgment of believers & unbelievers. (Matthew 25:31-46) We will all stand before the **judgment seat** of Christ & hear His proclamation of our **eternal destiny**.

The Apostle John describes it for us ...

The Great White Throne Judgment



Revelation 20:11-15

(X) "Then I saw a great white throne & the one who sits on it. Earth & heaven fled from his presence & were seen no more. And I saw the dead, great & small alike, standing before the throne. Books were opened, & then another book was opened, the book of the living. The dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. Then the sea gave up its dead. Death & the world of the dead also gave up the dead they held. And all were judged according to what they had done. Then death & the world of the dead were thrown into the lake of fire. (This lake of fire is the 2nd death.) Those who did not have their name written in the book of the living were thrown into the lake of fire." (The Revelation 20:11-15)

The final judgment is the culmination of many things where God rewards **righteousness** ... or punishes **unrighteousness**. We know from Scripture that Jesus will return again at the end of history & the final judgment will occur. (X) "Then I saw a great white throne & the one who sits on it."



That sentence leads us to our 2nd question ... who will be our judge? Who will judge me? Who's on the throne?

Do you remember the controversy in the 2002 Winter Olympics? The French judge in the skating competition admitted that he was under tremendous pressure to vote for the Russian couple.

That left the Canadian skaters with a silver medal.

Sports Illustrated wrote at the time,

"The controversy renewed complaints over the subjectivity of judging, & brought to mind the cold war era, when many competitors suspected that their medals were sometimes awarded on the basis of politics."

I can't speak for you, but when I think of someone judging my eternal destiny, I don't want them to be swayed by outside pressure or politics or gut feelings or bribery. I want somebody who is impartial & just & fair.

"In the presence of God & of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living & the dead." (2 Timothy 4:1)
Right there's the answer ... who's the judge of the living & the dead? It's Jesus Christ. Our judge is **Jesus**.

Scripture records ... "Nor does the Father himself judge anyone. He has given his Son the full right to judge." (John 5:22) And Jesus is a judge who is fair & perfect & all-loving & just & all-knowing ... & came to earth not to condemn the world but to save the world.

Our Judge is also our **Savior!**

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior." (John 3:16-17)

"The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins." (2 Peter 3:9)

You've heard the expression ... "that's going to happen over my dead body." Think about it, Judge Judy cannot claim to bring sentence over someone's dead body. However, the Judge of our eternal destiny can make that claim. We literally have to go around **Jesus** to get to **Hell**. Again, I can't speak for you, but having a Judge like that makes the "who is our judge" process an encouragement rather than a discouragement.

Question #3 ... what happens to those who don't believe? I want to say something about a place that doesn't get talked about very often. It's generally considered impolite in our day to bring it up.

It's described in imagery that's dark & bleak.
 Nobody thinks they're going to end up there ...
 but people do. I need to talk to you about
 Guaranteed Rate Field. (X)



In all seriousness, Hell is a subject that is frighteningly critical. In fact, it just doesn't get any more serious than this in all of life. I mentioned earlier, in our day & age, most people don't believe that they'll go to Hell. They don't believe that their "good" friends, or that they themselves, as "good" people, will go to a place "where they will cry & gnash their teeth." (Matthew 8:12)

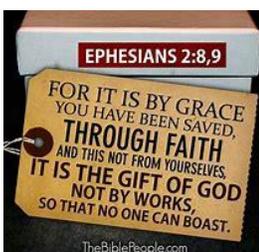
However, we simply cannot read Scripture without recognizing that there is such a place.

This isn't a grey issue at all. It's black & white.

Jesus talked about the reality of Hell ... in fact, He talked about it more than any other person in Scripture. He warned ... "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of God, who can destroy both body & soul in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

But God has made a provision so that we do not have to end up in Hell.

(X) "For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it." (Ephesians 2:8-9)



That's the key verse ... salvation is God's **gift**, it cannot be **earned**. Too many people have this idea that their eternal judgment is based on their **good works**.

So, when they pass, if their duffle bag of good stuff is fuller of than their sin bag ... they'll be welcomed into the Kingdom. But what people fail to realize is that we must be perfect because God cannot have any imperfection in His presence. Jesus said, "You must be perfect - just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

(Matthew 5:48)

"God's eyes are too holy to look at evil." (Habakkuk 1:13)
And add to that, James' words ... "Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all." (James 2:10)

Wow! We're in big trouble, aren't we? ...

I suspect that most of us have broken at least one commandment already this morning. Add to that, every wrong word & wrong deed that we've ever done ...

it'll all be remembered on the Day of Judgment.

Jesus stated ...



(X) "You can be sure that on the Judgment Day you will have to give account of every useless word you have ever spoken."

(Matthew 12:36)

"God is going to judge everything we do, whether good or bad, even things done in secret." (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

Okay, I'm going to go out on a Pastoral limb & do something we never do. I want you for just a moment to think of one of the worst things that you've ever said, or one of the worst things you've ever done. ...

Now can you imagine if we were to put your picture on the cover of our program & list below it what that wrong deed was, what you did or said ...
how would that make you feel? ...

The Daily Herald has been running front page stories all week about Bill Hybels & what he may or may not have done some 30 years ago.

(To be honest, there's probably a # of things I did 30 years ago, that I'm not proud of.)

But here the world is talking about Bill Hybels' sins.
What if it were yours? ...

Well, in one respect, we need to recognize that God knows all of our sins. (Hebrews 4:13)

He knows what would be on this program cover.



(X) And when the time of judgment arrives ... our private sins will be made public in the spiritual realm. (Luke 8:17)

And that's bad, disastrous news for those who have not come to faith in Jesus. And it's not just simply embarrassing ... their judgment will be an eternity of separation from God & His love.

But ... thank you, Lord ... if we've come to faith,
we need not fear God's judgment.
There's a better way available.



(X) "Jesus answered him, 'I am the way, the truth, & the life; no one goes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)

There's only one way ... & society doesn't want to hear that. But there was only one sinless person, one Lamb of God ... & so there's only one way, because there had to be a sinless sacrifice to conquer death. (Hebrews 10:10)

Buddha wasn't sinless ... & his tomb is full.

Mohammed wasn't sinless ... & his tomb is full.

St. Peter wasn't sinless ... & his tomb is full.

Mary wasn't sinless ... & her tomb is full.

Hare Krishna wasn't sinless ... & his tomb is full.

But Jesus, our Judge, was sinless (1 Peter 2:22) ...

& His tomb is empty! (Luke 24:6)

And that means there's only one way to a perfect God, & that's through the perfect sacrifice of the sinless Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 10:14)

But for those who want to go around the dead & then resurrected body of Jesus Christ the end judgment is an eternity of horror. That means that there's the potential of your friend Richard, & your friend Margie, & your Uncle Tim ... they may be in this place of horror.

You don't know, I don't know, but it's a real possibility.

I had a friend John, I had an Aunt Nina, I had an Uncle Harry who may be there, & if I stop & ponder that ... it eats me up. Because I know that I didn't take advantage of the opportunities I had to tell them the Good News of Jesus & His grace.

The only thing that we have some control over is if we'll be there, & how much we help our friends & family from going there.



(X) But the Good News is to those who believe & confess Jesus' name ... we'll be saved. (Romans 10:10)

It's not simply a head belief; it's a belief of the heart.

And Jesus wipes away all that sin we were thinking about earlier. It's gone. Now there may be some memories that still linger, there may be some consequences that must be dealt with. But, from the spiritual perspective, once we've come to faith in Jesus & ask Him to forgive us, the eternal effects of that sin are gone. Our slate has been wiped clean. (The Psalms 103:12)

And if you haven't already, I pray that you won't leave here this morning without dealing seriously with that. It's the most important decision of your entire life. It'll determine where you're going to be 10,000 years from now.

Question #4 ... what happens to those who believe?
 Let me ask ... do you look forward to meeting your Savior face-to-face? ... To be honest, I feel a lot like the Apostle Paul when he says ... "I want very much to leave this life & be with Christ, which is a far better thing."

(Philippians 1:23)

He goes on to give us a little preview of his Heavenly Judgment while he was still on earth. Paul had been living in Corinth for several months, & was spreading the news of the Gospel at every opportunity when trouble hit. His enemies dragged him into court & charged him for "trying to persuade people to worship God in a way that is against the law!" (1 Corinthians 18:13)



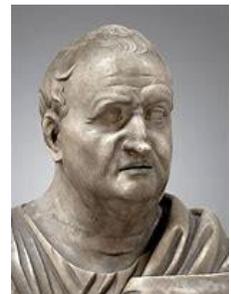
(X) Scholars believe that a raised marble platform that's visible in the ruins of Corinth today is the exact spot where the magistrate sat to hear Paul's case.

That platform is called "bema" (Judgment Seat). The same word is applied to where officials sat at an athletic contest. (1 Corinthians 9:25)

The bema represented authority, justice, reward.

(The Revelation 22:12)

At Paul's hearing he stood before the (X) Roman governor, Gallio. (The Acts 18:12-17)
 Paul's enemies argued for his punishment. But Gallio had already decided that Paul had done nothing wrong.



So there, at the Judgment Seat, because Paul didn't have any crime on his record, he was free to go.

3 years later, in a letter sent to the Church in Corinth, Paul wrote about another bema, this one is in Heaven. "For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life."

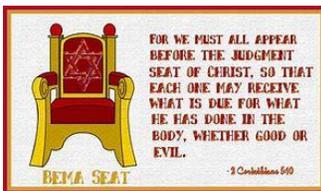
2 important phrases in that passage ... "will each receive" ... clearly indicating reward or repayment for those who are believers at the bema seat.

And then, "everything we have done ... in our bodily life." The reward we receive will be based on what is done while alive here on earth. (Matthew 25:21)

We will all stand at the bema, the Judgment Seat.

We'll stand there alone ...

& our Judge will be Jesus Christ Himself.



(X) "All of us will stand before God to be judged by him. ...

Everyone of us, then,

will have to give an account to God." (Romans 14:10,12)

What does it mean ... "will have to give an account to God"? ... Paul answers that by using an analogy of a building. He writes, "You are ... God's building." (1 Corinthians 3:9) And this "building" is constructed by the "works" that we do. And the Day is coming when our building/life will be tested by fire.

"Some will use gold or silver or precious stones in building on the foundation; others will use wood or grass or straw. And the quality of each person's work will be seen when the Day of Christ exposes it. For on that Day fire will reveal everyone's work; the fire will test it & show its real quality." (1 Corinthians 3:12-13)

The purpose of the bema seat is to show our works.

"Will be seen" ... "will reveal" ... "show."

On that Day, all that we have done for God in our life will be **clear & apparent**.

The 2nd purpose of this bema seat is to test our works. "If what was built on the foundation survives the fire, the builder will receive a reward. But if your work is burnt up, then you will lose it; but you yourself will be saved, as if you had escaped through the fire."

(1 Corinthians 3:14-15)

Notice again, as a follower of Jesus, our beliefs aren't being tested here. Our destination for all eternity is not being determined ... it's our works that are being tested. And it's only after the judgment fire that we finally see how a person's life has added up for eternity. The fire will make truth obvious to all.

And the judgment fire will test not only **what** we did, but **how** we did it, & **why** we did it.

That'll separate the "gold" work from the "straw" work. In other words, some of us will suffer "loss" in Heaven.

We don't understand it all, but there will be consequences of missed opportunities & lost rewards that'll go with us. But any shame or regret will not.

"He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain.

The old things have disappeared." (The Revelation 21:4)

My guess is, however, that we will want to (X) kneel before Jesus at the bema seat & be rewarded & receive our crown of jewels.



This isn't a bragging thing. It's a victorious celebration.

Question #5 ... so what should I do now?

I don't know. I don't know. But God does. So, pray.

But let me give you some choices of what you could do. If you haven't truly come to faith at this point in your life, you might leave here this morning saying, "that was kind of interesting, but ... I'm going home & watch the golf match" or, "I need to go shopping."

And simply settle back into your life in the world.

Or, you could pray & ask Jesus into your heart, to wipe away your slate of sins, to forgive you, & give you a place with Him forever in Heaven. And the result will be that you'll have a new purpose & joy in life,

& an opportunity to gain jewels for your crown.

As a follower of Jesus, you need to decide if you're truly living for yourself or for God.

If we were to peek up at your **crown** right now,
what would it look like? ...

You can have some indication by looking at how you're spending your time. How you're spending your money.

You can look at the spiritual direction of your family. You can look at the people who have come to faith, or have grown in their walk with the Lord, because of you.

If you're doing all that faithfully, in accordance to Scripture ... praise God! ... keep it up.

But, if you feel like your crown's a little sparse. You can begin this morning by turning more of your life over to God. Become more regular in your prayer life. Start giving more. Start serving more. Start spending more time in the Scriptures. Become more faithful in worship attendance. Be more obedient to Him.

And, I hope, for all of us, that we will share Jesus more. That's the bottom line of it all. "Your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do & praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Steve Winger is an interesting minister (X)

He bills himself as a "Juggler For Jesus."

He's part comedian & part revival preacher.

Steve likes to tell a story about a final exam

he took in a logic class at the university he attended.

The professor was well-known for his difficult finals.



Winger says, "To help us on our test, the professor told us we could bring as much information to the exam as we could fit on a sheet of notebook paper. Most students crammed as many facts as possible on their 8½ x 11" sheet of paper. But one student walked into class with nothing written on it. He took his sheet of notebook paper & placed it on the floor, & then had an advanced logic student stand on it. That advanced logic student told him everything he needed to know.

He was the only student to receive an 'A.'"

Our final exam at the Last Judgment will be more than fair, because we are allowed to bring with us

Someone who will answer the questions on our behalf.

We could never pass the exam on our own,
but we have Someone who will stand with us.

"For there is one God, & there is one who brings God & human beings together, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself to redeem the whole human race." (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

In Jesus, we have someone who stands with us in our final exam. In Jesus, we have our only hope.

Close your eyes. Imagine that you have just passed, & you're standing in front of Jesus Christ, who has ascended into Heaven, & is sitting on His throne. He's looking you right in the eye. He opens His mouth to pronounce judgment on you, & your life. What's He going to say? ... Where are you going to spend eternity? ...

"For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Judgment has _____

Each one of us will be judged according to our _____

We will all stand before the _____ of Christ and hear His proclamation of our _____

The final judgment is the culmination of many things where God rewards _____ ... or punishes _____

"In the presence of God & of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead." (2 Timothy 4:1)

Our judge is _____

"Nor does the Father himself judge anyone. He has given his Son the full right to judge." (John 5:22)

Our Judge is also our _____

We literally have to go around _____ to get to _____

Salvation is God's _____, it cannot be _____. Too many people have this idea that their eternal judgment is based on their _____

"You can be sure that on the Judgment Day you will have to give account of every useless word you have ever spoken." (Matthew 12:36)

"God is going to judge everything we do, whether good or bad, even things done in secret." (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

On that Day, all that we have done for God in our life will be _____ and _____

The judgment fire will test not only _____ we did, but _____ we did it, and _____ we did it

What does my _____ look like right now?

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



My sins:

- I am guilty of xxxxxxxxxx