

Fil-Am Community Church

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John 20:26-28

“My Lord and My God”

“A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

(John 20:26-28 NIV)

Good morning! Today we’re continuing our sermon series on The Apostles’ Creed which we have entitled “Back to Basics”. We’re looking at some of our core Christian beliefs which are embodied in the Creed. Now, mind you, we’re not saying that the The Apostles’ Creed is the basis of our beliefs because no creed, no confession, no statement of beliefs could ever supercede the only true basis of our faith which is the Bible. If your statement or your creed doesn’t line up with the Bible then you have to throw it away.

According to historians, The Apostles’ Creed was formulated by the early followers of Christ as a unifying factor in order to counter the false teachings that were becoming prevalent during that time. One of these false teachings was propagated by the Gnostics and their philosophy is called Gnosticism. It comes from the Greek word, “gnosis”, meaning “to know”. To them, salvation can be gained by secret knowledge. So only a select few will be saved based on what they knew. They also held the belief that the material world is evil and that only the spirit is good. They believed in Jesus but in a different kind of Jesus. Since to them

matter is evil, they held the notion that Jesus only appeared to have human form when he was on earth or that the divine spirit came to the physical body of Jesus during his baptism and left his body before his crucifixion.

John the apostle actually addressed such heresy in a letter he wrote to the early Christians. He says in 2 John 1:7 (NLT), *“I say this because many deceivers have gone out into the world. They deny that Jesus Christ came in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist.”*

On the opposite extreme, there were also those who denied the deity of Jesus. Like the Alogians in the second century AD, who claimed to be Christians but didn't believe that Jesus was God. In fact, they denied the Gospel of John because, as we know, the Gospel of John starts out by declaring that Jesus is God, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* (John 1:1)

And so, there were those in the early stages of Christianity that were trying to introduce erroneous beliefs concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. There were those who denied his humanity and there were those who denied his divinity. It became apparent then that true Christians must affirm their beliefs in a way that would be passed on easily to other believers. Thus, the statement we are considering today seeks to assert the teaching in the Scriptures that Jesus is both God and man. *“I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.”*

This statement is not very detailed, of course, just like all the other statements in the Creed. You see, The Apostles' Creed just gives you a broad overview. For specifics, you go to the Bible. The nitty-gritty is in the Bible.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is both God and Man. He has divine nature and he has human nature. Some say that when Jesus came to earth, he cast aside his being God in order to become a man. That's not true. Jesus was still God when he

was on earth but just voluntarily refused to exercise his prerogatives as God. And he took on the additional nature of man.

Some of you may be wondering why I'm wearing this jacket. Or maybe not, because the weather is now cold. But I'm wearing this to illustrate a point. With my jacket on, you don't know what I'm wearing inside. Maybe a sports shirt, a t-shirt, an undershirt or maybe none at all. My jacket hides what's inside. Maybe I'm Superman. When I take it off, you see now that I'm wearing a white long-sleeve shirt. So, all along I've been wearing this white shirt. This jacket doesn't negate the fact that I have a white shirt even though you don't see it.

The white shirt represents the divinity of Christ. My jacket represents his humanity. So, while on earth, when Jesus was human, he was still God. People just didn't see it. God was walking with them and they didn't realize it because he took on a nature similar to them but underneath that, he was still God.

Now, how could Jesus be both God and man at the same time? I don't know. And we don't have to know. But we know it's true, it's a fact. It's what the Bible tells us. It's like when you turn on the TV. You don't have to know what goes on inside the TV to make it work. It just works. Because that's what the manual says. Just plug it in, press the button, and it will work.

The same thing about Jesus, the manual of life, the Bible, tells us that he is both God and man. It's hard to explain but the Bible tells us enough to believe that it's true. This morning, let me share with you what the Bible says about Jesus and what it means for us today.

First, the Bible tells us that

1. Jesus is the Son of God.

When he was on earth, Jesus claimed that he was the Son of God. His disciples believed that and that's why they referred to him as the Son of God in many places in the Bible. But what does "Son of God" mean?

Jesus is God's Son in the sense that He is God made manifest in human form. During His trial before the Jewish leaders, the High Priest demanded of Jesus, *"I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God"* (Matthew 26:63). *"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven'"* (Matthew 26:64). The Jewish leaders responded by accusing Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65-66). Later, before Pontius Pilate, *"The Jews insisted, 'We have a law, and according to that law He must die, because He claimed to be the Son of God'"* (John 19:7). Why would His claiming to be the Son of God be considered blasphemy and be worthy of a death sentence? The Jewish leaders understood exactly what Jesus meant by the phrase "Son of God." To be the Son of God is to be of the same nature as God. The Son of God is "of God." The claim to be of the same nature as God—to in fact be God—was blasphemy to the Jewish leaders; therefore, they demanded Jesus' death, in keeping with Leviticus 24:15. Hebrews 1:3 expresses this very clearly, *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being."*

There are many, many verses in the Bible that unequivocally tell us that Jesus is God. But why don't people see that? Like, for example, those who are in pseudo-Christian organizations like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Iglesia ni Cristo. You know why? Because they try to explain God with the use of logic. This is actually tied to the doctrine of the Trinity. The human mind cannot comprehend the fact that God consists of three persons. They see a lot of problems. Like when Jesus was on earth as a man, does that mean that God left heaven? Or when Jesus was praying to his Father, was he praying to himself? Or when Jesus died on the cross, did God cease to exist?

That's how I fell in the trap of the Jehovah's Witnesses. My Jehovah's Witness friend argued his case using logic and I succumbed to it. Back then, I wasn't so familiar with the Bible. In fact, I didn't study it and so I was an easy target. The late Walter Martin, former president of the Christian Research Institute, used to say that an average Jehovah's Witness could make a doctrinal pretzel out of the average Christian in about 20 seconds.

Anyway, let's look at some verses that say that Jesus is God.

The first one is what I already quoted. In John 1:1, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* So how do the anti-Trinitarians get around this? They insert the article "a" before the last "God" and made "God" lower case so that it will read *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."* How could they do that? They explain it away by saying that that's what the original Greek means. Of course, that's not true. For thousands of years the Bible has been translated this way by numerous scholars. Now, the anti-Trinitarians translates it another way just to suit their purpose. In fact, the JW's came out with their own version of the Bible.

Another verse: John 10:30-36 (NASB), *"I and the Father are one." The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."*

I think it's quite clear here that Jesus claimed to be God. It was clear to his disciples, it was clear to people opposing him and that's why they wanted to kill him. You see, Jewish Law says that the punishment for blasphemy is death by stoning.

In the Bible, we also see that Jesus applied to himself the titles of God. Two examples,

Alpha and Omega –

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”(Revelation 1:8 ESV)

“And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” (Revelation 21:6 ESV)

I AM

“God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: “I am has sent me to you.”’” (Exodus 3:14)

“I tell you the truth...before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58). Jesus spoke these words in response to the Jews who said to him *“You are not yet fifty years old...and you have seen Abraham!”* After Jesus said those words, look at what happened next, *“At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds”*. (John 8:59) The violent response of the Jews to Jesus’ “I AM” statement indicates they clearly understood what he was declaring—that He was the eternal God incarnate. Obviously, Jesus was equating Himself with the "I AM" title God gave Himself in Exodus 3:14. If Jesus had merely wanted to say He existed before Abraham’s time, He would have said, “Before Abraham was born, I was.”

These are just a sampling of the numerous verses that affirm the deity of Christ. Knowing that Jesus is God should cause us to worship him and adore him with all our beings. Knowing that Jesus is God should help us to see that he deserves to be lifted up and glorified in everything we do. Knowing that Jesus is God should make us aware that is he all-knowing, all-present, and all-powerful. And because Jesus is God, he knows what’s going on in my life.

You may not understand your circumstances, but Jesus knows exactly what you’re going through. Remember he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is not bound by time or space. He is eternal.

He knows what's around the bend and he promises that he will see you through. He says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you". In fact, he is already there where you are going and he is waiting for you. It may be confusing at the moment but you don't need to worry because his eyes are on you.

Now, let's look at another thing that the Bible says about Jesus. The Bible says that

2. Jesus is the Son of Man.

This is the most favorite designation of Jesus to himself. In fact, the term "Son of Man" occurs in Matthew 32 times, in Mark 15 times, in Luke 26 times, and in John 12 times. Of all these occurrences only twice was the expression used by people other than Jesus. Based on this, it seems like Jesus was emphasizing the fact that he was human, he had flesh and blood, just like any human being.

The Bible tells us how Jesus was born. It tells us that he was born in this world of a human mother, Mary. Thus, he is human. But it tells us also that his birth was miraculous. Mary was a virgin, no man ever touched her but she was able to conceive. The Bible says that she conceived because of the Holy Spirit, signifying that the baby is of divine origin and, therefore, sinless.

Then, the Bible records that Jesus grew up like any ordinary man. He felt the same emotions we have like when he wept upon learning of the death of Lazarus or he became angry at the temple vendors, he felt thirsty like when asked for a drink from the Samaritan woman, he became hungry too because he ate with his disciples, he felt tired as well like when he went away by himself in a secluded place after ministering to people an entire day.

So, Jesus is the Son of Man. What does it mean to us today? Because Jesus is the Son of Man, it means that he can save me from my sins. You see, the Bible says that we are all sinners and we need a Savior. God's requirement is that blood must be shed to save us.

Hebrews 9:22 says, *“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”* Thus, that savior needs to be sinless, perfect, without blemish. In Old Testament times, the Jews sacrificed an unblemished lamb to atone for their sins every year. When Jesus came and died for us, he had to do it only once. Hebrews 10:1-18 talks about all this. Specifically, it says in verses 11-13, *“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest (talking about Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. 14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”* In the eyes of God, we are now perfect and holy. We are headed to heaven. We have conquered sin and death because of the bodily sacrifice of Jesus. Hebrews 10:10 says, *“We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*

Because Jesus is the Son of Man, he can also feel what I’m feeling. He can empathize with me. Hebrews 4:15 says, *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin.”*

If you’re struggling with something, be encouraged that Jesus has been through that as well. He went through various trials and sufferings. And he will give you the grace to overcome. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, *“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

Lastly, so the Bible tells us that Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of Man, and lastly, it tells us too that

3. Jesus is Lord.

The term LORD is the term MOST USED in the New Testament to identify Jesus. Over 600 times it declares that Jesus is Lord. The term Savior refers to Jesus only about 25 times in the New Testament. In the Bible the word "KURIOS" is the Greek word translated "Lord" and that word meant master, possessor, supreme authority, king, or OWNER. The apostles knew exactly what that word meant and its implications and they consciously accepted Jesus and called Jesus their Lord and they acknowledged that their only function was to serve their Lord.

In our society today, especially in our Western culture, we do not want anyone to Lord it over us. After all, we are a free and independent people. We can easily acknowledge that Jesus is our Savior because that appeals to us. What is really difficult is to say that Jesus is Lord in our lives and really mean it and live it. Not just say it as a Christian slogan.

When we acknowledge that Jesus is Lord that makes us His "servant" because we always become the slave of whoever we serve, either Jesus or Satan. This is why Paul, Peter, John, and Jude in their letters to the early Christians usually began their letters with something like "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...". (Romans 1:1 NIV)

To be a servant requires humility. It means surrendering every part of our being to our Lord. It means relinquishing our right to ourselves and handing over the control of our lives to our Lord. I notice that some Christians, including myself, try to maintain their control of a part of their lives. Everything else they have handed over to the Lord except maybe for one or two or three areas. As Pastor Dave mentioned last week, if Jesus is not Lord of all, then he is not Lord at all.

I'm not saying you're not saved but are you committed and surrendered enough to your Lord that you would turn over to him all those areas that you still want to have control over?

That's the test of a true servant and follower. You cannot follow if you keep looking back to those things that you are still attached to. You have to cut those ties in order to follow Jesus unhindered.

As a servant, we need to be obedient to our master. And obedience has its reward. Jesus says, *"Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them."* (John 14:21). From this, we see that although Jesus is our Lord and Master, he is not someone who is detached from us. He doesn't really treat us as servants but children and friends. He loves us dearly and takes care of us.

What does it mean to us today? It means that because Jesus is Lord, he takes care of my every need. I just come to him and he will answer. He loves us so much and nothing can separate us from his love.

I came to realize this great love of Jesus because of an experience I had several years ago. It was the time when I had just started to come back to him after years of turning away from him. I was in Frankfurt, Germany and met with my uncle who was living there at the time. We were having dinner and then he brought up the subject of religion. I didn't know that he was deep into a New Age religion called Eckankar. He talked to me about their beliefs, about reincarnation, Karma, enlightened spiritual masters, and a lot of eastern religion stuff. All the while, I was trying to counter these with my own arguments from the Bible. We continued our discussion even after we left the restaurant. On the street, he then talked about Jesus. He believed that Jesus was just a great teacher, in fact, a reincarnation of Elijah, even quoting from Matthew.

He went on and on trying to make the point that Jesus wasn't God. At this point, I felt like my defenses were starting to break down. I was becoming confused. I was just emerging from my former agnosticism and I was so vulnerable.

Silently, I prayed, "Lord, please protect my mind. Lord, help me to introduce Jesus to him". Right after that prayer, I felt like a helmet covered my head because although my uncle kept on speaking, his words were not penetrating my mind. It was as if I couldn't hear him. Then, the Lord impressed on me the experience of Thomas with Jesus. And I said, "Uncle George, you've been quoting verses from the Bible to prove your point that Jesus is not God. But do you know that one of his apostles, Thomas, addressed him as 'My Lord and my God'"? And then I quoted from the Bible.

At that point, he suddenly turned silent. Mind you, he is a very articulate speaker. I saw how he stuttered and was at a loss for words. Until he just said goodbye and walked away.

I was left alone feeling the presence of God. I realized how Jesus loved me so much and he would do anything to protect me from harm.

This morning, my question to you is: Is Jesus your Lord and Savior?