
Creed #3. Jesus Christ our Lord

Sermon • Rev'd Andrew Hoggan • 15 February

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 • Mark 7:2-8



I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ His Son our Lord.

As we have highlighted over the last couple weeks, the first sentence in the creed throws a few challenges along with massive encouragements.

- For those who have had a bad experience with fathers, or men in general, it can be really difficult to think positively about God as Father. In such cases it's only as we are able to experience the goodness of God. And understand that our failures are not God's failures that we stop projecting our failure to live as "image bearers" onto God.
- For those who struggle with the scripture and science debate it's helpful to understand science and scripture are not at enemies. We touched briefly on it last week, and showed that the more we understand of the complexity of our universe, the more evidence there is for a creator.

Maybe in practical terms, at least in regards impacting our lives, the last two words of the first sentence of the creed may prove the most challenging.

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ His Son our Lord.

I don't think anyone has ever asked me this. But if someone were to ask me "if I were to become a Christian what would it mean?" As well as talking about

- salvation,
- forgiveness,
- freedom, eternal life,
- Gods presence with us,
- the Holy Spirit and the scriptures,

Along with many other things I could add, if I was being honest and somewhat brave, I would also have say, "it means living as if Jesus is in control."

Jesus himself talks about counting the cost before deciding to follow him. So painting a "come to Jesus and everything will be sweet and easy" is both untrue and potentially manipulative.

As we address the Lordship of Christ, we get to what I believe is the most challenging, and probably unpalatable of all Christian doctrines.

Ask any married couple what's the greatest challenge in working out their relationship. They may well say "it's in the area of who runs the ship." Now all us men need to do is figure out it's the women, and all will be smooth sailing. Joking aside, control in relationships is something that needs to be worked out. Even when it comes to God.

That Jesus Christ, Gods Son, our saviour, is also our Lord. That's where the real challenge of the gospel kicks in. Sometimes we avoid drawing attention to it. for example, one of the services we do from the prayer book, (456) has a prayer after communion that I so want to change.

" through Christ and with all your saints,
we offer ourselves
and our lives to your service.
Send us out of the power of your Spirit,
to stand with you in your world.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, the servant,
our friend and brother, amen."

That's a great prayer, except in my thinking, for one thing. Given what the prayer is stating and asking, surely we should say, we ask this through **the Lord Jesus Christ**, the servant, our friend and brother, amen. For my liking it just a little bit pally pally.

Sometimes when I'm saying that prayer to finish the communion I pop in the word Lord under my breath. I for one need to remind myself because that little word "Lord" is an affront to our:

- individualistic nature, where choice is king.
- It's a challenge to the fact we all like to be in control.
- It's a counter to the cultural norms where many think all is equal on the battle field of ideas and ideology.

How different for the Hebrew people who had as their foundational and formative creed these words ^{DT 6:4} Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **In other words no rivals. God calls the shots.** In our gospel reading Jesus goes up a very high mountain with Peter James and John, the inner three of his disciples.

Generally through scripture a mountain is the place of instruction. Think Mount Sinai in the Old Testament. Think Jesus teaching the beatitudes in the New Testament.

The text specifically says Jesus goes up a high mountain with his inner circle, as if to emphasise the point. Something awesome and instructive happens. Jesus is transfigured before them. Something of his pre-existent heavenly glory is seen.

Now apart from Jesus, James, Peter and John, who else is up that mountain? Moses and Elijah.

- Moses is representative of being the law giver. Moses gave us the Law and the Pentateuch, the first five books of the bible, Genesis through Deuteronomy.
- Elijah is representative of the leading prophetic voice in the OT. If you want a biblical power group you won't find greater than Moses, Elijah and Jesus talking together.

It's who talks next that is so instructive for us. We read, "then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud came a voice. "This is my son, the beloved, listen to him." Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus."

What do you think might be the major point and the learning in this place of instruction? Yes, Jesus is seen. Yes there is a declaration of the status of Jesus given by God the Father.

I think most of all though that the point of what happens is to establish the authority of Jesus. Moses the lawgiver. Elijah the prophet. Jesus, the Son. Of the three only Jesus remained. "Listen to him."

Of course we still listen to Moses and Elijah. But we do so through the lens of Jesus teaching because Jesus has fulfilled the Law, and he knows things that makes him the ultimate prophet.

And yes, there is a cost when we make Jesus Lord. Did you notice the transfiguration passage begins “6 days later” 16 days later than what?

Later than:

- The first time Jesus talks about his death and resurrection.
- Jesus saying that if any want to be his followers they are going to “have to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him.”
- Jesus saying “what profit is it if you gain the whole world yet loose or forfeit, your very soul.”
- Jesus saying “if we are ashamed of him and his words, he will be ashamed of us when he returns in glory.” Vs 31-38, ch 8.

C. S. Lewis' looked at the words and claims of Jesus and came to this conclusion. “In the mouth of any speaker who is not God, these words would imply what I can only regard as a silliness and conceit unrivalled by any character in history.

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God”

For those of us who have taken the last option, to call Jesus our lord and our God, we must ask the question what difference is it making in our lives?

For those who lived in and around the time of Christ to follow Jesus as Lord came at a price.

- You would be seen as anti social, almost an anarchist. The Roman Caesar, had unified and subdued the world, all be it through domination and under the threat of death. Refusal to bend the knee to Caesar was seen as disruptive to the system and punishable by death.

In A.D 112 Pliny, the Roman governor reported to Emperor Trajan, that these "Christians" stubbornly refused to worship the emperor.

Pliny seemed especially frustrated and angry with the obstinance of these Christians who would not, for the sake of the empire, renounce their faith in Christ—even on pain of death.⁷

There is an inspirational story of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna. As he was martyred it was said that this servant of God, well advanced in years, was

marched into the stadium in Smyrna where the Roman proconsul threatened him with death unless he would renounce his faith in Christ.

"Think of your age," beseeched the proconsul, "Swear by the genius of Caesar. Swear, and I will release you; just curse this Christ!" . Polycarp answered, "For eighty and six years have I served him, and He has never wronged me; how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me.

There are still many thousands today who live in Christian minority areas, particularly in Africa and North Korea who pay dearly for following Jesus as Lord, even with their lives.

What of us. Thankfully we have the privilege to live our Christian lives in freedom and without the fear of persecution. But I wonder how tough it might get if we lived with the same principles, priorities and perspectives as Jesus.

Polycarp was offered safety if only he would renounce his faith in and curse Christ. "For eighty and six years have I served him, and He has never wronged me; how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me.

Our Lord is also our saviour which means we can trust him as we hand ourselves over to him as Lord of our lives.

Did you know that most people didn't have second names in Jesus day. They were known for where they came from, or for what they did. Paul was a tent maker. Mark, John, James were fishermen. Matthew was a tax collector. Luke was DR. We only know their first names and what they did, before we know them most of all as followers of Jesus.

Jesus to was carrying out the work of his Father, and Paul in Philippians 2 sets out what it means to make Jesus Lord.

Firstly, It is to be like him. To imitate him. And in so doing,
Secondly, we bring Glory to God the Father.

In a magnificent hymn of praise that makes up Philippians Ch2 vs 1-11, the aim of it all is articulated in v11. That is "that everyone should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." A way, though not a simple way, of testing whether our lives are governed by Jesus, is how we would answer the question "do our lives bring glory to God?"

Let me finish on this thought. One of my favourite books in the Bible is the book of Romans. My favourite chapter in the book of Romans is chapter 8, which begins, "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

That statement is based on everything found in the previous seven chapters. Ch 8 goes onto to speak about life in the Spirit, future glory, and God's love in Jesus Christ.

Paul sums up the chapter verse 38-39; "for I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, **our Lord.**"

The last two words of that chapter, "our Lord", are crucial.

- It is only as we hand our lives over to Jesus Christ our saviour, and Lord, that we can fully experience the love of God the Father.
- It is only as we let Jesus call the shots and set the direction of our life that we are truly conquerors over all that life can and will throw at us.
- In Jesus Christ our Lord, we both know God's love, and we rightly honour and glorify the God who has redeemed and saved us.

I believe in God the Father almighty, and in Jesus Christ His Son our Lord, Amen.