

'LENT
for OUR
EVERYDAY'

Spending time in the Creeds

Week 3

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Jesus Christ, unique in nature, fully God and completely human.

In Jesus we find much to know about God and what it is to be human!

John pondered on all of this through the decades; he had known Jesus for several years as a disciple and come to see that he was more, much more. So he opens his gospel with these words:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

John is drawn back to the start of all things, to the creation story in Genesis 1— ‘in the beginning’. The word of God was in the beginning, active and alive, creating, bringing forth life and the will of God. And now this word had become embodied, fully expressed in the life, death and resurrection of the man Jesus Christ.

Over the history of Christianity some folks have thought of Jesus as

a superhero, a spiritual superhuman able to call down the powers of God at any time. But the gospels show us a very different picture; a very normal loving, eating, drinking, crying, laughing person with a mother and siblings and friends.

Others have taught that Jesus is just a man, a great philosopher, and inspirational leader and all-round good human being.

So, how are we to talk about Jesus the Christ? How is it that we can square a circle and declare he is fully God and completely human?

In our creeds we use the term 'incarnate', literally 'enfleshed'. Here, in completely human existence and life is the presence and purpose of God. Jesus is the meeting point between our frail and fallen humanity and the everlasting love and life of God. Jesus is not just a perfect human being, he is fully God. Likewise Jesus is not God in the disguise of a human being, he is completely human.

The incarnation is therefore one of the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith. It is not that we are called to have some full scientific understanding of the how of the incarnation, of the nature of conception by the Holy Spirit and of the virgin birth. We are called in the creeds to affirm this as a statement of the faith.

Athanasius, one of the great teachers of the Church worked at length in his creed to put into words some of what can only be expressed by faith. As much as he sought, in his battles against the early heresies, to give some words for the 'how' of Jesus Christ, he found himself much more focused on the why; 'he became what we are so that we could become what he is'. If Jesus was not completely one with us then he could judge but never save us from ourselves. On the cross Jesus, who is God shares the consequences of a sinners existence, death. Yet the man without sin, can never be subject to its wages and so is raised again for us on the third day.

Moving on, going deeper!

The incarnation, the coming into being of the one who is fully God and completely human matters greatly! The story of Jesus is not

simply his story, but that of all of humanity. Because Jesus is completely human and God is content to dwell with us in him, all humanity is blessed by God. Thus John continues in his gospel with a sentence renowned the world over, 'for God so loved the entire cosmos he sent his one and only Son that all who believe in him would have life into eternity'.

There is a blessing to dwell on this Lent. God in Jesus Christ absolutely accepts and loves each of us. And more, if God loves each of us then God loves our neighbour as well. How are we caught up in God loving us and in his seeking to love the world around us?

The Week ahead.

'The word became flesh and lived amongst us' (John 1.14). Our calling in Christianity is to allow Jesus to live amongst us, to be with us in every aspect of our lives, through His Spirit. And more, it calls us to 'be with' people in the name of Jesus; to make his presence in us known.

Who are the people you will be with this coming week? What might it mean to be with them in the name of Christ, in the presence of the Spirit with us? What might it be to welcome God into areas of your life you may have kept him away from? How might Jesus be completely with you this week?

Each day recite this declaration of faith based on Philippians 2:

Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.