

## Creed: In Jesus Christ

*Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.*

*When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.*

*When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."*

*Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."*

*They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish."*

*And he said, "Bring them here to me."*

*Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.*

*And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full.*

*And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

Today we are continuing our series on the Apostles' Creed, and so we are continuing to talk about what we believe. Last time, we talked about how saying, "I believe in God" changes the way we see everything else. By saying, "I believe in God," we are making the commitment to look for the love of God all around us.

And so today we say we believe In God's only son Jesus Christ our lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead.

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In other words, we believe in God incarnate, the word made flesh. We believe that the fully human Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter and itinerant preacher, the one who ate with sinners and tax collectors—is also the fully divine Christ of God, the one who was there from before the beginning, always in perfect relationship with God the Father.

When we say we believe in this incarnate God, we claim that the all-powerful God of the universe showed up in the human Jesus, who was born and who died, who walked and laughed, bled and cried. We claim that when we look to Jesus, we can see God's perfect love showing up in our daily lives. We can trust in God throughout our lives, because Christ lives with us, eats with us, dies with us, and with Christ we rise.

The One who looks at the world and constantly sees more than we see is the One who helps us to see abundance where there is scarcity. When we are hungry and afraid we don't have enough, Jesus shows up—just like the visitor with the recipe for stone soup—and shows us that God brings to the table more than we think we have.

That's what happened to the disciples in this story we just read.

Jesus has gone out on the lake for some alone time, but the crowds—hurting and hungry and full of hope—have followed him. By the time the disciples catch up to Jesus, he was already out of the boat and on shore sharing the perfect love of God by healing the sick and caring for the crowd—which by that point was over 5000 people and counting. The disciples looked around at the crowd and with grumbling stomachs realized—it was getting close to dinnertime. Maybe a little hangry at this point, they suggested that Jesus send everyone home for the night.

After all, when Jesus decided to go to a deserted place, he didn't go to Braum's or Dairy Queen—get it? A deserted place, not a *desserted* place? Anyway, they are out in the middle of nowhere, and people need to eat. The disciples wanted Jesus to tell the crowd to go on home—or at least to a nearby village with an open restaurant.

But Jesus calls out to his disciples— “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”

That's when I am sure the disciples started to panic—were they supposed to cater this event? Who was in charge of bringing the food? Where are they supposed to get enough to provide for this crowd? There's nothing here! There's no grocery store

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nearby, they're way outside of delivery range, and they didn't bring anything with them from home.

They look around and they see nothing. Well, maybe not nothing. They see a hungry crowd. They see a teacher with unrealistic expectations. And they do have a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish.

But wouldn't you know it? Through some miracle, that's enough.

Jesus takes the bread and the fish and gives thanks. As everyone else bows their heads and close their eyes, Jesus lifts his head and the food to the sky. He gives thanks to God for the gift of life and for providing for the people—for the sun and rain that helped the wheat grow, for the rivers and streams and seas that the fish lived and grew in. He gives thanks for the hands that harvested the wheat and ground it into flour, the hands that held the nets and brought the fish from the water.

When the prayer is finished, Jesus gives the disciples food—so that everyone—more than 5000 people—can eat their fill, with enough for leftovers.

When Jesus first asked the disciples to give the people in the crowd something to eat, they said, we have nothing. Like the villagers in the story of stone soup, the disciples didn't realize that there was more available than what they brought to the table. Jesus exemplifies what we talked about last Sunday—how believing in God changes how we see everything, or in this case, how we see nothing.

When the disciples look around at the hungry crowd, they see nothing but problems—they only see the real logistical impossibility of feeding that many mouths out in the middle of nowhere with nothing around. But that's precisely where Jesus led them! Clearly, when Jesus looks around, he sees things differently. He looks into the eyes of the hurting, the poor, the hungry, the weary, the lost, and he doesn't see problems that need to go away. He sees with the fullness of his humanity—Jesus knows what it is to be hungry, and he knows what needs to be done. He looks upon the crowd with compassion. At the same time, he sees with the eyes of God—where others see nothing—that nothing can be done or there isn't enough to go around—Jesus sees the grace of God already at work. Jesus sees abundance where others see scarcity.

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Jesus sees the “not enough” and the “nothing” and that is precisely what he uses to share the love of God. And through this sharing, through this miracle, Jesus reveals the heart of God.

I believe that God is love, and that Christ is the perfect expression of God’s love for the world. By his incarnation and humanity, Christ reveals God’s commitment to be at one with God’s people. By his concern for the poor, the weak, and the outcast, Christ reveals God’s love for all people. Jesus reveals that the heart of God is compassion.

Believing that Jesus Christ is Lord means obeying his commands and following his example and teachings. Christ calls us to humble service of God and neighbor.

Today, we find Christ calling us, leading us into the wilderness, places that stretch the limits of our wills and imaginations.

The challenge of this story isn’t to believe that somehow Jesus made five loaves and two fish into more than enough food for a hungry multitude—the challenge is to hear Jesus’ command for us today.

Because believing in Jesus Christ means trusting in him. It means trusting that our limitations and weakness do not keep us from serving—but that Christ can act through those limits and weakness to bring new life. And it means trusting that we, too, can be fed—hungry as we are. After all, there is more than enough to go around.

Christ helps us see the crowd of people—the hurting and sick, the lonely and despairing, the lost and the hungry—and shows us how to have compassion. They are the ones Jesus tells us to feed, knowing that even when we feel like we don’t have enough to make a difference, God can take our humble offerings and use them to transform the world. When we say the words of the creed, when we say “I believe” Christ responds, “you feed them.”

Christ helps us to see the people in our community and around the world who go hungry and whose children are dying of starvation. We may feel powerless to help, and so we might be tempted to let someone else deal with it. But Christ says to us, “you feed them.”

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Christ helps us to see the child, hungry for attention and affirmation. Even though we might want to send them away because we aren't good with kids, Christ says to us, "you feed them."

Christ helps us to see the person who is struggling with loneliness and depression. Even though we may want to send them and those difficult feelings away, Christ says to us, "you feed them."

Christ helps us to see the person who is not sure if they belong—the person who is different, the person who is hungry for a home. Even though we may not feel like we are good with making new friends, Christ says to us, "you feed them."

Christ invites all of us—all who are hungry—to the table. To take, and eat. To taste grace. We don't have to be worthy, we just have to be hungry.

Christ calls us to believe—to trust that we have more to offer than what we bring with us. Christ calls us to share grace and kindness and bread with those who are hungry, because there is abundance where we see scarcity.

Christ calls us today—you feed them!