

Believe!

4.2.17

For the past few weeks we have been exploring our baptismal vows and striving to live into our baptismal calling. So far we have been challenged to:

- > RENOUNCE the spiritual forces of wickedness...REJECT the evil powers of this world and REPENT of our sin.
- > ACCEPT the freedom and power God gives us to overcome EVIL, INJUSTICE, OPPRESSION - IN WHATEVER forms they present themselves.
- > CONFESS Jesus Christ as our Savior, Put your whole Trust in His Grace, and Promise to Serve Him as Lord in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations and races.
- > NURTURE one another in the Christian faith and life.

This is the fifth and final week of this Lenten Sermon Series. We conclude today with the part of our Baptismal vows that includes the creed.

**Do you believe in God the Father?**

**Do you believe in Jesus Christ?**

**Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?**

Taylor Burton-Edwards, Discipleship Ministries staff, and a Greek scholar, suggests that a better translation on "*believe in*" is actually "*believe into*."

*"Believing into" someone means "entrusting one's life to someone."*

*"What each article of the creed is really asking then is not whether we give intellectual assent to the idea, ... (but) whether we are prepared to **entrust our lives to ... God...**"* ("Living Into Our Baptismal Faith" by Taylor Burton-Edwards)

**Do you *entrust your lives to* God the Father?**

**Do you *entrust your lives to* Jesus Christ?**

**Do you *entrust your lives to* the Holy Spirit?**

It changes how we look at it, doesn't it? It is not just a matter of the head, it's a matter of the heart and the life.

To help us better understand this, we come to the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Scripture summary. John 11.1-45

Lazarus, a friend of Jesus became ill.

His sisters sent a messenger to tell Jesus.

Jesus and His disciples were in another village, a day's journey away.

When He received the message, Jesus decided to stay a couple more days.

He told the disciples of his friend's illness. "*He has fallen asleep.*"

*'Oh that's good. He must be getting better then.'*

*“No, he is dead. I’m going to wake him up.”*

When Jesus got to the village, he was greeted by Martha, one of the dead man’s sisters.

*“Lord, if you had been here earlier, my brother would not have died. But even so, I know that God will do what You ask.”*

*“Your brother will rise again.”*

*“Oh, I know he will rise on the last day at the resurrection.”*

*“I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me, even though they die, yet shall they live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Martha, Do you believe this?”*

*“I believe You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”*

Later, Mary, the other sister came to meet Jesus. Weeping, she said:

*“Lord, if you had been here earlier, my brother would not have died.”*

Then those gathered around her all began weeping loudly.

Jesus also wept.

Then, Jesus asked where the dead man was buried.

When they got to the tomb, He looked up and prayed:

*“Father, thank You that You are the God of Life. May You be glorified.”*

Then, Jesus asked for someone to roll the stone from the tomb.

Martha: *“Uh Lord, it’s been four days. He really smells. It wreaks.”*

*“Lazarus, come forth!”*

And the dead man emerged from the tomb, wrapped in grave clothes.

*“Unbind him and let him walk!”*

*“I Am the Resurrection and the Life”* (vv. 25,26)

*“I have defeated death!”*

Fredrikson: “Impossible for death to prevail in Jesus’ presence!”

“One who clings to Him, who unites with Him in faith, is living eternally now, as well as at the end.”

“Cannot die eternally b/c we trust in One who is life.” (Communicator’s Commentary, John, © 1985 Word, Inc; Roger Fredrikson, NT Vol 4; ch. 11 “Loose Him and Let Him Go”; pp. 191 - 205)

*“I have defeated death!”* “If you live in me and entrust your life to Me, You will live!” “Do you believe this?”

*“Do you believe this?”* (v.26) Jesus asks Martha.

Martha’s response makes it sound like “she doesn’t understand.”

But she does. She accepts Him. Confesses Him as Christ. Son of God. She believes Jesus is with her in the presence of death. (Communicator’s Commentary, John, © 1985 Word, Inc; Roger Fredrikson, NT Vol 4; ch. 11 “Loose Him and Let Him Go”; pp. 191 - 205)

*“Do you believe this?”* *Are you willing to entrust your life into this promise?*

This past week, our family said goodbye to Nancy’s brother, who died unexpectedly a week ago. No matter how prepared we are, it seems that we are never really ready to face death. It was, and continues to be, a shock to all of the family. And it has certainly given us pause to reflect on our own understanding of life, death and resurrection.

*“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever entrusts their life to me, even though they should die, yet they will live. And everyone who is alive and entrusts their life to me shall not die in the age to come.*

*Do you believe this?”*

Certainly, for the Followers of Christ, there is a degree of peace and hope that gives us strength and comfort.

It is at moments like these that this part of the creed has new meaning.

I believe in...**the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

I entrust my life into the promise of “rising from death to life.”

I entrust my life into God’s Hands of “complete transformation.” (Harper’s Bible Dictionary, Paul J. Achtemeier, General Editor, © 1985, The Society of Biblical Literature, Harper Collins Publishers, NY. Resurrection, pp. 864,865)

Do you Believe? Do you entrust your life completely?

Do you ***entrust your life to God...?***

Do you ***entrust your life to Jesus Christ...?***

Do you ***entrust your life to the Holy Spirit...?***

To totally and completely transform you in this life and the life to come?

Thank you for joining us on this Lenten journey as we have sought to “*Live Our Baptismal Calling.*” Are you ready and willing to live out your baptismal covenant?

Next Sunday is Palm/Passion Sunday. During worship, we will begin our walk with Jesus through the final days and hours of his life on this earth. We will hear his last words. We will re-live His final meal with the Disciples. We will experience Jesus being arrested, tried, and crucified on a cross. And then, we will go with the women to the tomb, to anoint Jesus’ body for burial, and witness the miracle that gave birth to the church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant, by water and the Spirit.

**Do you *entrust your lives to* God? Jesus Christ? the Holy Spirit?**