Affirming our Faith through the Apostles' Creed
I Believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord

Text: Hebrews 1:1-4 -- Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Introduction: ***What do you believe about Jesus***? Sooner or later every person in the world has to come to terms with this question and figure out for himself who Jesus ***really*** is, not just who we want or imagine Him to be. In his blog entitled "***Restless and Reformed***," author **Kevin DeYoung** addresses some of the responses to this all-important question and warns that NOT EVERY JESUS IS THE REAL JESUS. For example, for some … **there's the Republican Jesus**—who is against tax increases and activist judges, for family values and owning firearms. **There's also Democrat Jesus**—who is AGAINST Wall Street and Wal-Mart, FOR reducing our carbon footprint and printing money. **Then there's Therapist Jesus**—who helps us cope with life's problems, heals our past, tells us how valuable we are and not to be so hard on ourselves. **Others enjoy Starbucks Jesus**—who drinks fair trade coffee, loves spiritual conversations, drives a hybrid, and goes to film festivals. **Open-minded Jesus is also very popular**—He loves everyone all the time no matter what (except for people who are not as open-minded as him). For sports fans **there's Touchdown Jesus**—who helps athletes run faster and jump higher than non-Christians and determines the outcomes of Super Bowls. **There's Hippie Jesus**—who teaches everyone to give peace a chance, imagines a world without religion, and helps us remember that "all you need is love." **There's Spirituality Jesus**—who hates religion, churches, pastors, priests, and doctrine, and would rather have people out in nature, finding "the god within" while listening to ambiguously spiritual music. **There's Revolutionary Jesus**—who teaches us to rebel against the status quo, stick it to the man, and blame things on "the system." For the romantic in all of us **there's Boyfriend Jesus**—who wraps his arms around us as we sing about his intoxicating love in our secret place. And finally (**continues Kevin DeYoung**), **there's Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God**. Not just another prophet. Not just another Rabbi. Not just another wonder-worker. He was the one the Jews had been waiting for: **the Son of David and Abraham's chosen seed; the one to deliver mankind from captivity; the goal of**

the Mosaic law; Yahweh in the flesh; the one to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, freedom to the prisoners and proclaim Good News to the poor; the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. **That's a far different Jesus from the one of some many of our imaginations**!

This morning as we continue along in our preaching series "**Affirming Our Faith through the Apostles' Creed**," we're going to take a close look at who Jesus ***really*** is according to the people who knew him best … the apostles. **Now we should listen carefully to their assessment of Christ because they were eyewitnesses of His majesty** (**2 Peter 1:16 -- For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty).** In other words, they had firsthand knowledge of Jesus because lived with and walked with Him for **three years. They had the truly awesome privilege of sitting under His teaching and witnessing His interactions with others. They saw Him as He confronted the religious elite and ministered with divine power to the multitudes**. The Apostle's Creed, based on their teaching, summarizes their conclusions about Jesus and here's what it says … **I believe in Jesus Christ His (God's) only Son, our Lord**. Now there's more in the creed regarding His incarnation, miraculous birth, suffering and death, resurrection, exaltation and 2nd coming and we'll be looking at each of these in upcoming messages, but for today let's start with this declarative statement that reveals Jesus' true identity by sharing ***four titles*** with us.

I Believe in *Jesus*. The name **Jesus** (Greek for the Hebrew name **Joshua**) means **God is Savior/God is Salvation**. It's important for two reasons: **(1)** First, it identifies our Lord as an historical person. Actually, it was a very common name among the Jews in the first century with at least five Jewish high priests claiming it as their own. We know that Jesus was a Jew from Nazareth in Galilee and grew up in the home of a man named Joseph, a direct descendant of Abraham, and his wife Mary. He was a carpenter by trade and spent three years of his life as an itinerant rabbi. **(2)** It's also significant because the name itself (*God is Savior*) speaks of the fact that God entered the human race to rescue His people from their sins (*this is what the angel said in* **Matthew 1:21 – … for He will save His people from their sins**). When we say we believe in Jesus we're recognizing that He is both fully human and fully divine. ***He was like us*** – Jesus could feel hunger and pain, bleed, cry, be astonished and display any other human attribute that wasn't sinful – ***and He was unlike us*** – in that He possessed the very attributes of God – He had authority over disease, demons, sickness, the elements and everything else. Most importantly, He could forgive our sin and reconcile us to God (**Mark 2:1-12 – no one can forgive sin but God alone; 1 Timothy 2:5 -- For**

there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus).

I Believe Jesus is *the Christ*. Just so you know Christ is not the last name of Jesus any more than "**Pastor**" is my first name and "**Kerry**" is my last name. "**Pastor**" is a title that speaks of my role in this church as one of your spiritual shepherds. In the same way, "**Christ**" is a title that speaks of Jesus' role as the "**Messiah**" or "**Anointed One**." It comes from **a Greek word that itself comes from a Hebrew word** and is filled with theological significance. **It points to Jesus as the long-awaited Savior-King, the promised seed of Abraham, the descendant of David who would sit on his throne and rule forever**! To call Jesus "**Christ**" is to proclaim that He is the object of those prophecies and to acknowledge His right to reign over everyone and all of creation. Early Christians combined the name "**Jesus**" with the title "**Christ**" so that in some ways they became inseparable (**135 times the two are paired together in the New Testament**). The title "**Christ**" also expresses the claim that Jesus fulfilled all three ministries for which men were anointed in the Old Testament (**Prophet** – God's spokesperson; **Priest** – one who mediates with God for us by offering a sacrifice; and **King** – who reigns and rules). The glory of these roles is clearly understood when we consider our actual needs: **(1) We are ignorant of God and need instruction** – thus the prophet; **(2) We are separated from God and need reconciliation** – thus the priest; and **(3) We are foolish and weak when it comes to living for God** – thus the king!

Let me focus on this last one for a moment. The Bible says that "**we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us** (**Romans 8:37**)." The word conqueror means "**to vanquish beyond, to gain a decisive victory**." Now if you're a Christian, you know that this victory doesn't come through our human ability to overcome opposition to Christ, but through His strength which lies within each of us. Christ our King provides the strength to stand strong in Him. ***Here's a good example for you to consider***: American hostage **Kayla Mueller** was abducted on August 4, 2013, tortured, verbally abused, forced into slave labor for ISIS commanders **in Syria** and raped by the group's top leader. Still her fellow hostages say she never surrendered hope, she selflessly put the welfare of fellow captives above her own and she even stood up to executioner "**Jihadi John**" to defend her Christian faith. Four former hostages, who shared cells with Mueller, spoke publicly for the first time about their shared ordeal for ABC News' "**20/20**" broadcast, "**The Girl Left Behind**," that aired on July 30, 2017. They said the **Prescott, Arizona**, humanitarian aid worker **was a courageous 25-year-old who inspired them** by her unwillingness to bow to her captors and their god. ***They shared this incident as proof***: In March of 2014 Mueller was taken to a room next

door from the room in which she was held captive several times where male hostages were being held. Several said the group's leader paraded her in front of them to show prisoners about to be released who she was and to offer her own **proof-of-life** by removing her head scarf and briefly introducing herself. Former hostage **Daniel Rye Ottosen**, a Danish freelance photographer, recalled how Mueller turned the tables on the men in black. "***One of them started to say, 'Oh, this is Kayla, and she has been held all by herself. And she is much stronger than you guys. And she's much smarter. She converted to Islam***.' And then she was like, ***'No, I didn't***,'" Ottosen told ABC News. He admits it surprised him a lot. He had once tried to strangle himself when ISIS guards strung his arms up by chains. "***I would not have had the guts to say that. I don't think so***," he said. ***"It was very clear that all of us were impressed by the strength that she showed in front of us. That was very clear***." Three of the Westerners released by ISIS and a Yazidi teenager who escaped captivity provided eyewitness accounts of Mueller's strength, selflessness and will to survive amid her considerable suffering, including details she gave them of her treatment … for most of her confinement by the terrorist group. "***They would scream at her, and they would, you know, blame her for everything that America has done in the world***," said … one of three women from **Doctors Without Borders** who shared a cell with Mueller at an oil refinery. Despite their best efforts to conquer her will and force Kayla to profess faith in Islam, she never broke. She remained strong and faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ until the very end. Mercifully, God called her home in **February of 2015** after eighteen months of captivity in Syria. KAYLA KNEW CHRIST WAS THE REAL KING AND SO THROUGH FAITH IN HIM SHE GAINED A DECISIVE VICTORY OVER HER CAPTIVES!

I Believe Jesus is *God's only Son*. **J. I. Packer** comments on this section of the Apostles' Creed: "**When it called God maker of heaven and earth, it parted company with Hinduism and eastern faiths generally; *now* by calling Jesus Christ God's only Son, it parts company with Judaism and Islam and stands quite alone** (*Affirming the Apostles' Creed, p. 59*)." The little word "**only**" is very important to this section. **John 3:16** refers to Jesus as God's "**only begotten**" Son in the **KJV.** The **ESV** and the **NIV** are more accurate in their translations, however … God's only Son. **It's the Bible's way of saying that Jesus is God's *one and only* Son! He is absolutely unique … *one of a kind* … and there will never be another like Him**. He shares the exact same nature as the Father. That's what our text in **Hebrews 1** tells us. It says, "… **in these last days, God has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and,** just like the Father (**See Psalm 75:3**), **upholds the universe by the word of His power**

(**Hebrews 1:2-3a**)." **The Nicene Creed**, written to confront the Arian heresy that denied the deity of Christ, says it like this: ***He is very God of very God***. **Those who knew Jesus best** (**the apostles**) **did not think He was merely similar to God or at times acted like Him. No … they RECOGNIZED HIM as God's one and only Son and thus worthy of the same worship as the Father. In fact, to see Jesus was to see the Father**. That's what it means to say that Jesus is the exact imprint of His Father's nature. Remember the words of Jesus from **John 14:8-9**? **Philip said, "Lord show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." As God the Son, Jesus possessed all the same divine attributes of the Father. While the two had different roles, they were exactly alike in their divine nature. (Review: I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son**).

I Believe Jesus is *Our Lord*. This last title means that **Jesus is our absolute ruler**. He is sovereign over all, including you and me. This confession is what sets Christians apart from everyone else – **Jesus is Lord**. It's our way of saying that we obey only one Master. We surrender all we have to Him and follow Him gladly. Many people today including some pastors and theologians want to say that Jesus was a good man, but nothing more. He was a role model worth following, but that's all. ***C. S. Lewis explains why this I not an option***. "I am trying to prevent anyone from saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: '***I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I do not accept His claim to be God***.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a LUNATIC – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the DEVIL OF HELL. 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 or kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to (**C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity**)."

This part of the creed (I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord) leaves mankind with just two options:

- **You can confess *with joy* Jesus as your Lord and Savior now**. That's what the Bible tells us in **Romans 10:9 – If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be**

saved. **What better news could you hear than the Gospel message?** Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord offered Himself in payment for your sins and invites you to receive forgiveness and the gift of eternal life through faith in Him. **Now let me add a word to the wise here** … this isn't some sort of formula to be followed like a recipe for making jello. It's much more than that. **When you confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior you are putting your complete and uttermost trust in Him to not only save you from the wages of sin, but to change you from one who serves self to one who serves Him**! You are choosing to come under Jesus as your new master and to learn to live in obedience **to His will** and **not your own**. By the way, this is not a bad thing, as if it's the downside of following Christ. When we conform our lives to the pattern we have in Him, we actually experience life to the fullest measure (**John 10:10**). So … the choice is yours … you can confess with joy Jesus as your Lord and Savior now or …

- **You can confess *with shame and terror* Jesus as Lord later**. **Sooner or later *every* knee is going to bow and *every* tongue is going to confess** (*including those in heaven … angels and saints who have gone before … on earth … human beings alive when Christ returns … and under the earth – referring to the unbelieving dead and the spiritual forces of evil*) **that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father** (**Philippians 2:10-11**). Now imagine that scene. It won't be a forced confession as if God twists their arms until they bow and cry out Jesus is Lord! ***It will be an act of submission to the One whose power they cannot deny***. When this takes place, however, there will be no opportunity to receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. That door will have closed, the invitation no longer offered. At that time there will only be the judgment of Hell for those who have rejected the gift of salvation. So, the big question is: ***Which one will you choose***? Will you bow your knee now and confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior or will you wait until the second coming when you will face the judgment of God!

Conclusion: In the film ***The Bucket List***, ***Edward*** (**played by Jack Nicholson**) and ***Carter*** (**played by Morgan Freeman**) are both terminally ill. Doctors have given them about one year to live, so they make a list of things they always wanted to do before they **"kicked the bucket**"—and then go about doing them, one by one. The list includes skydiving, racing vintage Mustangs, and seeing the wonders of the world. In one scene, the two men are on their way to Europe in a private jet when Carter, as he looks out the window at the magnificent landscape shares, "***It's indescribably beautiful***." "*Hmmm. I love flying over the polar caps*," replies Edward. "*We're above the desolation*." Both men look out the window together.

"***The stars—it's really one of God's good ones,***" Carter says. "*So, you think a being of some sort did all this*?" Edward says. "***You don't***?" Referring to his illness, Edward replies, "*You mean, do I believe if I look up in the sky and promise this or that, the 'Biggie' will make all this go away? No.*" "***Then 95 percent of the people on earth are wrong***," Carter says. Edward smugly fires back: "*If life has taught me anything, it's that 95 percent of the people are always wrong*." "***It's called* faith**," Carter says. "*I honestly envy people who have faith. I just can't get my head around it*." "***Maybe your head is in the way***." "*Carter, we've all had hundreds of these discussions, and every one of them always hits the same wall. Is there a sugarplum fairy or not? And nobody has ever gotten over that wall*." "***So, what do you believe***?" Carter asks. "*I resist all beliefs.*" "***No big bang? No random universe***?" "*We live. We die*," Edward says. "*And the wheels on the bus go round and round*." "***What if you're wrong***?" "*I'd love to be wrong. If I'm wrong, I win*." Carter chuckles before he says, "***I'm not sure it works that way***." He's right, you know. It doesn't work that way. If you bow you knee and confess with your tongue that Jesus is Lord (that means that you believe He has been resurrected from the dead) you will be saved. If you don't, if you wait until the Lord returns, it will be the worst possible outcome for you.

NOW JOIN ME AND LET'S DECLARE WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS BY RECITING TOGETHER THE APOSTLES' CREED.

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I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hades; The third day He rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.