

The Creed moves directly from Jesus' birth to his crucifixion and death. This is not to say Jesus' life, teaching, and ministry are not important (the gospels are available to learn more about those things), but rather, the Creed focuses on what is significant for the work of salvation and redemption. The historical reality of Christ's sacrifice and death (and his resurrection and victory over death) are at the very core of the gospel.

Dwelling in the Word

Prayerfully read Philippians 2:5-8; and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. When you think of the cross, do you primarily see it as a symbol of religious hope, or do you also feel the weight of it as a particularly cruel form of execution reserved for criminals and slaves?
2. The Creed explicitly names Pontius Pilate alongside Jesus and Mary. Why is it significant for your faith that Jesus' death is rooted in a specific historical moment rather than being told as a timeless myth or legend?

Digging Deeper

1. The sermon argues that Jesus' suffering demonstrates his "full sharing in our humanity." According to Hebrews 2:10–18, why was it necessary for the pioneer of our salvation to be made perfect through suffering?
2. While believers accept the NT testimony of the crucifixion, the sermon mentioned extra-biblical corroboration from ancient historians like Tacitus and Josephus. How does this strengthen your confidence in the Gospel?
3. The phrase "he descended to the dead" (*katotatos*) refers to the "utmost depths" or the abode of the dead (Hades). Based on Acts 2:24–27, why was it impossible for death to "keep its hold on him," even after Jesus entered the realm of the dead? What difference does this make for your faith?
4. According to the sermon, a discipleship devoid of suffering is a distortion of the Gospel. How do passages like 1Peter 2:19–21 and Philippians 2:5–8 redefine suffering as a participation in the redemptive work of Jesus rather than a sign of God's abandonment?
5. In what ways has the suffering of Jesus transformed the meaning of human suffering itself? How do we distinguish between "unjust suffering" caused by oppression and the "suffering that comes because of our faith"? How does the story of the cross help us to put our experiences of difficulty and despair into perspective?

Living it Out

1. The Creed assures us that Jesus went where we went — even to the grave! If you are currently in a season of "lowest places," spend time in prayer this week reflecting on the promise that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39), because he has already been there?

The Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God,
 the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.

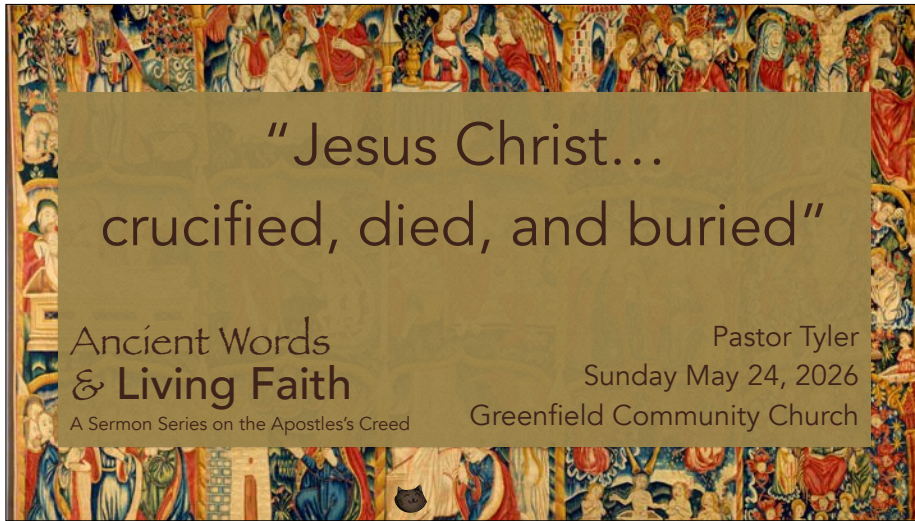
I believe in Jesus Christ,
 God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic^[a] Church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.

Notes

[*] This version is based on the translation of the ELLC.

[a] Catholic (small case c) means "universal."

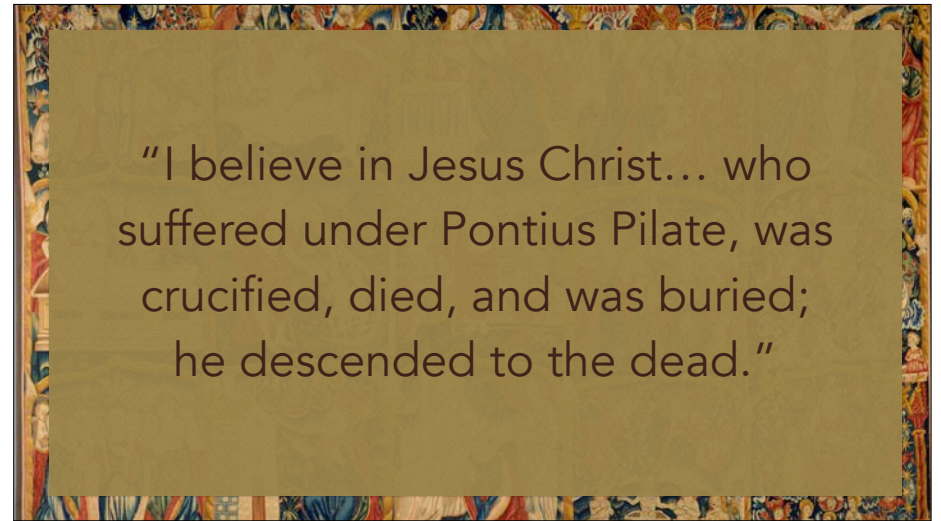


“Jesus Christ...
crucified, died, and buried”


Ancient Words
& Living Faith

Pastor Tyler
Sunday May 24, 2026
Greenfield Community Church

A Sermon Series on the Apostles' Creed





“I believe in Jesus Christ... who
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was
crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.”



“... who suffered under Pontius Pilate”

Pontius Pilate was the Governor (procurator) of the Roman province of Judea from 26-36 AD.

- ♦ Roots Jesus' death in history.
- ♦ Jesus suffered and was publicly tried and executed at a particular historical moment.

“... who suffered under Pontius Pilate”

While there were many factors in play in Jesus' death, that Pilate authorized his execution is undeniable (Matt 27:11-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28-19:16).

- ♦ Reminder that the powers of this age hate challenges to their authority (1Cor 2:8).



“was crucified”

That Jesus was executed as a criminal by means of crucifixion is a statement on which all can agree.

- ♦ The NT testifies to it, in story (Matt 27:15-37; Mark 15:1-39; Luke 23:28-49; John 19:19-30; Acts 3:13-16; 4:27); and in letters (1Cor 1:18-2:8; 2Cor 13:4; Gal 3:1; Phil 2:8; Col 1:20; 1Tim 6:13; Heb 12:2; 1Pet 2:24).
- ♦ Extra-biblical evidence: Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44); Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.3.3); and Lucian (*Peregrinus* 11).



“was crucified”

Crucifixion was a particularly cruel and barbaric form of execution, reserved for slaves and criminals.

- ♦ Origen, 2nd century theologian, described it as “the utterly foul/vile death on the cross” (*Against Celsus*).
- ♦ Jews saw his death as a stumbling block and a curse (1Cor 1:22-23; Deut 21:23).
- ♦ Greeks and Romans saw his death as shameful and utterly foolish (1Cor 1:23-25; Heb 12:2).



“...died, and was buried.”

Jesus died and was buried in a borrowed tomb (Matt 27:55-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-55; John 19:38-42; 1Cor 15:1-2).

- ♦ Jesus died after about six hours – which was quick (Mark 15:44). Rather than succumb to asphyxiation, Jesus gave up his spirit (Luke 23:46; John 19:30).
- ♦ He was buried in a new tomb owned by Joseph of Arimathea, a Council member and a disciple of Jesus.



“He descended to the dead.”

Translation of the Greek *katotatos* κατωτατος (Latin “*ad inferos*”) – superlative of *kata* “down” = deepest, the lowest places, the uttermost depths.

- ♦ Understood as hades (the abode of the dead); LXX translation of the Hebrew *sheol* (שְׁאוֹל).
- ♦ Not a reference to hell (the place of final judgement).



“He descended to the dead.”

This notion alludes to a number of biblical passages, though none of them fit perfectly.

- ♦ Acts 2:24-27: God did not abandon Jesus to “the realm of the dead.”
- ♦ Rom 10:6-7: Paul implies in his rhetorical question that Jesus did “descend into the deep.”
- ♦ Eph 4:8-9: Paul again suggests Jesus “also descended to the lower, earthly regions.”



“He descended to the dead.”

- ♦ 1Pet 3:18-20: “After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits.”
- ♦ 1Pet 4:6: “the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead.”
- ♦ Matt 12:39-41: “For as Jonah... so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”



“He descended to the dead.”

The Main Point: Jesus was human like us and shared the fate of all those who have died.

- ♦ Jesus really did die — and in his death he defeated the cosmic powers that hold humanity in bondage: sin, death, and the devil (1Cor 15:55-57; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14-15).



“He descended to the dead.”

“In his suffering and death, Christ has broken the power and the hold of sin and death *for all* (and not just for those who, by accident of birth, are so situated in their time and place as to be able to meaningfully ‘hear’ the gospel) and that the ‘place of death’ need no longer hold any fear for those who put their trust in him” (Trevor Hart, *Confessing and Believing*, 116).



Suffering & Death

That Jesus died is a matter of public record and historical fact.

- ♦ Against early gnostics and Docetists who rejected the idea that a divine saviour could physically suffer or die.



Suffering & Death

Why Jesus died is a matter of faith.

- ♦ Jesus died "for us" (Rom 5:8);
- ♦ Jesus died "for our sins" (1Cor 15:3);
- ♦ Jesus died "in our place" (Isa 53:5; 1Pet 2:24).



Conclusions

Jesus' suffering and death means...

- ♦ Suffering is real; God suffered in Christ (Heb 4:15)
- ♦ Our suffering can be transformed (Rom 8:18-30; 2Cor 4:13-5:5; 1Pet 2:19-21).
- ♦ Death is not the end (John 11:25-26; 14:1-3).
- ♦ We have hope (1Thess 4:13; Heb 6:19).



Conclusions

Nothing — including death — is "able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).