

Welcome

How many of you have seen *House of Cards*? It was the first hit TV show from Netflix. It's a political thriller about an ultra-corrupt politician who cons his way into the White House. The pilot was directed by director David Fincher, who remains an executive producer on the show, along with the star, Kevin Spacey.

The show has been *huge* for Netflix. Netflix - as I'm sure you know - started as a DVD mail service that quickly put stores like Blockbuster out of business. Then, a few years ago, Netflix started making their own content. Shows like *House of Cards* and *Orange is the New Black* and *Daredevil*.

Why? Because in order for Netflix to remain successful, they have to get and keep subscribers. That's it. That's how they make their money. So they made a decision to do everything they could to keep subscribers.

And it turned out, the trick was to figure out what people like to watch. Because if they know what people like, then they can give them more of what they like, which keeps them happy.

So Netflix paid people to watch movies. They created a 36-page training document to help people watch and tag the movies - everything from romance to action to the morality of the characters to whether the plot resolves or not.

They created a huge, insanely complicated categorization system for their movies and TV shows. And then they started tracking what people actually watch. What movies are you clicking on? How often? What do you finish? What do you shut off?

It let Netflix know what kinds of movies you'll probably like, and put those movies first when you pull up their menu. But it *also* told them what kind of stuff to make.

For instance, their algorithm told them people like political thrillers, things directed by David Fincher, and things starring Kevin Spacey. So they made a political thriller directed by David Fincher that stars Kevin Spacey. They called it *House of Cards* and it was a hit.

Not because they got lucky. Because they gamed the system. They followed the path to figure out what would give them the outcome they wanted - shows people want to watch, to keep current subscribers happy and get new subscribers. *House of Cards* just released its fifth season. In its first four seasons, it was nominated for over 200 awards and won 27 - including 6 emmys.

When you know the goal, it's easier to figure out how to get there. And so today, as we conclude our series on the Apostle's Creed, we're going to review God's endgame and see how we get there. If Netflix can win 6 emmys, then we can do much, much better.

Message

This is the final week in our Summer series, Believe. We've been working through the Apostle's Creed, asking what beliefs make us the Church of God. We've focused on these beliefs not as statements we have to understand and agree with before we can participate in God's life, but goals, callings, invitations deeper into a life of faith.

Today, we conclude with the final statement in the Creed: **I believe in the life everlasting. Amen.**

We believe life is eternal, that death is not the end for us, for those we love, for the world. If you were here last week, you know we talked about this life as a real, physical thing.

But we're not there yet. We're still living on this side of the second coming, between Jesus' resurrection and the last resurrection. But we're not just in a kind of holding pattern. God is working on us, transforming us, making us into new creations (8th day people). Paul opens the letter he wrote to the church he founded in the city of Philippi with a prayer, celebrating this very fact. He says,

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. -- Philippians 1:3-6

God began a good work in us and is continuing to work on us right now until it's finished on the day Jesus returns. The Creed is sort of like all that data Netflix gathered from movie-watchers. The Church put together a list of what makes us God's people, a sort of outline of what a follower of Jesus looks like. That's what this Creed is.

Throughout the series, we've been focusing on the beliefs not as words to recite, but as practices to inhabit. We've been focused on what these beliefs *look like* when we live them out. They're the places God is working on us, making us into new creations.

With that in mind, I want to work through the creed one more time together, line by line, and recall what it means to say we believe these things.

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

We begin by believing God is the creator. This isn't a statement about faith vs. science. It's a statement of purpose. To believe God is the creator is to insist that our lives and our world have meaning and purpose. They began somewhere and they're going somewhere. We're not meaningless. We matter to the one who created the whole universe.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

We believe Jesus is God - not only human like us, but the creator of the universe. To believe Jesus is the creator is to seek out spaces of awe, to stay in those places and remember that the one who created us loves us and calls us to life.

I believe Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate.

We also believe God became fully human. Jesus accepted all the limitations of a human body, a human life. He became a baby. He grew up in poverty. He knew temptation and betrayal. He suffered with us and for us. To believe Jesus became human is to insist that being human is a good thing, that our bodies are good, that the beginning of our story is love and life, not failure and loss.

I believe Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried.

We believe Jesus was crucified because we believe in the power of Sin. We know we miss the mark, fail to live as we were created to. We know the weight of failure, and we know that we are powerless to do anything about that weight ourselves. We are dead in sin, and Jesus died for us. To believe Jesus died is to take Sin seriously, not to make excuses or allowances. It's to throw ourselves on God's mercy - and to show mercy to one another.

I believe Jesus descended to hell.

To say we believe Jesus descended to Hell is to say we believe Jesus was totally dead. He didn't hold back - he gave himself completely over to death. If we believe this, then we live risky, vulnerable lives in response. We trust God even in the dark places, just like Jesus did.

I believe that on the third day Jesus rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

To say we believe in the Resurrection is to insist that new life is a reality, that change is possible. It's to wait for God's Spirit to move, to follow God's lead and join in restoring the world.

I believe Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead.

To say we believe Jesus will return is to believe that the world is going somewhere - that the same God who created the world is going to finish his work. It means believing that evil and injustice do not have the final word. And because we know the End is coming, it means living now in anticipation of the End. Living now how we know the end will be.

I believe in the Holy Spirit.

To believe in the Spirit means we believe God can change people. It also means believing that we cannot. As a church who believes in the Holy Spirit, we commit to hold space for others to change, courageously loving them while trusting the Spirit to bring new life.

I believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints.

To believe in the universal church is to insist that every race, tribe, tongue and culture are part of God's church. It's to insist on rooting out injustice and bigotry wherever we find it. And here at Catalyst, it means creating space for the thousands of people around us who don't have a church home. We want to be the Church for them - just like Catalyst has been the church for US. And it means believing we all have something to contribute to the Church. God has called us all to be a part.

I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

As God's church, we not only insist that God has forgiven all of us. We also insist on being a people who forgives each other. We don't allow anger and bitterness to take root or control us. We go out of our way to enact forgiveness, not just as an internal action but also in relational reconciliation. This is what God has done for us in Jesus. We can do no less with each other.

I believe in the resurrection of the body.

If we believe in the resurrection of the body, then we believe our bodies are good gifts from God. We believe the world is a good gift from God. We don't believe we'll turn into spirits and end up on a cloud in Heaven. Rather, we know the end is Heaven and Earth becoming one. We know the End is us living with God in our bodies, raised from death just like Jesus. So we care for the earth now. We take care of our bodies. Because both the earth and our bodies are good gifts from God, the Father almighty, the creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in the life everlasting. Amen.

Friends, this is overwhelming. It's overwhelmingly *good*, to know we're called to be a community where everyone matters, a community that values our bodies and our world. A community that takes sin and evil seriously while also insisting we can be changed. A community committed to creating and holding space for that change to happen, committed to the work of reconciliation.

That's a beautiful picture. But it is overwhelming. So we must remember that the next world is an extension of this one. And from the beginning to the end, this has *been God's work*. God began this and God will finish this. We don't bear the whole responsibility to become this community. Rather, like Christians for two thousand years, we gather around these statements and confess they are who we want to become. We invite the Holy Spirit to transform us from the inside out, to bind us together as one body, and to empower us to join in God's restoring work in the world.

So today, I want to invite you one more time to recite the creed together with me.

Communion + Creed

[Communion Slide] We come to the table because Jesus is the one who makes all this possible.

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Assignment/Blessing

Fruit of the Spirit Examen