

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son

Luke 1:26-38, Hebrews 1:1-14

Well, our church is recruiting!

Some of you may know that Matt and Leonie Morrison, our student ministers, are concluding their studies at the end of the year.

This means we are looking to hire two brand new student ministers.

And so I am starting to make inquiries at various theological colleges, including my old college: Moore College.

And what Moore College have asked of me

is that I present myself on campus this coming Tuesday, ready to make a pitch for our church and the positions we have available.

I'll be making this pitch alongside ministers from other churches to a room full of students who are looking for jobs.

The actual phrase that has been used by the college to describe this process, is that it's a little bit like 'speed dating'.

Speed dating is where prospective partners rotate around a room spending a few minutes with each person, trying to find 'the one'.

And that's what I'll be doing this Tuesday, trying to convince the students in only a couple of minutes to join us.

Of course, I'm interested to hear how it is that the students pitch *themselves*.

It's a two way street, isn't it, when you're hiring.

The employer has a pitch and the employee needs to demonstrate their own suitability.

Part of the way a potential employee will promote themselves

is to put together a resume or CV, which I'm sure most of you have done at some point or another.

It's a way for a candidate to outline their suitability for the role.

The reason I mention this is because the central section of the Apostle's Creed reads a little bit like a brief *resume* for Jesus.

The creed is divided into three sections.

The first section is about God the Father,

the last section is about God the Holy Spirit and the work that he does,

The middle section is by far the longest section, and it's about God the Son.

And this middle section begins with four short sharp facts about Jesus:

Who he is, what his basic qualifications are, what it is he can do.

It's like what you find at the beginning of a resume or on a business card, the basic facts: name, qualifications, what it is you do.

But then after those basic facts, just like a resume, we have a *timeline*;
 we have an historic record of what this person has done,
 we hear that Jesus was born, that he died, was raised, ascended, and is
 returning.

These are events where we see these basic facts in action.

And so today as we continue in this series on the Apostles Creed
 we're thinking about these four sharp facts,
 and then we'll look at the first entry on the timeline:
 his Spirit empowered birth through the virgin Mary.

And just like a boss might do when reading our own resume,
 it's worth us taking the time to think
 "What so special about this person?
 Why should I be paying attention to this individual?" Let's read and see.

So the four sharp facts are contained in the following statement:
"I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord"

Fact number one: his name is Jesus.

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was going to have a baby,
 he gave Mary a very specific instruction Luke 1:31
 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

Jesus was a very common name in ancient times, and it still is!

It's just another version of the name Joshua.
 We all probably know someone called Joshua,
 and in ancient times, you would have known a person named Jesus.
 In Spanish speaking countries Jesus remains a very popular name today.

was a bloke called Josh, or Dave, or Kevin.
 Jim Carey was in a movie a couple of years ago called *Bruce Almighty*,
 where an ordinary guy—named Bruce—is given the chance to act as God.
 It was a comedy, you know that much by the title!
 If there is a God, he's not going to have the name Bruce!
 It sounds silly to say 'I worship Bruce', or 'I worship Kevin'
 These are ordinary name that we give to ordinary people.

But this is kind of the point when the Bible tells speaks of a man named Jesus.

The central figure of Christianity is one of us.
 He has a name like us, he grew up in a family,
 he had his own neighbourhood that he called home.
 Christianity has as its focus a real human being with a name: Jesus.

But he was a man with an important job.

In Matthew's account of Gabriel's visit to Mary,

we're told that the child is to be named Jesus
 because he will save his people from their sins.
 The names Jesus and Joshua both mean "*the Lord saves*".
 So from the name that is given
 we learn that this man is going to come to the rescue of God's people.

Now this implies another truth; a truth about the rest of humanity.
 If the name Jesus means "the Lord saves" —
 then that's an indication that we humans are in need of saving,
 that human sin is a problem.

We all know that the world can be a terrible place and that humans can be awful.
 I know some of you are following the story in Canada
 about those two young travellers,
 one of whom grew up here in the Hornsby area,
 I don't wish to rehearse the details here
 but the story is just one example of human sin in all its ugliness.

But we Christians believe that our God doesn't just sit on his hands doing nothing.
 We believe Jesus has come in response to human sin,
 and that he holds the key to finding hope beyond all the mess.

And the creed assures us that our trust in Jesus is well placed,
 because he is *the Christ*: 'I believe in Jesus *Christ*'
Christ sounds like a last name,
 but unlike the name Jesus, Christ isn't a personal name, rather it's a *title*.

The title *Christ* means "the anointed one".
 It means the same thing as *Messiah*.
Messiah is from the Hebrew language, *Christ* is from the Greek,
 but they mean the same thing: "The anointed one"

In the OT, kings were anointed with oil at the beginning of their reign,
 Prophets and priests, they too were anointed with oil
 as a sign they were selected by God to do an important task.
 So anointing meant that this person had the blessing of God to do the job.

And the OT also spoke about a special person who would arrive on the scene,
 who would be anointed for a role unlike all the others.
 This would be *The Messiah*, Messiah with a capital M!

In our second Bible reading from the book of Hebrews
 we heard one of these OT passages quoted and applied to Jesus.
 Hebrews ch 1:9, quoting Psalm 45. "therefore God, your God,
 has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."
 The writer is saying that God has anointed Jesus to be above everyone else.

He is *the Christ*,
which means he fulfills his task with the backing of the highest authority.

I shared with you a few weeks ago
how I recently watched the TV mini-series called *Chernobyl*.
It's a dramatization of the 1986 nuclear accident in the Soviet Union.

There's one scene where Mikael Gorbachev, the Soviet General Secretary,
is sitting in a meeting at the Kremlin and together with his central committee
they're deciding what to do.
At one point he addresses one of his ministers, Boris Shcherbina,
And says "you're going to Chernobyl!"
You're going into that mess and you're going to sort it out.
And so in a sense Shcherbina is *anointed*.
He's given the commission, he's given the authority,
which means he then has the freedom to get the job done,
which he does and the TV series portrays him as a bit of hero.

Jesus is no self-appointed savior, he's been anointed by the Father
and that means he's the one who has been entrusted to get the job done.

But lest we envisage Jesus as little more than an effective soviet bureaucrat,
the creed also reminds us that he is *God's only Son*.

Like the *Christ*, the *Son of God* is an Old Testament idea.
Sometimes a King of Israel was called a Son of God,
in our Exodus series we heard God refer to the whole nation as his Son
And in our Bible reading from Luke,
we heard Gabriel tell Mary that Jesus would be called 'the Son of God'.
To be a Son of God means to have a special relationship with God;
to be connected with God in a special way.

But in the creed we have another element to notice,
Jesus isn't just God's Son, he is God's *only* Son.
Jesus is God's Son in a way that is *different* to an OT King,
and *different* to the nation of Israel.
Jesus is connected to God in a *very* special way, in a way that's unique.

The difference is hinted at in our Hebrews reading.

Ch 1 v 8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
In this verse, God is addressing the Son, and he calls the Son *God*.
Jesus is God's Son in that he shares the Father's divine nature.
Everyone else is God's child by adoption, but Jesus is God's Son by nature,
and he's the only person to have that privilege.

One thing that we'll read about from time to time
is the wish of adopted children to connect with their biological parents.
As happy as they are with their adopted mum and dad,
and as loving as their mum and dad are,
there is still this curiosity to meet their biological parents,
maybe there's even a medical reason to make that connection.
There's a *different* relationship with the natural parents,
not necessarily a better relationship,
but a different relationship
that can never be completely replicated through adoption.

In a similar way, Jesus has a relationship with God
that no other human can ever completely experience,
he is God's Son by nature, sharing in the Father's very essence.

He is God's only Son, and the final short sharp fact, is that he is our *Lord*
This is personal: note the use of the word *our*.
Not simply the world's Lord, not only the Lord of heaven and earth,
but he's *my* Lord, and he's *your* Lord.

What does it mean to have a Lord?
Well, it means to be living under someone authority,
it means we're following instructions and not simply living for ourselves.

After I had finished at Moore College as a student,
one of my peers returned to the United States to work in a church over there
and a few weeks ago his eldest son graduated from high school
and enrolled at West Point, the famous United States Army Academy.

Now when you go to West Point,
you're not simply enrolling at uni, you're also joining the army.
So my friend shared some pictures of young Jordan
standing at attention with his luggage at his feet,
being received into the army on the parade ground.
The long and carefree summer after finishing high school was now over.
He was a man under instructions, no longer free to do as he pleased.

And so it is with those who choose to believe in and follow Jesus.
We believe that he is our Lord,
and so our life's direction and the decisions we make,
they'll start to reflect that belief.

He's not like a Drill-Sargent though; he is gentle and patient.
However, we must not let that gentleness
lull us into ignoring the claim that he has
on each area and each moment of our lives.

So these are the four short sharp facts:

His name is Jesus, he is the Christ, he is God's only Son, he remains our Lord.

So how do these facts reveal themselves in his career?

Let's briefly consider the first entry in the Creed's summary of his life.

As Christians we believe that Jesus was *conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary.*

When the angel Gabriel informed Mary of her forthcoming baby, Mary asked "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

The virgin birth is described by both Luke and Matthew,
and the fact Jesus was born in this way
is an indication that he was born with both

a human nature and a divine nature.

The virgin birth reminds us of the double origin of Jesus:

an origin in God and an origin in humanity.

Now why does the savior need to be both human and divine?

Why does he need to be God's only Son, and Jesus?

Because that's the only way that he can save us humans from our sins.

If he was going to make atonement for human sin,
then he needed to be human.

If I purchase a new flatcreen TV,

but it's somehow faulty and I seek a replacement,

then I'm going to be very disappointed if they try and satisfy me
with an old cathode ray tube black box. It has to be a like-for-like substitution.
And so it is with finding a substitute for sinful humanity.

For this reason Jesus had to be made fully human in every way, Hebrews tells us
that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

And the reason the TV needs to be replaced is that
the broken machine isn't going to fix itself.

A piece of electronics doesn't have the capacity to make its own repairs,
there has to be some kind of outside agent that gets the job done,
and so it is with the human race,

we are so broken—dead in our sins Paul says—that any kind of salvation
needs to come from the outside of our race, and so the saviour must be divine.

And so we are looking for someone who is both divine and human.

What about this Jesus guy? Is he going to be any help?

Oh look, it says here, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.

That looks promising!

Speaking about the Apostle's creed as a resume is a little bit misleading.

It's not a document that God has given us to promote himself—
that honour belongs to the Bible alone.

It's a document that Christians have come up with
which we place in front of one another.

It's as if we've cobbled together a resume about Jesus
and we're pushing it under one another's nose saying

"This is the guy were getting behind. Let's stick with him!"

And he's worth sticking with because, among other things,
he is the effective savior:

the one with the authority and background to get the job done.

Prayer.