



# I Believe

The Apostle's Creed affirms, "I Believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.

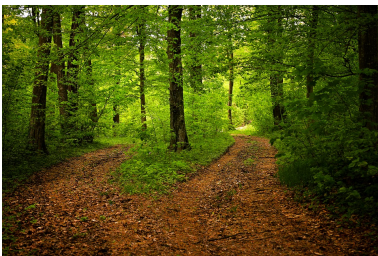
What? He descended into Hell?!

We know that on the surface, this seems a bit odd—particularly when we think of hell as the place of fiery punishment for the really bad and evil people. We tend to think of Hell as the very last place that Jesus—the Only One Who ever lived perfectly and loved unconditionally—would ever go.

This phrase has been confusing for many throughout the years. Some traditions read, "descended to the dead." Others say, "He descended into hell." As United Methodists we have used both versions of the Apostles' Creed. Some would say it is best to omit this phrase.

In this series we are looking at the phrase, "He descended into hell", (or the place of the dead") There are a variety of phrases for death. We talk about "Sheol," "Hades," "the pit," "the depths," or "the grave."

Later the Scriptures use the term "Hell." Please understand that no one is in Hell because God has sent them there. Jesus is clear that God doesn't want anyone to go to hell. That's why Jesus came.



*"There are only two kinds of people in the end. Those who say to God, 'Thy will be done and those to whom God says in the end, 'Thy will be done.'"*  
C.S. Lewis

2 Peter 3:9 says God isn't willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

John 3:17 says, "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but save the world through him."

Anyone who ultimately lives in Hell lives there because they have chosen it.

Simply said, people choose hell whenever they say to God, "Leave me alone. I don't want anything to do with You, with your purposes or your patterns for Life. I don't need anybody else to be God for me. I can be god for myself, thank you very much."

What is tragic yet predictable is that while we talk about Hell as a place, it is also a place of life where individuals who reject God eventually end up living — right smack in the middle of hell — the brokenness, the pain, the utter emptiness of human self-addiction, discontent, lack of purpose....

Whichever phrase is used, the Scriptures and the creed makes clear that absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Read Romans 8:35, 37-39; John 3:16,17.



"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but save the world through him."  
John 3:17

When Jesus died, — when he descended to the dead or to Hades, — He walked into that Castle of fear and lies the Devil maintains, broke down the door and walked into the lowest dungeon, declared His victory and walked out. The Lord proclaimed His triumph over Satan, sin, death and hell. (1 Peter 3:18-20; Hebrews 2:14)

2 Timothy 1:9-10 says, "Now his grace is revealed through the appearance of our savior, Christ Jesus. He destroyed death and brought life and immortality into clear focus through the good news."

Read **Romans 6:1-4, Romans 8:35-39**. Do you believe that your "old life" died with Christ? What then is the difference between our old life and our new life? In what way(s) do we live "in Christ"? How confident are you that nothing can separate you from God's love?

Read **2 Timothy 1:8-12**. How can Jesus' "destruction" of death, the Devil, and sin help us find peace in a world that's often consumed by fear?

Read **Hebrews 2:10-15**. Do you feel that you have been freed from the captivity of the fear of death? Do you still worry about those loved ones you might leave behind? Whom would we lift up in prayer?

Sing a song, perhaps, "Victory in Jesus."

SERMON NOTES: