

ward can't be separated.

Resurrection, like forgiveness, throws us back into the world of pain and disappointment, of Good Friday looking toward Easter, opening us up to choose love in the mess of life.

The greatest clue of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world is wherever that choice to choose love in the mess of life is being made. That is the liberation that is forgiveness. That is the love that is resurrection.

And then there is: the life everlasting.

You know that old saying about it ain't over till its over? Well it ain't ever over.

The story isn't over, even when it seems like it's the end, even if we want it to end, it's not over.

Life is now, not someday, everlasting is now, not someday.

We don't run out. The well never runs dry.

Life is abundance, there is no scarcity.

Like the parable of the sower throwing seeds every which way with reckless abandon.

The Holy Spirit is like that, the river never runs dry.

Will I give my heart to the reckless abandon of life everlasting?

Take away the stone. Lazarus come out. Unbind him and let him go.

Liberation.

What is it like? That sudden gift of freedom.

Pictures. Moments. Stories.

What comes to mind?

Will I give my heart?

Lift up you hearts.



Briton Riviere 1898

I GIVE MY HEART

Lenten Reflections on the Apostles' Creed

Jack Hardaway

2026

DEFIANT HOPE

Who can fathom the human heart?

Why we do things?

It is a fragile vulnerable thing, our heart, so easily broken, so easily enslaved.

Jesus and the devil wrestled over the heart of things.

What do I believe?

Where my heart is tells me what I believe.

I believe. That repeated turn of phrase in the Apostles' Creed Credo. I believe. It is Latin for I believe, or I give my heart.

I give my heart.

The Apostles' Creed is an ancient baptismal statement of who we give our heart to.

The earliest forms of it date back to the early 2nd century, the final form being settled in the late 4th century.

The Apostles Creed tells us how the earliest believers read scripture and how they understood God. It reveals something about God's heart, whom we give our hearts to.

The Creed tells the story of God. The creation. The incarnation of God. The Life and death and resurrection and hope of Jesus as our Judge. It speaks about the Holy Spirit and the many ways we find evidence of the Holy Spirit in the world.

For Lent I will be giving a series of reflections on the Apostles' Creed, our hearts and the God who fills our hearts. My hope is that the reflections will be spiritual and poignant rather than long and ponderous. Your prayers are appreciated.

Today, we begin with the first two lines: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

The One who is the origin of all that is, the heavens and the earth.

Two lines that speak volumes.

Creation, Genesis chapter one vs one, John's Gospel chapter one vs one.

Many other biblical references and allusions are in the background.

The parting of the red sea crossing over to the other side.

Take away the stone. Lazarus come out. Unbind him and let him go. Words of liberation as God's presence breaks into a world held captive by darkness.

And then, what to do next? What comes after? After liberation, after the celebration, that sudden realization, "What do I do now?"

Life in the Holy Spirit, hearts given to the Holy Spirit.

This is the final reflection in a Lenten series on the Apostles' Creed, about belief and giving our heart to the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Today's reflection is about the last three lines: the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

They are the evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in the world, claiming the world back, freeing the world to choose love.

The forgiveness of sins, the greatest power in the Universe. Forgiveness is to be set free from slavery to the endless chain reaction of sin binding up everything in an avalanche.

We give our hearts to the power that sets us free from the tyranny of always loving so poorly.

Forgiveness is freedom, freedom to choose love no matter what is happening.

The heart set free.

The clearest way to know the difference between idolatry and the presence of the Holy Spirit is that idolatry always enslaves, and Holy Spirit always brings the freedom that is love.

Forgiveness is more than a possibility it is inevitable.

Will we surrender to the inevitable? Will we give our heart?

This is not an escape into forgetfulness; that is oblivion.

Forgiveness throws us back into the world of pain and disappointment, of Good Friday looking to Easter, opening us up to choose love in the mess of life.

The resurrection of the body.

There is no ghostly escape into disembodied virtual existence.

The body is a good thing, it is the incarnation, it is the resurrection, it is baptized with the Holy Spirit.

The sacraments are the real presence of Jesus, the outward and the in-

together. The bread which makes us one is a serious thing, a glory 9
overload.

It is more than a comfort. It is a challenge: to share the table. To share
the table. It doesn't have to make sense, we simply share. Faith is so
much bigger than what I will ever know, it is crowded with all kinds of
humanity and believers, and sinners of God's own redeeming.

The trail of clues, the Holy Spirit leads us into holiness, its catholicity,
into Church and into communion with the saints, one leading to the next.

We stop today with the Communion of Saints.

This trail of clues reveals that the Holy Spirit connects us in many ways,
one to another, and to God. God is like that, the tie that binds. Be that
binding, holy and catholic and crammed with heaven.

Next week that communion leads us into the greatest power in the uni-
verse, the forgiveness of sins, which is true liberty, and from there the
trail leads us to the resurrection of the body and life everlasting and a
great big Amen.

Be that binding.

Tune in next week for the conclusion. Same grace time, same grace
channel.

Lent 5a 2026; 22 March

Eze. 37:1-14; Ps 130; Rom 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

I Give My Heart: The Apostles' Creed part 5; Jack Hardaway

TO AWAKEN

Liberation.

What is it like? That sudden gift of freedom.

Pictures. Moments. Stories.

What comes to mind?

My dog bursting out the back door to chase whatever moves.

That famous photo of the navy sailor kissing a woman in a white dress at
the end of WW 2.

The last day of school watching the students and teachers skip and frolic
out the door.

That first Juneteenth in Texas as the last slaves learn of their freedom.

That last breath after a long slow dying.

Goodness and intention are at the heart of this opening statement. 2

Creation in the biblical universe is a belligerent statement of hope.
The ancient world was full of many creation stories that were a way to
make sense of things.

The Babylonian creation story, as primary example, saw the world as an
accident, two God's got in a fight and the mess they made is the world, a
creation story based on the mess of human experience. The world has no
meaning or purpose or direction, it is a divine accident unworthy of no-
tice. Life is a mess, beginning, middle and end.

The biblical creation is in many ways a contrary statement to the Baby-
lonian Myth, a push back against the despair of being held captive by
the Babylonians.

Creation is rather full of direction, intention and goodness.

It is a statement of spirit breathed hope that goes beyond our mere hu-
man experience of the world. It is belligerent and contrary.

When life loses meaning, when life loses direction, when life loses
worth, when life loses hope, I give my heart to the God who fills crea-
tion with direction, intention, worth, hope, goodness and meaning.

Especially when our world falls apart we give our hearts to the hope that
life is worth living.

It is good to be here. Our lives matter. Especially when it seems like
they don't, especially then we give our hearts to One who is the source
and purpose and direction of the Universe.

That is what I believe is at the heart of the creed, especially the opening
lines.

Defiant hope.

Next week the reflection will be about Jesus, his birth, his death and his
descent to the dead, the sacramental power of material existence, re-
minding us that salvation is not about escaping the world but rather
about the redemption and renewal of all flesh.

Lent 2a 2026

John 3:1-17; Jack Hardaway

I Give My Heart: The Apostles Creed part 2

EMBRACING THE WORLD

Giving birth is hard work.

Being born all over again boggles the mind.

Today we hear Nicodemus and Jesus and their secret conversation, at night.

Being born in the Spirit.

Here is the thing that we often get wrong about the birth of the Spirit, it is about the Spirit entering the world, not helping us escape the world.

The Spirit is born in the flesh.

Not that we may escape the world and all its pain and disappointment, but rather that God embraces the world, embraces creation, through human flesh.

The Apostles' Creed. That is what it is about, that birth, that embrace, and that is what we give our hearts to when we say I believe, I give my heart to that embrace.

This is the second reflection of a five part sermon series about the Apostles' Creed.

We begin the second stanza, I believe in Jesus Christ, you can follow along the creed in the Prayer Book on page 96 if you would like.

This stanza is about that Spirit birth into the world, the embrace of the world that is the humanity of Jesus, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

The virgin birth. The true miracle of the virgin birth is not that Jesus was born of a virgin, though that is impressive and miraculous, the truly great miracle is that God would become fully human, not just the appearance, but all the way. That is The Miracle. That is The Gospel. And that is also The Scandal.

And that brings us to the original bad idea, the great heresy at the root of all heresy, the bad idea that the physical world is corrupt and evil and the spiritual world is pure, and we need to escape the clutches of the corrupt material world and be set free into a bodiless pure spiritual existence.

That bad idea even infected how the virgin birth was understood, turning it into an escape from the corruption of sex, so much so that a legend came about that Mary was born of a virgin as well, which is called the Immaculate Conception, all so that Jesus could be free of the nasty stuff of physical and sexual existence.

The Apostles' Creed in its original understanding has no interest in sex,

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Be who we are made to be, who we are called to be, to be who we are becoming. Honoring the distinctiveness and uniqueness of everyone and everything that God has spoken into creation.

Reverence for the holy.

We find evidence of the Spirit of holiness in the Church being holy, in the Church being what it is and nothing else, the body of God inhabiting the world.

And the church is catholic.

Universal. Now let's talk about that.

It has nothing to do with big C or little c, it has nothing to do with being Roman Catholic or Anglo Catholic, that's like saying Universal but not really, it's oxymoronic.

For the Church to be catholic means that it is for everyone, the Church belongs to everyone.

I don't really know how to do that, or be that Church that belongs to everyone, but that is my problem that is always stretching me.

When I encounter someone who is truly foreign and strange to me, who weirds me out by being so surprisingly not like me, that is what I call a catholic moment. That strangeness is an encounter with the otherness of God, the strangeness of God, who is not like me.

For the Church to be truly catholic is for that encounter to be a normal everyday thing, it is about much more than the latest version of diversity, and inclusion, those words are too small. It is about communion with God in the other.

To be catholic is to preserve and shield and cultivate that encounter, a never ending vulnerability and openness to that holy presence. It is evidence. It is a clue that leads us closer to God.

And to live in that holy space, is to become part of the communion of saints.

It is a beautiful, awesome and comforting and challenging thing, to give our hearts to the communion of saints.

A table with the living and the dead through the body of Jesus, we never really lose each other, the communion is stronger than death, because the body of Jesus destroyed death.

You know that movie where that boy says, "I see dead people"? We break bread with the dead. In the Eucharist the living and the dead kneel

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The question then quickly becomes, what am I choosing not to see? 7

Elizabeth Barrett Browning has a famous quote, from *Aurora Leigh*, "Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God, But only he who sees, takes off his shoes / The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries".

So often we walk on holy ground, and simply miss out on the whole thing.

But to be honest, I am a big fan of both: being bare foot and plucking blackberries.

But the wonder of the moment quickly passes unobserved, I am distracted.

The Holy Spirit. Life itself touching the world, everywhere, all time. I believe. I give my heart to the Holy Spirit. I wonder if I saw that presence all the time, if I would blow out all the sensory receptors in my brain, a glory overload.

Sometimes just plucking blackberries is all I can handle.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints.

We consider that section of the Apostles' Creed today, the fourth part of a five part Lenten reflection.

This is the beginning of the third part of the Creed, the section on the Holy Spirit. The first two sections told the story of God Father and Son, creating, being born, dying, rising, ascending, returning as judge.

The Holy Spirit is different, we finish the history of creation and redemption, and we put on our detective hats and break out our magnifying glass as we look for the Holy Spirit in the world, we look for evidence. The Creed shows us a trail of clues, where the Holy Spirit is present in a glory overload.

Holy is a powerful word whose meaning we brush past too quickly. It means set apart, different, unique, other. To be holy is to be what it is and nothing else, like nothing else. It is the language of distinctiveness, differentiation, honoring the difference.

The Spirit that is Holy, that is what it is and nothing else.

God is holy, unashamedly, unabashedly, God and nothing and no one else.

And that commandment for us to be holy as God is holy? It means to be who you are. Don't be anybody else.

or the disdain of the world that the heretics were trapped in. In fact the Creed is about the exact opposite. It is about the miracle of humanity and God becoming one, the full communion, without restraint, hesitation, qualification, or excuse.

The embrace.

The embrace includes embracing all the suffering of the world, from all of history, embracing our death and our deadliness and all our bad ideas that trap us and that we can't escape.

He embraces that death, and descends into death, into hell, into hades, all that is the power of death and all those enslaved by its power to break the chains.

The harrowing of hell is what the early believers called it. The ancient images of the church have Jesus breaking down the gates of death and hell with the cross, breaking it down from the inside out, lifting up humanity by the hand, and leading them out in the great exodus, the great prison break, leading forth the captives. That image is also called the resurrection.

But that is for next week.

For now when people ask me if I believe in hell, I say I do, and that it is empty.

To be continued next week, same grace time, same grace channel.

Lent 3a 2026; 8 March; Jack Hardaway

Ex.17:1-7; Ps. 95; Rom. 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

I Give My Heart: The Apostles' Creed part 3

THIRST

We are thirsty people.

Without water we don't last long.

Water is life.

Then there are floods, too much water, a destructive power that is unstoppable.

As an engineer once said, "Water always wins."

Water has been a major story for our church for almost fifty years, bringing water to the village of Cange in Haiti. I was in middle school when Bishop Beckham first addressed the diocese about bringing water

to Cange, then schools and a hospital. I remember it. A VHS tape 5
was sent to every congregation to watch.

Stories about water.

Bringing water to the dry places. Moses striking the rock and water
flowed in the dessert.

Psalm 95 sings of that water, of the rock of our salvation.

Even Romans writes of God's love being poured into our hearts.

And then there is Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, speaking
of fresh water, living water gushing up to eternal life from within us,
never to thirst again.

John's Gospel has these stories of personal encounters with Jesus, of
meeting Jesus, and the conversation having so many layers of meaning.

Give me this water.

Some of Jesus last words before his death in John's gospel are, "I thirst."

We are thirsty people.

We long for God.

God longs for us.

The Apostles' Creed bears witness to this water that is life, that we be-
lieve in, that we give our hearts to, that we thirst for.

This sermon is the third reflection in a sermon series about the Apostles'
Creed, found on page 96 of the Prayer Book if you want to follow along.
The series is called "I give my heart" which is what "I believe" means,
Credo, I give my heart.

Today we look briefly at the end of the second section, "On the third day
he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand
of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead."

We thirst for the water of the resurrection.

Resurrection is life.

When Jesus rises from the dead he carries humanity into communion
with the Father of creation.

We rise with him. We are carried with him. Humanity rises and is
brought into the heart of God to share in that divine love song of shar-
ing, of communion.

The great scandal of Jesus being the communion of humanity and the
divine becomes even more scandalous when we rise with him into that
life.

A physical resurrection, that embraces humanity and creation rather 6
than casting it aside as the heretics would have us believe in their dis-
dain for material existence.

The early Christians even believed that creation itself came about be-
cause God longed to become human. To be in the Spirit is to be in the
world, not to escape.

And judgement.

Jesus will be our judge.

And it is a judgement that we long for, that we thirst for, that we give
our hearts to.

So often we are told to think of God's judgement as punitive, especially
for some people, you know those people.

When the great hope is about so more than having a pleasant afterlife, or
some people not making the cut.

The great hope is the restoration and completion of creation, of history,
of all relationships, of our drought stricken humanity.

Water for a dry world, from the rock of our salvation, the rock of ages
clef for me.

Cool water on dry parched lips.

That is the judgment that Jesus brings.

Water.

Bringing water to the world, more than one kind of water, that is what it
means to believe.

Be that water.

Next week we venture into the mysteries of the Holy Spirit and finding
evidence of that life giving ghost in the stuff of life.

We find the Holy Spirit in the church being catholic, and in the saints
being in the communion that is stronger than death.

Tune in next week.

Same Grace time. Same Grace channel.

Lent 4a 2026; 15 march

John 9:1-41; Jack Hardaway

I Give My Heart: The Apostles' Creed part 4

CRAMMED WITH HEAVEN

So the story of the blind man, it turns out he wasn't the one who was
blind.