

# JESUS IS GOD

In 1977, Oscar Romero became the Archbishop of El Salvador, a country in Central America. Like so many countries in Central and South America, El Salvador's government has been supportive of the very rich while the majority of the people remain very poor.

The church in El Salvador is very influential in people's lives. When Romero was appointed Archbishop, the rich and powerful people were pleased, because Romero was a quiet man who probably wouldn't be a threat to the wealthy.

But then something happened. Romero began to be concerned for the poor in his country. He was disturbed that hundreds of civilians were murdered because of their suspected opposition to the government. As priests and nuns were added to those tortured and murdered, the quiet Romero became bold.

Romero became obedient to God's call to serve the poor and the powerless. Romero spoke out fearlessly against his government. He even wrote to then President Carter asking the United States to stop sending hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid to the El Salvadoran government.

On March 24, 1980, Oscar Romero became obedient unto death. He was gunned down while celebrating Mass.

"El Salvador" is Spanish for "The Savior." Oscar Romero's assassination is observed every year the world over as a testimony to one who, like the Savior, became obedient unto death.

## 3 STATEMENTS

- We believe that Jesus is God.
- God loves us so much that God stoops down to serve us and to die for us!
- When Jesus gave his life for us, Jesus was also giving his life as an example for us.

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*Source*

## OUR GOD THE REDEEMER

Jesus is *your* Savior. In fact the name *Jesus* means "the one who saves." And Jesus died for you!

It may be hard sometimes to understand what that death almost 2000 years ago has to do with you. You hear words like "Jesus died for you," and "God loves you," but what do they really mean? What does it all have to do with you?



MRS. KEVIN SCHEIBEL

*We believe  
Jesus is God.*

Start by looking at who Jesus is. Jesus was born around 4 B.C. He was a Jew, the son of a carpenter, who spent the last years of his life preaching to people and healing the sick. Around A.D. 29 Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

For non-Christians, that's the end of the story. Some people say that Jesus was merely a great human being—a prophet who spoke the Word of God to his generation. Some people think that Jesus was godlike—more than just human, but not really God. These people feel that Jesus was like a junior God—second-in-command.

But Christians believe that Jesus is human *and* Jesus is God. There's a mystery for you! While recognizing that Jesus is human, we believe that Jesus is God.

Jesus showed his humanity the most when he died on the cross. Jesus showed his God-ness or divinity the most when his story did not end with his death.

For Christians, the death of Jesus is just the beginning of the story. Our God Jesus rose again to live forever. Our God Jesus defeated death and now offers us life! *We believe that Jesus is God.*

In the beginning, all God's creation was good and humans were created in the image of God. In the Garden of Eden, people had the ability to care, to love, and to respond to God. They lived in close relationship with their creator.

However, evil entered the world. Now the world suffers under sin, death, and evil. We were born sinful.

"But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We were slaves to death and sin, and Jesus redeemed us—bought us back—"not with silver or gold, but with his holy and precious blood and his innocent suffering and death" (explanation to the Second Article). Jesus is our God, the Redeemer.

But if Jesus is God, why did he want to die? Couldn't God have just killed death with a lightning bolt or something? And you may still be asking, "What does all this have to do with me?"

## OUR GOD, THE SERVANT

A family took a vacation and stayed at a cottage on a small lake. There were lots of fun things to do. There was only one rule: no one was to try to swim across the lake.

One day the son decided that he would swim across the lake anyway. Halfway across, the boy's arms became exhausted and he began to go down. He struggled and screamed.

Hearing the screams, the father dove into the water without hesitation

to save his son. It did not go well, and it occurred to him that they might die together. But he struggled on. And finally they reached the shore.

"You could have died out there trying to save me, dad. Why did you do it? I don't deserve to live. I disobeyed you!" and he began to cry.

"Son, I gave you life in the first place. Of course I would give my life for you. I love you with all my heart." Can you imagine how the son felt then? The ultimate expression of love is to risk your life for someone else.

Now imagine the father had *died* saving the son, and you have a picture of what God has done for us. We have disobeyed the one who has given us life. When we were drowning in our sins, God jumped in with us. And Jesus died saving us.

The death of Jesus was God's way of showing us how much God loves us! The resurrection shows God's power to enter death and break its hold by rising again from the dead. Not even death can separate us from the love of God. We can really live our lives without fear.

God could have redeemed us in any way God chose. God is, after all, God, and can do anything. But God chose this gripping, compassionate way to free us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. God chose this way to tell you, "I love you."

The Jews had been waiting a long time for a special person who would be anointed by God to save them. This anointed one is called *Messtah* in Hebrew and *Christ* in Greek. Jesus is that long-awaited Messiah. Jesus is the Christ.

But when Jesus the Christ came, Jesus was not what they had expected. The Jews had expected a leader, a power man, a military hero. What they got was a servant. Jesus came, washing feet. Jesus came, healing and feeding.

Think of it! *God loves us so much that God stoops down to serve us and to die for us!*

## UNDERSTANDING THE SECOND ARTICLE

The following questions will help you understand more about the words in the Second Article of the Creed (page 174). You may use a dictionary to help answer some of these questions.

1. What does the name *Jesus* mean?

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The name *Christ*?

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2. What does *descend* mean?

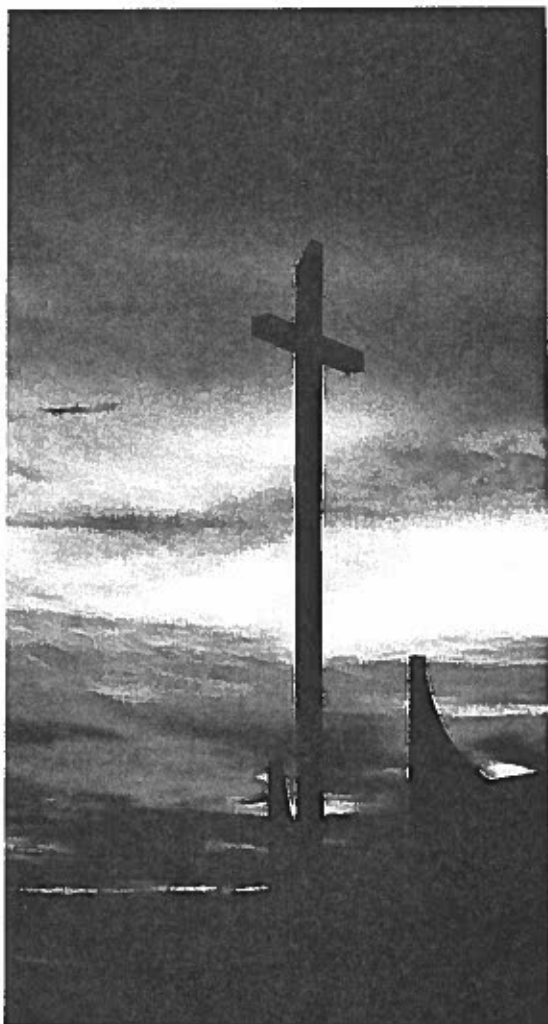
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*Ascend*?

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3. The Creed says that Jesus is "seated at the right hand of the Father." What do you think that says about Jesus?

*God loves us so much that God stoops down to serve us and to die for us!*



TONY LA GRUTH

Read the explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed on page 174. The following questions will help you understand more about Luther's explanation.

4. What is it that God has done for you?

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5. Why does God do this for you?

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6. We do not deserve everything God does for us, but we can respond. List some ways you can respond to God's love and mercy.

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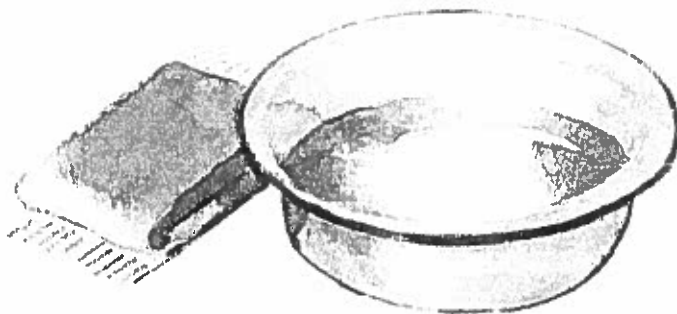
### I THINK

Imagine that a queen from another country comes to your town. While she is in town, she comes to visit your house. Just when you are getting over the shock of her visit, she kneels down and asks to wash your feet.

In the same way, Jesus, the ruler of the universe, has chosen to visit us. While he was here, he washed his disciples' feet. Jesus became a servant in order to show us how much God loves us. And on the cross, Jesus showed he loved us to the end.

How would you feel if a queen or the leader of your country served you in such a personal way?

How do you feel, knowing that the ruler of the universe wishes to serve you and was willing to pay the highest price for you?



## Shaping life

### PICK UP YOUR CROSS

Harriet Tubman was born a slave in Maryland in the early 1800s. Early in her life she found out how cruel her white slave owners could be to their slaves.

When she was 15, she saw another slave trying to escape. When the overseer started to chase the runaway, Harriet got in the way on purpose. The overseer hit Harriet on the head with a two-pound iron weight. Harriet suffered for the rest of her life with seizures because of the blow. The wound left her with a dent in her head, and a deep desire to be free.

In 1849 Harriet escaped with her two brothers. She then worked fearlessly to help other slaves escape. Her efforts earned her the nickname Moses and the praise of freedom lovers. But her life was continually in danger and a reward was issued for her capture.

Though her life was always in danger, she kept on with her work. After the Civil War she lived in Auburn, New York where she continued to work for full freedom for blacks in the United States.

She died at the age of 93, a well-respected woman who was willing to risk her life to serve others.

## A SERVANT OPPORTUNITY

When Jesus gave his life for us, Jesus was also giving his life as an example for us. Jesus is not only our redeemer and servant, but also the best example of how we can live. Jesus said he expected disciples to be servants of all. That means God is calling you to be a servant too.

Remember that God wants to have a personal, loving relationship with you. But it is not a private one. Faith created a family; we are sisters and brothers of one another. We can't just sit in the church pew feeling joyful that God loves us. We are sent out to share this good news and to help one another through the struggles of life. Being a Christian is a very public matter.

And how far does God want you to go with this servant business? Anyone who wants to be a follower of Jesus should pick up a cross and follow Jesus' path.

Oscar Romero died a servant. Harriet Tubman escaped death and served fearlessly in spite of the danger. You probably won't have to die while serving others. But there are many ways you can serve others right now that may make you carry a "little cross."

Pretend there's a student in your school who gets picked on. You may choose to be kind to that person. That's serving. And some other students may be mean to you because you were nice to him or her. That's a cross to carry.

Or pretend your parent needs help at home and you agree to help. That's serving. But you have to give up some of your free time to do it. That's a cross.

Maybe your friend is really depressed. You could tell your friend about the love Jesus has for him or her. Your friend, or others who hear you, may think you're weird for talking about Jesus. That's a cross, too.

Or maybe you want to share some of your money with your local food shelf for needy people. That's serving. But you have to give up pizza or a movie to do it. That's a cross.

If you are a Christian then your life, in one way or another, will take on the shape of the cross. You will take on



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the same loving, serving style that Jesus had. You will be a servant.

Look up the following Bible verses, and shade in the boxes of the ones that talk about serving others.

John 1:1	Philippians 2:3-4	Mark 15:39
John 13:5	Philippians 2:5-8	Mark 10:43-44
John 20:26-28	Matthew 16:24-25	Mark 8:27-29
Matthew 28:19	John 15:12-23	1 John 5:20

## FURTHER

# opportunities

### Bible Reading

Philippians 2:3-11 was an early Christian hymn. The words beautifully describe how Jesus emptied himself of his equality with God in order to become a servant. Read Philippians 2:3-11 and put it into your own words. Write down any ideas you have about how God serves you. Write down any ideas you have about how you might serve God and others.

### Memory

Memorize Luther's explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed. As an additional challenge memorize one or more of the following: John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 10:43-45; Matthew 16:24-25; John 15:12-13.

### Activity 1

Make a servant chart for yourself for a month. Under each day write, "Today I served (*my parents, etc.*) by (*doing the dishes, etc.*).” At the end of the month, thank God for helping you be a servant.

### Activity 2

Do some reading to find out more about Oscar Romero or Harriet Tubman. Make some brief report that you can photocopy or share in some way with the rest of the class.

### Activity 3

Talk to your pastor or a local priest and find out where and when the next annual worship service will be held in memory of Oscar Romero. (It will probably be sometime around March 24.)

## FOCUS

### ON "HE DESCENDED INTO HELL"

No one is really sure why this phrase ended up in the Apostles' Creed. But if you look at the Bible, you can come up with some ideas.

Sometimes when the Bible uses the English word *hell* it just means a place for the dead. This is another way of showing that Jesus was human and really died. You may have noticed that *Lutheran Book of Worship* (p. 65) suggests that instead, we could say "He descended to the dead."

Other times when the Bible uses the English word *hell* it means the place where the evil are punished. If this is where Jesus went after his death, it does *not* mean that Jesus suffered punishment.

Rather, it means that Jesus "made a proclamation to the spirits in prison" there, to tell them the good news of his victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil (1 Peter 3:19-20; 4:5-6).

Some people think that in addition to announcing his victory, Jesus liberated those "imprisoned" believers who died before Jesus came in the flesh to save them.