



March 22, 2017
The Apostles' Creed 3.3

[Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58](#)

“Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all my sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.” (Luther’s meaning to the Apostles’ Creed, *Small Catechism*)

The church, for Luther, is the community of those made holy by the gift of faith in Jesus. The heart of that community is a life of forgiving and being forgiven. I have written elsewhere that being forgiven is the task of a lifetime. It is also God’s profound gift that makes it possible for the sinner to repent and become a conduit of God’s forgiving love for others. Forgiving and being forgiven are concrete tokens of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. (from *Forgiveness: The Road Home*, see <http://www.blurb.com/b/1460298-forgiveness-the-road-home?ebook=337759> to purchase an e-book copy).

It is no accident, therefore, that forgiveness and resurrection of the body appear in connected fashion in the great Christian creeds. Forgiveness is the Resurrection enacted in the midst of this life. Resurrection is the final result of that forgiveness in the new life. In either case, it is the Holy Spirit who does this creative and life-giving work.

In his book, *Surprised by Hope*, N. T. Wright puts it this way.

The Spirit who brooded over the waters of chaos, the Spirit who indwelt Jesus so richly that it became known as the Spirit of Jesus: this Spirit, already present within Jesus’ followers as the firstfruits, the down payment, the guarantee of what is to come, is not only the beginning of the future life, even in the present time, but also the energizing power through which the final transformation will take place. (page 163).

There is, however, no escapism in this part of the Creed. This is no pie in the sky in the sweet by and by. Instead, because we are forgiven and free, we can live as fully formed human beings God created us to be. Paul concludes his great resurrection chapter in 1 Corinthians 15 with precisely those marching orders: “*Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*”

You are forgiven. You have the gift of eternal life by faith in Jesus both now and forever. Don’t worry about that. Instead, get to work, because we know that our work is part of God’s eternal life project both now and forever.

Let’s pray. Dear God, send your Holy Spirit into my heart today to create the gift of faith. Fill me with fear, love and trust in You above all things. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

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Do something: Participate in the Sunday adult class at Emanuel Lutheran Church, beginning March 26. The focus on the class will be the Christian understanding of the Resurrection.

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