



March 20, 2017
The Apostles' Creed 3.1

[Read Mark 9:14-29](#)

“I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith...” (Luther’s meaning to the Apostles’ Creed, *Small Catechism*)

We have arrived at the center of the Catechisms—the work of the Holy Spirit to create the gift of faith. Go back twenty days and recall the First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods.” Now recall the meaning Luther gives to that commandment in the *Small Catechism*: “We are to fear, love and trust God above all things.” A few moments of sober reflection tells us that we are already lost. We cannot do it on our own.

People of my generation will soon celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the film, *The Princess Bride*. One of the many memorable characters in that film is Vizzini, the scholar and philosopher. He is reason and logic (and arrogance) personified. His favorite exasperated expression is “Inconceivable!” The word erupts from his lips any time his plans and projections fail. After one such notable failure, Inigo Montoya observes, “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

So it is for us. We use the word “believe,” but I do not think it means what we think it means. We think it means we intellectually accept something as true. We think it means we are not certain about something so we embrace it all the more firmly. We think it means we are in charge of our relationship with God—that we decide whether to be in that relationship or not based on our own understanding and strength. We think it means we can keep the First Commandment on our own.

We cannot. Luther makes the confession for all of us. Then comes the Gospel reversal—“but instead...” The Holy Spirit calls us through the Good News of Jesus and creates in us the gift of trust that makes real life with Jesus possible. “Inconceivable!” we cry in...disbelief. That can’t be right! How can we get credit for believing if it’s a gift from God?

There it is. We receive the “inconceivable” gift of faith that enlightens us with the Spirit’s gracious gifts, makes us wholly holy, and sustains us in trust when our hearts get cold. When our reason and strength desert us, the gift of faith is there to fill us with hope and love. Lord, we believe! Help us in our unbelief with the gift of faith!

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.

Do something: Spend ten minutes today quietly resting in the gift of faith that the Holy Spirit gives you. That’s enough “doing” for today.

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