

## I believe in Jesus Christ

I wonder what your favourite story is about Jesus? Perhaps the time he changed water into wine? Or stilled a storm? The raising of Lazarus? The tender way he dealt with those who were broken? Or when he knelt and washed the feet of the disciples?

And what's your favourite saying of Jesus? Perhaps a parable: the good Samaritan, the lost sheep, the treasure buried in the field. Perhaps it's when Jesus teaches us the Lord's Prayer or his conversations with Martha or Zaccheus. It might be the Sermon on the Mount, or perhaps when Jesus invites all who are weary to come to him and find rest.

How you might introduce Jesus to a friend? Would it be like John the Baptist: 'Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.' Or Philip: 'We've found the one of whom the Moses and the prophets wrote.' Or the woman at the well: 'Come and see a man who told me everything I've ever done.' Or just like the man whose eyes were healed: 'Once I was blind and now I see.'

Welcome to the second in this short series of films. I'm Steven, the Bishop of Oxford. I first learned about Jesus as a child. I became a friend and follower of Jesus in my mid-teens. I've tried to follow Jesus ever since, and that following has shaped and changed my whole life.

We're looking together at the great story of our faith in the creed. We began by placing our trust in God as Father, the maker of heaven and earth. When all around us is in chaos, it's time to come back to our Father, who loves us, to recover our sense of identity and purpose and meaning. But what then is the next step on our journey?

The next step is to say: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

Who is Jesus?

Jesus of Nazareth is a real person in history. His life is described in the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, ancient texts based on eyewitness accounts. The gospel writers each tell their story in a different way.

If you've never read a gospel through from beginning to end, then choose one and come and meet Jesus afresh. The gospels are not like a conventional biography, giving equal weight to every part of a person's life. Apart from the stories of Jesus' birth, the gospels focus on just a few years of Jesus ministry. Then they focus powerfully on the journey to the cross. Unlike any other biography ever, they tell us that Jesus rose from death on the third day. This is a life which continues beyond death.

The gospels are written not just to tell us about Jesus, but to invite us, each of us, to follow Jesus ourselves. This is how John describes his gospel, the last to be written:

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that through believing you may have life in his name” (John 20.30-31).

God prepared the way for Jesus over many generations. God calls first a family and then a tribe and then a nation. That beautiful story of God’s call is told in books of the Bible which Christians name the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, we read that God will send an anointed king, the Messiah, his own Son, to be the saviour of the world and to bring in God’s kingdom: that God will come and be with us and live among his people. The creator has come into the creation: the word of God takes flesh.

From beginning to end, the four gospels unfold for us the beautiful and powerful truth that Jesus is the fulfilment of all the Scriptures, fully God and fully human, dwelling with us. Jesus is a powerful teacher: he crafts some of the best stories the world has ever known. But Jesus is far more than a teacher. He demonstrates the humility and gentleness and love of God in his meetings with the sick and the bereaved and the vulnerable. His character has absolute integrity: the best of what it means to live a human life to the full.

The gospels show the power of God, of life itself, breaking through in the life of Jesus Christ through his miracles of healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the hungry. From the very beginning, Jesus calls disciples to follow him and to continue his life and ministry. His disciples are not called only to pass on his teaching but to invite others to come to Jesus and pattern their lives upon him. Those disciples start a chain reaction which continues to this day and transforms the life of the world in every generation.

In normal times, it’s my enormous privilege to baptise and confirm people who are taking a new step in following Jesus. We gather often around an ancient font, sometimes around a pool, deep enough for the candidates to be washed from head to foot.

The whole congregation falls silent as I ask the candidates three solemn questions:  
Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?  
Do you submit to Christ as Lord?  
Do you come to Christ, the Way, the truth and the life?

Then I invite the whole congregation to join with the candidates in placing their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father?  
Do you believe and trust in his Son, Jesus Christ?  
Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?

The whole church declares:

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary.

To explore the Christian faith is to discover Jesus. To come back to faith is to rediscover Jesus. Read the gospels. Talk with those who are walking with you. Ask them what Jesus means to them. And hear his gentle, life-changing question: who do you say that I am? And hear his wonderful, warm, beautiful life invitation: come and follow me.