

“The Apostles’ Creed”

Why do we do that? part 3

Luke 6:12-16, 9:1-6

[58] Good morning. My name is Pastor Eric, and it is an honor and privilege to be with you as we worship God together.

Turn to your neighbor and tell them, “You are a miracle of God.” Each and every one of us was created by God to love him and to serve him. Some of us know that already, but maybe you are hearing this for the first time. My hope is that today, you will hear how to fully claim the miraculous life that God has given you. I pray that together, we will discover our purpose.

I invite you to stretch out your hands, palms open, before God right now, as a symbol of readiness to receive what God has for us today. Please join me in prayer.

Holy, awesome, mighty God, Creator of heaven, earth, and us, look down on your people and grant us a new glimpse of your perfect plan this morning. Help to see we are all messengers of your love and grace, so that we can make new disciples of Jesus Christ who will transform the world. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our salvation. Amen.

[59] The last two weeks we have journeyed through a message series called “Why Do We Do That?” Sometimes we forget just how much insider language we use in Sunday morning worship. We frequently repeat prayers, creeds and sacraments, seldomly asking, “So, what does this mean? Could someone take just a moment and explain to me these church traditions?”

So far, we’ve covered Communion and the Lord’s Prayer. Today we look at the traditional Apostles’ Creed. This was hard for me to memorize in Confirmation, but I did eventually get it. Still, there were certain phrases I didn’t understand back then, and maybe you don’t, either. Let’s look at the entire text. It goes like this: [60-62]

The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again
to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic** church, (**universal)
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

While I won’t cover this creed word-for-word today, I do want to start with the most obvious question: What is an apostle?

[63] Has your mom or dad or spouse ever sent you to the store for groceries? Or to pick up a pizza for dinner? Well, in a sense, you were an apostle. An apostle is simply one who is sent. It’s a combination of a messenger and a servant. An apostle is given a task to perform as the representative of the one who sent them.

We read in Luke 6 that Jesus spent all night praying, then chose 12 apostles from among the many people who were following him. Then, in Luke 9, Jesus sent the Twelve out. They did some pretty cool stuff! They told the good news that the kingdom of heaven had come. They healed. They prayed. They performed miracles and exorcised demons. All because they were the chosen agents of Jesus.

[64] It makes sense, when you think about it, that Jesus chose to send these twelve into the world. After all, who is Jesus, but the supreme apostle? Hebrews 3:1 says, “Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.” Jesus was sent by God to bring the salvation to the world. So he chose others to continue his ministry and spread the good news.

[65] Tradition says that this creed was written by those Twelve. That may or may not be true, but it leads us to another question: if the Twelve were the original apostles, then why are we still saying their creed? The answer is quite simple: we are all apostles of Christ. We all represent Jesus. We all proclaim the good news, or we should. We pray. We heal. We can be God’s agents to bring miraculous transformation and love to this world. This is our purpose. And we say this creed to remind ourselves what we believe.

[66] The first two words of the creed are “I believe.” What does it mean to truly believe? I can say, “I believe the sky is blue. I believe chocolate is better than vanilla.” But that’s not what we’re saying here. We are talking about a fundamental trust in something. I once took my family to the Mystery Spot in St. Ignace, a building with a sloped floor and some pretty cool optical illusions. In one place, the tour guide asked us if we believed that we could sit on a chair leaning up against the wall while only supported by two legs. It was one thing to say, “Yes.” It was another thing to sit in the chair myself.

[67] Apostles doesn’t just believe in God; they depend on God. What about you?

You might be thinking, “I’m not perfect. God couldn’t possibly want me as an apostle!” The twelve apostles believed in Jesus, but they were not perfect. At one point, they wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a whole town. These men fought with each other about who was the best. They all ran away when Jesus was arrested. They weren’t perfect. The apostles were ordinary people; most of them were fishermen. Jesus uses ordinary people to do the extraordinary, not because they are qualified, but because they are willing. Because they believe. Don’t worry about perfection; just believe.

This creed is as much a part of our mission as theirs. Jesus sends us. This is our apostle’s creed, too. So let’s look specifically at some of the language in it.

[68] The first statement in the creed is, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and of earth.” Remember, life is not about you. It’s about God. God made you. And if God made you, then there is a purpose for your life. God Almighty calls you to be an apostle. That’s powerful.

[69] The second part of the creed tells the story of salvation through Jesus. This is Christmas and Easter in a nutshell. This creed states what every bible-believing Christian should know: Christ, fully God and fully human, was born, lived, suffered, died, and was buried. Jesus truly died for us. His death wasn’t faked. It was real.

Ponder that for a moment. In this creed, we essentially proclaim, “God died.” The Messiah, the Savior, died. This belief is the one thing that makes Christianity unique from any other faith in the world. No one in any other religion

would make such a foolish claim. Our God loves us enough to die for us. That is the bold truth of our faith, and we profess it.

[70] The story in the creed goes on, that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. The apostles witnessed this miracle (Acts 1). Jesus's final destination was the right hand of God Almighty. From there "He will come again to judge the living and the dead." In some versions, it reads "the quick and the dead." Sounds like the old western movie. This is not about Jesus coming back with a stopwatch to time your 40-yard sprint. We believe that Jesus is the only perfectly qualified judge, the only one who truly knows what's in your heart. If you love Jesus, you are alive. You are forgiven. You have abundant life (John 10:10). If you do not believe in Jesus Christ, if you do not depend on him, you may think you are living in this world, but you are not truly alive, spiritually.

[71] The next few lines in the creed have a wealth of information, but I just want to consider two more things. First, "the holy catholic church." This is the most frequently misunderstood part of the creed. We are not saying, "We believe in Father John and St. Ignatius of Houghton and the Pope." What we do believe is there is one Church (with a capital "C") under Christ. "Catholic" is this creed means "universal". No matter what the label, if a church professes this faith (and this creed), they are one church with us. We are all united in Christ, even if we speak different languages of worship. We are all on the same team.

[72] Finally, there is this line, "The forgiveness of sins." The apostles were sent to spread the good news of the kingdom of heaven. Do you know what that good news is? You can be forgiven. Personally, I'm flabbergasted that such an important doctrine gets one small line in the creed, three simple words. We believe in forgiveness. We said it last week, as part of the Lord's Prayer, that the confession of our sins to God and to one another is a crucial part of our faith. This creed completes that thought. Through what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross, we are forgiven, every time we ask. As apostles, we proclaim the good news of forgiveness to others, and we forgive each other. No true apostle can ever hold a grudge. No honest apostle can ever say, "I'll never forgive you." No messenger of the Author of Love will ever say, "I hate you." It simple cannot be done if you believe this creed.

[73] There is so much more here, too much for one Sunday. The resurrection, life everlasting – we'll talk about them some other time. But if I can sum the Apostles' Creed up in one point, it is this: if you believe these things, you are an apostle of Christ. You have a mission. You are being sent. When you walk out of this building, you are entering the mission field. Christ needs every one of us.

"I believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit." It's all about God. It's not about you. The apostles weren't in this to make money. They weren't in it for fame or comfort. They were in it to make other disciples of Jesus Christ. And they transformed the world.

Did you want to be an apostle? Do you know the good news? Then go tell your story. Go tell God's story. Ask God, "Where are you sending me?" Each one of us must look around and ask, "What am I doing so that others will believe the good news?" That's why we have this creed.

Believe in Christ like your life depends on it. Let's read this creed together. And let's say it like we mean it.

[74-76] (Read the Creed.)

(Prayers, Mission Moment for Michelle, OCC. Mention jelly drive and Make a Difference Day. Move to the organ)

Memory Verse

John 1:14 - "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Reflection questions

1. When have you wanted to ask "Why do we do that?" in church? Did you feel like someone was ready to listen to you?
2. Who has been an "apostle" (messenger) of the gospel in your life?
3. Does the Apostles' Creed accurately describe your faith? What parts would you omit or add to make it your own?
4. What parts of the Creed are the most difficult for you?
5. In what ways does your life communicate the truths of the Creed to others?