

First Lutheran Church of Venice
Foundations Class – Fall 2013
Session 3 – The Story That Shapes Us: The Apostles’ Creed I

CREED

1. What is a “creed”?
 - a. Comes from the Latin word “credo,” which means “I believe”
 - b. A creed might be defined as a short *summary* of the Christian story (found in Scripture) that shapes our beliefs, our identity, our values, and our way of life
 - c. It is a *public* statement of the object of our faith and trust
 - d. There are several examples of creeds in the Bible, e.g., Deut. 6:4, Mt. 16:13-16, 1 Cor. 8:6, 1 Cor. 15:3-7, Phil. 2:5-11, Col. 1:15-20, 2 Tim. 2:11-13
 - e. Creeds can be as simple as “Jesus is LORD” (Rom. 10:9)

2. The Big Three
 - a. The three “historic” creeds that summarize what Christians believe about God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – are
 - i. The Apostles’ Creed (2nd – 5th century) – the Western baptismal Creed, with origins in the writings of the earliest church fathers
 - ii. The Nicene Creed (AD 325/381) – the Eastern defense of the divinity of Jesus Christ
 - iii. The Athanasian Creed (5th century) – the Western defense of the Trinity
 - b. They are “ecumenical” or “catholic” because they teach what is confessed by Christians throughout the world and through history. They are not the peculiar teachings of any denomination or church body.
 - c. What are the advantages of confessing one of these historic Creeds each week in worship?

3. Connection to the Commandments
 - a. The First Commandment teaches... “Fear, love and trust in God above all things.” The Creed now teaches us who this God is, and what He has done and does for us.

4. Our Trinitarian faith: 1 + 1 + 1 = 1
 - a. The three *articles* of the Creed correspond to the three Persons of the Trinity
 - b. This three-in-one and one-in-three stuff is mind-boggling. We don’t believe it because it is logical. We believe it because it has been revealed to us in Scripture.
 - c. Trinity – term first used by Tertullian as a shortcut to describe this Scriptural teaching
 - i. God is One Divine Essence – Deut. 6:4, 1 Cor. 8:4, Jn 10:30
 - ii. God is Three Distinct Persons – Ps. 2:7, Jn 10:30, 15:26, Mt. 3:16-17, Gal. 4:6, Mt. 28:19-20, 2 Cor 13:14

Apostles' Creed: The First Article

5. The First Article – Emphasis on God as “Maker of Heaven and Earth,” as CREATOR
 - a. Biblically, God as *Creator* is central to His “job description”
 - i. Gen. 1-2
 - ii. Psalms 121, 134, 136, 146
 - iii. Isaiah 40-46 (e.g., Is. 40:18-23)
 - iv. 1 Corinthians 8:5-6
 - b. “The conviction that God is the Creator provides the basis for the *radical character of the biblical and creedal view of the world.*” (Arand, 17)
6. An important implication: If God created everything out of nothing, then everything that is not God must be a creature – including us. As one of my professors said repeatedly, “God is God, and we are not.”
 - a. What does it mean for us, and for our relationship to God, that we are *creatures*?
 - i. I am the handiwork of God!
 - ii. I relate to God as a receiver, as one who is completely dependent on God
 - iii. God is the exclusive giver of our lives and all that we need for our lives
7. Read Luther’s explanation to the First Article
 - a. In a universe of more than 40 billion galaxies, why would Luther start his account of creation with *me*? Is this too naïve for us modern, scientific people?

Luther’s explanation

8. *I believe God has made me and all creatures*
 - a. Gen 1-2, Heb. 11:3, Ps. 33:6-9, Ps. 95:7, Ps. 139:14
 - b. Read Gen. 1:31 and Gen. 2:7. Do the truths expressed in these verses have any implication for how we view creation and ourselves?
 - c. In Luther’s original, it says that I am made “together with all creatures.” How does believing in God as the almighty Creator, and our solidarity (in a sense) with other creatures affect our attitude toward creation? (Psalm 8, 148)
9. *That He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.*
 - a. Ps. 139:13, Ps. 36:6, Ps. 104, Ps. 145:15-16, Mt. 5:46, Mt. 6:31-32, Acts 17:27-28, Col. 1:17, 1 Pet. 5:7, Heb. 1:3
 - b. God is not merely a clockwork designer (deism), but actively sustains and preserves His Creation.

- c. God often accomplishes this sustaining work through other creatures – what Luther describes as “masks of God”.

10. *He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil*

- a. Ps. 5:11-12, Ps. 37, 46, 73, Ps. 91:9-10, Mt. 10:29-31

11. *All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.*

- a. Ps. 103:13, Mt. 7:11, Ps. 118:1, Ps. 116:12-14, 1 Tim. 4:4, Col. 3:16-17, Gen. 2:15
- b. As God’s creatures, receiving so many gifts from Him, we are to respond with lives of *gratitude* and *service* as God’s image-bearers and caretakers of His creation

12. How is such a response possible?

Luther:

“...We ought daily to practice this article, impress it upon our minds, and remember it in everything we see and in every blessing that comes our way. Whenever we escape distress and danger, we should recognize how God gives and does all of this so that we may sense and see in them his fatherly heart and his boundless love toward us. Thus our hearts will be warmed and kindled with gratitude to God and a desire to use all these blessings to his glory and praise.”
(*Large Catechism, Creed, 23*)