

Lent Sermon Series: The Apostles' Creed

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

This seven-part sermon series for Sundays in Lent and concluding on Easter reminds us of what we mean when we recite the Apostles' Creed. Especially in the context where we don't recite it very often anymore, it was helpful to think about what we mean when we say that we "believe in God, the Father Almighty"; "Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord"; and "the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." This sermon series was also a teaching tool for a confirmation class.

First Sunday in Lent Mark 12:38-34

Sermon Title: "I believe in God the Father Almighty"

This was also an introduction to the series. The Apostles Creed established and helped us to profess the rule of faith. Our measuring stick sets our Christian belief (orthodoxy) and guiding Christian practice (orthopraxy). We affirm our identity as Christians.

- As we read Scripture it reveals who God is and who God made us to be.
- When we say we "believe" we are saying we "trust in." We trust God with our lives.
- We call God "Father"—not to portray gender, but to specify an intimate relationship.
- When we say "maker of heaven and earth" we affirm that there is more than this world. There is more to come.
- The Creed provides a communal identity—we are part of God's story and purpose. God is the main character.
- We declare our true allegiance to God. In a world that fosters radical individualism and multiple gods to worship, we profess this radical commitment to God.

Second Sunday in Lent John 3:16-19; John 1:1-19

Sermon Title: "Jesus Christ: Fully Divine"

The titles given Jesus are intended to help us recognize Jesus' true identity.

- Jesus Christ: the anointed God, divine, incarnated for our salvation.
- Son of God: Son of God from eternity, Jesus is God, not created.
- Lord: accepting his love and forgiveness and let him be in control of every aspect of our lives,
- If he is Lord, then no one or nothing else can be.

Third Sunday in Lent John 1:10-18 & Philippians 2:1-11

Sermon Title: "Jesus Christ: Fully Human"

At the heart of the creed is that Jesus came for us and for our salvation. As Paul describes in Philippians, "he emptied himself." It is who he is that made him Savior.

Written by the Rev. Dr. Thomas Hoeke '03
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- Jesus came to earth to be what the Temple was supposed to be: the living presence of God on earth.
- We experience salvation as a human experience.
- We did not deserve attention and care.
- God revealed as love as a matter of God's grace.
- We are given a chance for life that depends on faith.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

John 14:15-20, 25-27

Sermon Title: "A Celebration of the Holy Spirit's Presence"

Too often we are on autopilot, just waiting for the tank to be empty, and thus we have a difficult time recognizing God's presence. It is time to fill up and be attentive to the Holy Spirit. When we believe in the Holy Spirit, we say that we believe in God's presence.

- We believe in God's presence and empowerment for us and our ministries.
- We believe in God's catalyst for change—transformation.
- It is a gift from God empowering us to be and do as Jesus taught us.
- So as we live out our discipleship, the Spirit works in and through us.
- Testimonies of how the Spirit has been at work through missions and ministries of the congregation.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Acts 4:32-37; Ephesians 1:15-23

Sermon Title: "The holy catholic church and the communion of saints"

Christ established the church to work together, taking responsibility for God's worldwide family. With diverse backgrounds and cultures, the church needs to work together for one common purpose, to help build the Kingdom of God.

- Holy = set apart; set apart for God's purpose
- Church in Acts was the church of ordinary people, empowered by the Spirit of God to continue Jesus' work throughout the world.
- Church today is holy, set apart for God's purposes through ordinary people. We are his ambassadors on earth.
- What we have in common should be more precious than our differences.
- Our core, the essentials, the gospel of Jesus Christ should hold us together and makes us catholic.
- We are a group of people called out into a community of faith to represent God in the world.
- Saints are those who preceded us and those who journey with us in the present.
- Examples of saints in your life, those who were and are models of faithfulness, perseverance, and love.
- Holy people, not perfect, but those willing to follow Jesus at all costs, willing to live a life in Christ.
- To be in communion with is to be in a deep personal relationship with or one with.

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Palm Sunday Colossians 3:12-17

Sermon Title: "The Forgiveness of Sins"

We believe in God, who made it possible for our journey of life and faith to be lighter by making it possible for us to check our sins at the door. We are forgiven.

- Example of how much easier to travel through airport and security without any baggage.
- "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" compresses our understanding of what Jesus achieved on the cross.
- He saved us from our sins and from ourselves. Christ restores us.
- He gave us direct access to God.
- Forgiveness opens up a new future.
- Paul declares that just as we are forgiven by God we need to forgive each other.

Easter Sunday Luke 24:1-12

Sermon Title: "I believe in the Resurrection"

The most extraordinary transformative event, the Resurrection, says that there is hope. We believe in the Resurrection and what it offers: hope and new life.

- Someone told us about it. We were not there but others were and they told others. The information was passed on. It has stood the test of time. Just like other historical facts.
- Yet there are still doubts.
- Those doubts can help make faith stronger. They lead to questions, further investigation, and deeper reflection.
- Story of Lee Strobel and *The Case for Christ*.
- Empty tomb is a sign of new life that points to hope.
- When we say I believe in the Resurrection, we are saying that there is hope and new life.
- Resurrection gives us hope. That is why we gather on Easter morning.
- Easter changes "It is Finished" to "Now it Begins."