

Apostle's Creed: Jesus, Christ, His only Son, our Lord

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0 : 00] Good morning, Braymar Baptist Church. How are you? So for anyone who may not know me, I think most of you do when I look out now, but my name is Kent Dixon and it is my deep privilege to be your lead pastor here.

A couple of pastory announcements. I'm feeling very strongly that I want people to be baptized. And most of you have been, I know that. But if you're here this morning and you don't know about baptism or you'd like to know more, you'd like to have that conversation, I'm not about having a big formal baptism class.

But if you're interested and you want to have that chat, I'd love to. So let me put that out there. I also want to tell you something else. This is not because I want you to feel bad for me or anything, but we said goodbye to a friend of ours that we had known for 14 years, our beloved dog, Sydney, yesterday.

And so part of my brain is not here. Part of my heart is broken. Part of the emotion that you're hearing in my voice, you're going, ah, Pastor Kent's always weepy. And you're right.

But part of it comes from that place. And so your grace to me this morning, if I lose it, is appreciated. So this morning we're continuing our series on the Apostles' Creed.

[1 : 27] And so one thing I want to do first of all is thank you to the folks that have come to me personally and said, Pastor Kent, I'm struggling. People who have come with very personal experiences they have with the Creed, personal challenges that they've had.

And so I appreciate that. And I want to honor people who have done that. And I'm not saying that people who haven't, lots of people have no issues, and that's great too. But I've had folks confess to me that studying the Creed together in this series has also encouraged them and reminded them of connections to their personal faith journey because they may have learned the words to the Apostles' Creed when they were young and recited it often.

So for them, reflecting on this together has been nostalgic and deeply meaningful. But as I alluded to, others have come to me with concerns or questions over some of the wording of the Creed as they seek to understand it better.

And one thing I want to highlight quickly this morning is, and this has been a concern for a few folks, is that when we declare the Apostles' Creed that we believe in the Holy Catholic Church, do you go, the first time I recited the Apostles' Creed, raised in a Protestant home, I cringed.

I thought, I had to say the C word. Is that okay? Will God be mad at me? But when we declare in the Apostles' Creed that we believe in the Holy Catholic Church, we're not declaring in any way, hear me on this, we are not declaring in any way that we recognize the authority of the Vatican, the authority of the Pope or the papal office, or that our church includes priests or other things that we might associate with the large C Catholic Church.

[3 : 26] Because honestly, if I was up here preaching in a Catholic Church, I would need to be a priest, and I ain't not being married. Sorry. I love my wife, and that wouldn't have worked for me.

But in declaring our belief in the Holy Catholic Church, note that this is a small C. There in the Apostles' Creed, when we declare belief in a Catholic Church, we are declaring belief in a universal church, a worldwide church, a worldwide body of believers who hold the same Christian beliefs.

And yes, that could be people who are Roman Catholic, as well as Baptist, Mennonite Brethren, alliance. And that's okay. Because you know what?

We splintered the original plan God had for His Church. So remember that it's okay for it to be reunified, and for that to be a concept that doesn't cause us to lose sleep.

Because from the time the Creed was written, that, that universal church concept, has been intended behind the word Catholic from the beginning, as it's used there.

[4 : 44] And I had to laugh, because a friend of mine who's also a pastor has been teasing me as we preach this series. He's been telling me, keeps saying periodically, why do you want to preach a series on Rocky?

Rocky. And I said, what? And so if you know the film, there's a movie about a boxer called Rocky. And there's a character in it whose name is Apollo Creed.

And so I said, ha ha, ha ha ha, not fun. So, but anyway, so you can see there's confusion at times. But I want to reflect for a moment on a few things before we continue on our phrase for this morning.

If you claim to be a Christian this morning, there is nothing in this Creed and the declarations that it makes, or at least there should be nothing in it, that you cannot say that you believe.

I also want to remind everyone that the Apostles' Creed is a summary. Just a summary. It's a summary of our core beliefs as Christians.

[5 : 47] It's not intended to be exhaustive, in-depth theological statements. For that, I refer you to the Bible. As theologian Alistair McGrath says, you do not become a Christian by reciting a creed.

Rather, the creed provides a useful summary of the main points of your faith. There are certain items that are not dealt with.

For example, there is no section in the Apostles' Creed that says, I believe in Scripture. I believe in the Bible. Did you notice that? McGrath rightly states that a statement like that is not necessary.

Because the creed is basically a distillation or a summary of the main points of Scripture teaching regarding the Gospel. And our belief in the authority of Scripture through the Apostles' Creed becomes crystal clear based on the other statements that we make in it.

Our belief in Scripture is clear. McGrath also notes that the creed is helpful in allowing us to recognize and avoid incomplete understandings of Christianity.

[7 : 04] Because some believers, you probably know folks, some believers strongly hold to an idea that Christianity is mainly about God the Father.

Mainly. Because that God is God to me. This is me speaking on behalf of someone else. Just to be clear. So God the Father is most important to me.

That's the God whom I most relate to. So that's what it's about. Others may feel strongly that it's primarily about the work of the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit, as we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our body.

So our relationship with the Holy Spirit who lives in us, who empowers us in our lives, who speaks truth in and through us, that's what it's about.

It must be. But the creed reminds us that there is more to it than that. It helps us to better understand the richness and depth not only of what we believe personally and what it's meant for the church for centuries, but also it reminds us of the importance of tradition.

[8 : 19] We sang from hymnals this morning. Some people that resonates with. Other people say, why is the screen not working? So there's tradition that we have.

And let's not be quick to dismiss the value of tradition. Some of us may see something like the Apostles' Creed or other early creeds of the church as so last century.

Oh, let's move on. No. What I'd like to challenge us to do is that as we wrestle with our understanding of the core declarations of the Apostles' Creed, we recognize that they are as true today as when they were first written down.

And they continue to be essential to our faith. So keep your questions coming to me because I won't likely have all the answers for you. I've had conversations where I've said, that's interesting.

I don't know. I'll find out. We'll talk about it more. But I want us to go through this together and recognize that we are reaffirming things that we believe.

[9 : 29] And I also recognize that for many of you, you may be thinking, wow, Pastor Kent, I really didn't need the big disclaimer at the beginning of the sermon. I'm good.

I'm good. I didn't need it. And that's okay too. If you're comfortable with this, that's great. But if you're uncomfortable with it, that's fine too. And let's extend grace to each other as we experience it.

And I want us to remember that each of us are quite likely, the level of comfort with our faith and the truths of our faith varies greatly on where we're at in our journey, where we're at in our relationship with Christ.

And that's okay because it is an ongoing journey. You're never at the end. Discipleship is a continuous sanctification process.

God at work in you. We began our series a few weeks ago with an introduction to the idea of creed. Since then, we've begun to unpack the specific declarations that we find in the Apostles' Creed.

[10 : 33] We've looked at the idea of what it means to believe in one God. Amen? One God who is revealed to us in the Bible. And we've begun to dig into the qualities of God and the work of God that we find stated in the Creed.

Last week, Pastor Ahmad explored what it means to declare God as the maker of creator of heaven and earth. And what it means to be image bearers of that God.

He explored the idea of what it means to be created by him. And to be witnesses to what God has done for us and for all people.

Slide. This morning, we'll be looking at the statement from the Apostles' Creed, Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord. And the implication in that phrase is it continues in with I believe.

So we say, I believe in God the Father Almighty. And this continues, Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord. And I want you to consider the structure of the Creed as being somewhat like an hourglass or an X.

[11 : 47] Because it starts broadly and it comes to Jesus in the center. And it's not surprising that the core of the Creed is Jesus Christ.

The core of the Creed, the most dense content content of the Creed is about Jesus. He's at the center. And it's not a coincidence, at least I hope you don't perceive it to be a coincidence, that Christ is the anchor of this Creed.

Because it's here that we remember that Christianity is not a set of abstract ideas or beliefs. It's about a person. It's about a relationship.

But I think we can agree that the relationship between Jesus and Christianity is very different from other leaders who have been at the forefront of a belief system or a set of ideas.

the relationship between Karl Marx and Marxism, Buddha and Buddhism, Sigmund Freud and Freudianism.

[12 : 55] Why? Why is there a difference? Why is there a difference? Is there a difference? A quiet group.

Because Marx, Buddha, Freud have one thing in common. What do they have in common? Louder.

They are all dead. Thank you. In Jesus, not only do we see his death defeated through his resurrection, but our own death as well.

Through death, his death, and resurrection, we find the very essence of Christianity. A renewed relationship with God that was made possible through Christ alone.

In Christ alone, as the song says, we place our trust. Amen? For he alone can save us from our brokenness and our sinful desire.

[14 : 06] Do you know Christ this morning? Do you know not only believing that he was a real man who lived and died, but also that he is the Son of God?

That's where our Christian journey begins, my friends. As I studied this week, I came to realize something very interesting. In some ways, maybe you can relate, in some ways, I've always considered, probably subconsciously, Jesus Christ to be a full name.

As though Christ was his surname. Have you ever thought of it that way? Whether consciously or subconsciously? And that's, it's not an uncommon way to think about it.

Particularly in a culture where we recognize first and last names. Some cultures, their last name is said as their first name and vice versa. Other cultures don't prioritize names at all.

But we certainly, to continue this idea, we certainly don't consider the Christ family. Joseph Christ, Mary Christ, Jesus Christ. It's not how it works.

[15 : 20] Not even close, right? So it helps us actually to consider the word Christ is a title. A few nods.

We'd be more correct in considering Jesus as Jesus the Christ. Jesus the Christ. Christ or Christos in Greek is actually the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah or Messiah.

Christians recognize the coming of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of Messiah, the Anointed One.

In the familiar account of Jesus' birth in Luke 2, we read that when the angel appeared to the shepherds, he declared to them in verse 11, Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you.

He is the Messiah. Jewish terms. the Lord. Stating we believe in Jesus is central to the Apostles' Creed and absolutely central to our faith.

[16 : 37] In Jesus, we declare the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the incarnation of the Son of God as the man Jesus.

I love the words of Proverbs 30, verse 4 in recognizing this prophecy. It says, Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind?

Who has wrapped the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name? And what, catch this, is the name of his Son?

Surely you will know, Proverbs tells us. We see here a direct connection to both God the Father and God the Son.

And in Jesus, the prophecy is fulfilled. So why was this baby in Bethlehem named Jesus? We read in Matthew 1.21 that while Joseph was secretly considering divorcing Mary, before the baby was born, an angel appeared to him and said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

[18 : 08] She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

Mary and Joseph named their baby Yeshua, Jesus, which means God is Savior. God is Deliverer.

And they did that in obedience to the angel's command because they recognized that that command came from their God. God. So then moving on, what does it mean to refer to Jesus as God's only son?

Wow. There's a lot there, isn't there? One of the first times we see that distinct relationship between the father and the son is in John 1, 9 to 11, when Jesus was baptized.

Where we read, at the time Jesus came from Nazareth and Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove.

[19 : 30] And a voice came from heaven, you are my son whom I love. with you I am well pleased.

And at the time of Jesus transfiguration, we read in Mark 9, verse 7, then a cloud appeared and covered them, Peter, James, John, and Jesus.

And a voice came from the cloud, this is my son whom I love. Listen to him. And also in Mark, Jesus alludes to his relationship with God the Father as he tells the parable of the tenants.

And in speaking of the timing of God's ultimate plan for all creation, in Mark 13, Jesus again identifies himself as being both the son of man and the son of God.

God. Returning to McGrath, Alistair McGrath says, although all believers are sons of God in some sense of the word, Jesus is singled out as the son of God.

[20 : 46] Paul distinguishes between Jesus as the natural son of God and believers as adopted sons or daughters.

Our relationship to God is quite different from Jesus' relationship to him, even though both he and we may be referred to as sons of God.

McGrath goes on to say that the creed statement that Jesus is the son of God amounts to saying that, hear this, Jesus is God.

As Christians, people who believe in a triune God who is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Jesus truly is God.

Without bogging down too much in heavy theological content, it's important that we remember that our God is three distinct persons, and they are not somehow parts of God.

[21 : 47] Some people have used the analogy of a candle, a wax, the wax, a wick, and a flame. You've probably heard some of these.

Or an egg, the shell, the yolk, and the white, to represent the Trinity. But these are flawed analogies. Because consider it, is a flame a candle?

No. Wax? No. A wick? No. A candle is only when those three things are together.

good. So what we're talking about in those analogies, the egg and the candle, is three parts of something making up the whole. Jesus is not part of God.

Jesus is God. The Spirit is not kind of God. He is God. The Father is God alone.

[22 : 43] So do you understand that a little bit? That we're not talking about pieces of God. We're talking about the mystery of the Trinity. Do I get it?

Nope. I have friends who are theologians who have written books on the Trinity. They don't completely get it. They're far closer than I am. But that's one of those things that we can ask when we get to heaven.

Because God will reveal those things to us, pray about it now for a deeper understanding of the Trinity. Because one piece of the Trinity is not somehow less than, not somehow, I think, I'm reading a book right now about the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not, oh yeah, he does stuff once in a while.

The Holy Spirit is very active. The Holy Spirit is as real, as personal, as available to you, as Christ. As available to you as the Father.

And I'll dig into more of that as we go. But the Trinity is largely a mystery to us, but we firmly, through Scripture, are people who declare one God, but also recognize a manifestation of three persons.

[24 : 00] Scripture is very clear. And as I said, we'll unpack that together more as we go. So what does it mean to declare Jesus as Lord in that phrase?

Another author, Michael Bauman, says, calling Jesus our Lord is the very essence of the Christian faith because it connects us both to him personally and to his will.

When we call Christ our Lord, we acknowledge our duty to revere him and obey him. We willingly shape our lives around his will because we acknowledge that he has the right to rule us and we have the privilege to obey him.

Did you catch that? We submit to the authority and rule of Jesus in our lives and we should consider obeying him a privilege.

declaring Jesus as Lord was particularly important to early Christians and the choice for them was to either declare Kyrios Caesar is Lord or Kyrios Christos Christ is Lord.

[25 : 26] The apostle Paul was clear that declaring Jesus as Lord frees us from being bound to any earthly master. So while we recognize as I said in our prayer this morning we recognize the authority of earthly rulers or leaders as having been given that authority by God we serve only one master Jesus Christ.

This morning do you believe in Jesus Christ? Do you believe he is God's only son?

Do you believe Jesus is God's only son? Do you recognize him as God? And most importantly my friends have you submitted your life to him and given up all control to him?

Do you consider it a privilege to obey and serve him? Because I hope you can answer all of those questions with a definite yes this morning.

Sorry if I scared you. The rule of Jesus Christ in your life brings freedom from the empty promises of this world.

[26 : 59] And it calls you into serving others selflessly for the sake of God's kingdom. So I want to encourage you that if you have questions about Jesus or want to know more about how he can change your life please talk to me.

And that goes for people who accepted Jesus so long ago they can barely remember it or haven't quite gotten there yet. Because it's an ongoing conversation.

It needs to be. And it needs to be an ongoing surrender. And we do that together. But I'll tell you my friends Jesus has changed my life.

And he will continue to change yours if you let him. through communion we remember how the humanity and divinity of Jesus came together at that cross.

And it's through communion that we reflect both individually and as a community on the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. As we celebrate communion together this morning we approach this table not as I've said before as a Bramard Baptist church table.

[28 : 20] It's not it. We approach it as the Lord's table to which he calls us to freely come. So let's take a moment of quiet reflection this morning before we come to the table together.