

Apostle's Creed: I Believe

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- [0 : 0 0] So good morning, Braemar Baptist. Sorry for the awkward silence. For anyone who may not know me, my name is Kent Dixon, and it's my privilege to be the lead pastor here.
- A friend of mine who attends our church said, why do you say that every Sunday? And I said, well, it's because the expectation and our hope is that people are coming that don't know me, and don't know you, and don't know Jesus.
- So let's have that perspective. Happy Mother's Day. Silence? Really? Happy Mother's Day. It's a big deal.
- Happy Mother's Day. Sorry, dads. Later. One thing I want to pause and share with you is another piece of exciting news.
- Sorry, Mike, I jumped the gun on myself here. So we've got a window minimized, so we've launched a brand new website. So for people who said, we don't have sermons.
- [1 : 0 4] Now we do. We don't know who the staff are or what they're all about or anything about them. Now you do. We don't know what programs we have. Now you will. So BraemarBaptist.com.
- Check it out. Google is not super helpful, so if you go to Google and search Braemar Baptist Church and try and click on a Google link, it won't work well. So all you have to do is go in BraemarBaptist.com, and it'll take you right here.
- And if you go to BraemarBaptistChurch.org, our old website address, boom, takes you right there. Okay? So enjoy. Share. Share. Sermons are posted within about a week after we have them on Sunday morning, so it's going to be very current information.
- And a big thank you to my older brother Tim, who is not here, obviously. He's in Nanaimo, but he was a huge help in doing this for us. So we have a new website. So happy Mother's Day again.
- It's good. It's good. It's another little thing. So happy Mother's Day again. And Mother's Day, I think we can all recognize, can be a very complicated time.
- [2 : 1 2] And rather than just let that go, I want to talk about it for a second and acknowledge it. Because for many people, Mother's Day is a time to celebrate their mom. You go out for a nice meal.
- You present your mom with flowers and gifts. And rightfully so. Right? You shower them. You recognize them. But for others, Mother's Day can be hard.
- It can be a reminder of a broken relationship that may still be broken. Or one that may seem to have no hope of ever being repaired.
- For others, for me, I was teasing Marina this morning because they had these pussy willows at the ladies' tea yesterday. So if you were there, you would have seen them as a decoration.
- And I walked into the sanctuary this morning and I went, oh shoot, pussy willows. My mom's favorite. So my mom's been gone for, since 2000.

[3 : 10] Long time. But there are times when it stings. And no disrespect to pussy willows. I love them. So it's a nice reminder for me. So, but for other people, Mother's Day is a reminder of loss.

It's a reminder of the loss of a spouse. It's a reminder of the loss of a parent. Or a sibling. Or unrealized dreams that have never happened.

But this morning, I want to take a moment to put some of those things aside as much as possible. So we want to be aware of and sensitive to them. But today is about something else.

So I'd like to invite, here's your chance. The kids to come up the front with me, please. And all the ladies who are here this morning, please stand. Please stand.

We will not require proof of children or anything. If they are with you, that's a bonus. We're not checking ID. Okay, so here's the special job for you guys.

[4 : 14] You ready? So every lady that you see standing up, not just your own mom. Every lady that you see standing up, go and take a flower to them. How many? You know that? You take as many as you can do, Aiden.

Whoa, wow. Aiden's got it covered. Okay, so everybody take a few. Okay, just gently. Okay, there we go. Okay, everybody gets, everybody take one. Take one to a lady who's standing up.

There you go. You want to take it? Oh, let's go. There you go. Okay, everybody's good. Awesome. All right. So this morning, ladies of Braemar, we are grateful for you.

We are grateful for you many mornings, but we are grateful for you specifically this morning. We celebrate you as a unique and special part of our congregation, because without you, we are different, and without you, we are lesser than.

So God bless each one of you this morning. You are leaders and mentors. You're encouragers and supporters. We love you, and we appreciate you for all that you do and all that you mean to us.

[5 : 31] I don't know about you guys who are married, but I couldn't do this life without my wife, without the things that she does, without the things that she makes possible.

And I know moms are that to us. And if you're a kid, just FYI, you wouldn't even exist. There's the complicated biology of it.

So let's give a hand. Awesome. So this morning, we are starting a new series on the Apostles' Creed.

So why are we going to study this together? What is this thing? Since I began my time as a pastor, I've gotten a clear sense of the progression of ideas that I wanted us to explore together.

We began with waiting, and all that means to us as humans, both for ourselves and in community, and as Bramard Baptist Church. And from there, we explored how Jesus meets us exactly where we are, and the many ways that we can see that in his last words on the cross.

[6 : 39] And the core truths of our faith is what we're all about. It's never a bad time to reflect on what we believe and spend time digging into that and keeping it fresh in our minds.

And so as a means of doing this, God has placed on my heart that the Apostles' Creed is a rich and meaningful way we can do that together. So starting this morning and continuing over the coming weeks, we'll unpack the Creed together.

We'll learn about its history and explore in depth what it means to us as Christians. And we'll also discover how the Apostles' Creed serves as a relatively brief but deeply rich exploration and affirmation on the core truths and assertions of our faith.

So let's back up a bit. Is the term creed familiar to you? It's kind of a rhetorical question and kind of not. So you can nod. So what is a creed?

That's the question. So a creed, the English word creed, comes from the Latin word credo. Credo. Which literally means, I believe.

[7 : 56] Now a creed is defined as a set of beliefs or aims which guide someone's actions. But in the case of Christianity, creeds have represented the core of what we believe as a faith group.

For centuries in the Christian church, creeds and creedal statements have served as written or spoken summaries of what we believe.

And the Apostles' Creed, the one we're going to be exploring together in this series, is one of the oldest creeds in the Christian church. It dates back to as early as 150 AD.

150 years after Jesus. And within the Christian church, there are biblical creeds that were written by groups of believers and church councils.

denominational creeds were developed by specific Protestant denominations. Interdenominational creeds were developed by more than one denomination together.

[9 : 04] And even ecumenical creeds that were intended to reflect agreement between denominations. So we humans sure love to overcomplicate things sometimes, don't we?

And that's why I've chosen the Apostles' Creed for our series. In many ways, it's the most familiar to a broad group of people. And it's the most concise and theologically uncomplicated.

So you might be saying, whew, I thought he was getting heavy on us. So we'll take it apart a bit at a time. So the question you may be asking is, why do we need creeds when we have the full Bible?

Isn't everything we need to know already contained in there? Well, of course that's true. Of course. But if you had to summarize the core truths of Christianity for someone, could you do that on the spot?

The Apostles' Creed has been described as a PowerPoint summary of Christian faith. It's a means of summarizing, declaring, and affirming the core elements of our faith.

[10 : 17] And for centuries, faith communities have recited creeds together as commonly as they've prayed together. Perhaps you've attended a church where that was part of the structure of the service, that you read a creed off the screen.

Or you've sung songs together and served together. It's just as much a part of Christian tradition as that. And many church traditions still say traditional creeds out loud together as a personal, communal declaration of what they believe together.

But also they do that to affirm the core truths that have been at the heart of Christianity since the early church. So we'll work through this together. I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who is 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. He is seated at the right hand of the Father, who come to judge the living and the dead.

[11 : 38] I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen. Amen. It's beautiful to hear you say that. So as we explore the words and truths of the Apostles' Creed together over the course of this series, you'll come to recognize how rich its words are.

And you may find that parts of, or hopefully all of it, resonates with you. We're also going to look at some of the connections for each of these concepts and core truths of our faith as we find them in Scripture.

And as I mentioned, saying creeds out loud like this is a communal declaration, but it's also a deeply personal one. Because as I mentioned, the word creed itself comes from the Latin word *credo*, which literally means, I believe.

Did you catch that? I. I believe. When you recite the Apostles' Creed, even in a group, you're making a deeply personal declaration.

[12 : 53] You're stating that the Christian truth of this creed is something you personally hold to be true. This is convicting stuff.

Or at least it should be. When I was in seminary, one of the assignments I had to do in my systematic theology class was simply called my *credo*.

And I thought, well, that's interesting. So as we read the assignment, what it involved over two semesters was essentially declaring our own personal perspective and understanding of each of the core statements of the Christian faith.

So as we, as students dug into this more and more, we realized, yikes, this is a 30-page paper. And I think mine is at least that. But it's such a great exercise to be able to take all of these things I've always known, take all of these things that you maybe always understood at a top level and made it your own, made it deeply personal and made a personal connection to it.

It's powerful stuff. So I'm hoping we're able to do a bit of that together. We're personally declaring our belief in the creed. We're declaring our belief in specific statements and specific assertions that very clearly identify us as what?

[14 : 16] as believers, as Christians. There's no ambiguity here about what we're saying. And not only are we declaring that we believe it to be true, we're also declaring, by nature of their absence, things that we do not believe to be true at the same time.

By declaring something or making a personal statement, you're talking about what you believe. But we're also, by not affirming other things, saying that we don't believe them.

So particularly in the early church, other religions and belief systems existed that modeled themselves after Christianity. And they modeled themselves after Christianity on the surface, while in reality they were very, very different in many critical ways.

For example, you may have heard this word Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a heresy of the second century, of the early church, that suggested, catch this, that there were actually two gods.

A stupid and clumsy one who made all material things, this is Gnosticism, not me saying this, and a wise and kindly one who was all spirit.

[15 : 42] And they suggested that it was this kindly God who formed our own spirits and would ultimately call our spirits to leave our bodies behind when we die.

So Gnosticism essentially sought to represent much of the essence of Christianity with one critical element, no Christ. Gnostics also denied the virgin birth and incarnation.

Those are critical, aren't they? Those are critical, critical pieces of what we believe. Gnostics taught that a spirit called the Christ, who was sent by the wise God to be our teacher, embodied the man Jesus.

See how different that is? The man Jesus, embodied the man Jesus up until his baptism, from his baptism to his crucifixion, at which point the spirit, Christ, left Jesus' body so that as only a man, he suffered and died on the cross.

And for Gnostics, while Jesus the man may have died on the cross, the spirit called the Christ did not die.

[16 : 58] But do you see that separation? Do you see the problem there? The early church needed to take a stand in being clear on the teachings of our faith. They asserted that the permanent union of divine and human took place in Mary's womb, period.

That without diminishing his divinity, the Son of God became man, died to rescue us from Satan, sin, and death.

And now continues his incarnate life as the enthroned Lord of all and our Savior, Judge. You may even already be thinking that even today there are belief systems that fashion themselves after Christianity, but also differ in many critical ways.

So this creed and many others like it serve as a kind of guardrail or a measurement for correcting against inaccurate or just blatantly incorrect belief.

faith. But the creed also served and for many churches still serves as a kind of formation tool for people who are new to the faith.

[18 : 19] Can you see how that would be? Early creeds were formed as a means of teaching Jews who wanted to know more about this new faith. And they were also used as declarations of personal faith for converts to use at the time of their baptism.

So when we read the Apostles' Creed together, you may recognize things that you declared personally yourself or a pastor led you to declare at the time you were baptized.

There's a reason why we still do that. And this is where I see real value in creeds by being able to clearly state our beliefs and the core elements of our faith.

By being able to do that, we're better equipped to explain our faith to others and also to defend it when people are unclear about what we believe.

And as I said, the first words of the Apostles' Creed are, in fact, I believe. But personally, I think the idea of belief is more complicated than it appears, at least on the surface.

[19 : 28] Because the word belief, what does it really mean to us? Give me some ideas. What does the word belief mean? I believe I'm waiting to hear back from you.

Understanding? Point of view? Perspective? Mike, you look like you're thinking.

I agree to me. So belief can, in the fundamental way, just mean understanding. It can mean understanding that cordless bungee jumping is not wise.

It can be an understanding that planting flowers in Alberta at the end of April, early May is not necessarily that good an idea. If you have raised teenagers, and we're talking about Mother's Day and I'm seeing that people who have teenage kids look at me, yes.

So if you've raised teenagers or have some in your home right now or you can remember being one yourself, oh my goodness, the phrase, I know. I know.

[20 : 47] I know. I know. shut down. I know. But it can also be a complete dismissal of any pearl of wisdom you might have been trying to impart to them.

You know, I think it's really smart that you, I know, shut down. Right? The idea of belief can mean that we're just acknowledging something in passing but not necessarily anything more than that.

It can be very superficial. The idea of belief can also mean that we have a deeper knowledge of something or a deeper experience with it or connection to it.

So when you complete a class in school or you complete a grade level or you take training or certification in something, you have gained information that you didn't have before, right?

When you start a new hobby, learn a new instrument or a new sport, you've likely come to understand to believe things that you may not have even been aware of in the past.

[21 : 59] So do you see how that idea of belief can take on a deeper dimension? I'd suggest that possibly the richest or deepest way that we can understand this idea of belief is by beginning to think of it as conviction, commitment, dedication, something that you're anchored in, something that serves as your foundation, your identity.

This is where we get the idea of the saying you've probably heard of, a person's belief system. This is their set of personal values and principles that literally shape how they live.

They shape how they relate to other people and usually they shape all aspects or should shape all aspects of their life. Faith. So now we can see why Christians for centuries have referred to each other and likely ourselves as what?

Believers. Because we share that common faith. We share a common understanding and a commitment to the core facts and assertions of our faith.

Faith. I love how the words of Romans 10:8-13 really summarize what we're talking about here. But what does it say?

[23 : 36] The word is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart. That is the message concerning faith that we proclaim. If you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved.

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified. And it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As scripture says anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.

In writing these words the apostle Paul is talking about the way in which our beliefs as Christians serve as the core of our identity.

They encompass all aspects of what we've been considering this morning. For many of us we first developed an awareness of God.

An awareness of the Bible. Of Christianity. Through our families, our upbringing, our friends, or other people who've been important in our lives.

[24 : 54] We developed that beginning initial awareness. And as the verse says, the passage says, the word was near us. But at some point that basic awareness, that head knowledge or belief, became something we learned more about.

Through teaching, study, mentorship, discipleship, modeling by someone else, our belief in the truth of Christianity became something more to us.

And as the passage says here, the word came to be in our mouths and in our hearts. And then at some point, it likely became even a bigger part of our lives.

It began to represent something personal and grew into relationship with God. It became a faith that I sincerely hope we all proclaim and declare.

And I may have shared some part of this story with some of you. And as a pastor, repeating yourself is one of the dangers of the job, so forgive me if you've heard this.

[26 : 16] When I was in my late 20s, I remember, late teens I guess, I remember reflecting on the Christian experience that I had up until that point in my life.

I remember consciously thinking, okay, either this Christian way of looking at the world, this Christian teaching, this Christian belief, was something that my parents valued and taught me, but was not something that really had any meaning for me or value to me personally.

Or, it was something that had become deeply personal for me. It was something in which I would build my life, my marriage, my role as a father, and as a husband.

Something that would ultimately serve as the foundation for my life. And as I'm standing here this morning, I hope my ultimate decision is clear to you.

Because otherwise I shouldn't be up here. But as we've begun looking at the Apostles Creed this morning and started with an introduction to the idea of creeds and the concept of belief in that context, I hope that I've left you with a sense of the richness or the deep way that we can understand belief by thinking of it as conviction, as commitment, as dedication to what we believe.

[27 : 48] Something that we are anchored in, something that serves as our foundation and, as I said, our identity. And so as we continue in this series in the weeks ahead, we'll see more and more how the Apostles' Creed serves as a beautiful summary of what we believe as Christians.

And as I've said, creeds have been an important part in the way believers have declared and affirmed their faith over the centuries. And another way in which we've done this is by recognizing and celebrating communion, the Lord's supper, together.

I'll invite the servers to come forward now, please. Let's pray together. Thank you, Jesus, for loving us, even unto death.

Send your spirit upon us so that we may know that all who drink and eat at your table, in our congregation and around the world today are one body, one people.

Lord, give us clean hearts, forgiving hearts, praising hearts. As we come to your table this morning, we join with our brothers and sisters in heaven and on earth, giving thanks to you in an endless song of praise.

[29 : 26] Amen. Amen.