

Apostle's Creed: God, the Father, Almighty

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Let's pray. Almighty God, we come before you today as a body, and we're humbled by your presence among us.

You are the author of life, the architect of all things, seen and unseen, and yet you are here with us now in this sanctuary on this Sabbath day.

Father, we need you every day, and we come before you now we thank you for your great love and kindness to us and for the great mercy you showed in sending your son Jesus to make a way for us to be restored in relationship with you.

We trust that you care about our joys and sorrows. We know that you rejoice with us in times of celebration and weep with us in times of suffering.

Hear our prayers this morning, our thanksgivings, and our intercessions. Father, there are physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and relational needs in our church.

[1 : 07] Many of those needs we know and others we don't. We pray that you will answer the prayers of your people in all these areas according to your will.

Let us worship and celebrate this morning, drawing deeper in relationship with you and with one another. Father, renew our faith, revive our joy, and restore our commitment to living according to the ways of Jesus.

Wherever we have failed, Father, wherever we have spoken unkindly, where we have forgotten to embody the gospel of Jesus Christ, forgive us, we pray.

God of life, we pray also for our city, our country, our country, and the world. Our hearts are troubled by the constant violence and injustice in the world.

Cover the lands you created with a spirit of peace. Grant wisdom and compassion to all our leaders and shine your perfect light in lands that are darkened by war.

[2 : 15] Father, it can be easy for us to forget that our personal salvation is not the end of what you have asked of us, but only the beginning.

You have called us to reach out, Father, outside of our church, outside of our homes, outside of the comfort of what we know and our own needs.

Father, open our eyes to the needs of people with whom we interact every day. Father, you have called us to be light to our friends who do not know you.

Father, I pray now for friendships with people who do not know you. I beg you for that opportunity for each of us. Father, help us to be bold and fearless for the sake of your kingdom.

Help us to not be complacent, nor afraid, or lacking in confidence, but to be people who declare your love to everyone we know.

[3 : 29] Just as your love and grace to us as individuals has changed our lives, Father, please make us people who do not hold that for ourselves, but who act on what we know.

We ask for opportunities to do that and for the awareness to recognize when those opportunities are right in front of us.

Gracious God, we love you. Give us the strength to follow you and the courage to share your transforming love with all people.

We ask all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen. Well, good morning, Braymar Baptist.

So for everyone, look at May Long Weekend. Look at what it's done to us. And yet we are strong but mighty. So for anyone who doesn't know me, my name is Kent Dixon, and it's my privilege to be the lead pastor here at Braymar.

[4 : 40] This morning, we're going to be continuing in our series on the Apostles' Creed. After the service last Sunday, I had several people come up to me and say, you're preaching on the

Apostles' Creed?

I memorized that when I was a child. And so you can see the connection that it has for so many people and for the connection that it should have for each of us. And we began our series last week with an introduction to the idea of creeds and the concept of belief in that context.

We examined the idea of belief and that we looked at thinking of it as more than simply passing knowledge or understanding. But particularly as Christians, a sense of belief has a meaning more like conviction, commitment, dedication, something in which you are anchored, something that serves as your foundation and your identity.

And so this morning, we'll be looking at the statement from the Apostles' Creed, God the Father Almighty. And we're transitioning from an understanding of what it means to believe to that very clear statement of the creed of what we believe.

And perhaps most importantly, in whom we believe. because to be a Christian, it is working good. [6 : 10] To be a Christian means to believe in a God, in a creator, in a supreme being. But by making this statement, we're being very clear.

We're declaring that we don't just believe in a God. We believe in the God. We're stating publicly and personally that we believe in the God of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

We believe in the God who speaks in and through those 66 books that we call the Bible. We believe in a God that acts in our lives each and every day, every single moment.

And we're not making a vague statement here. We're not saying that the general idea of God seems nice. It gives us comfort somehow. We're declaring a great deal in very few words.

For example, somebody can say, well, I believe in the Loch Ness Monster without ever having seen Nessie. So if you're from Scotland or you know the Loch Ness Monster, the legend, maybe you believe in that.

[7 : 25] Maybe you don't. Or people may say, I believe in democracy. without ever having actually voted themselves. We can say that we believe in something, that we believe in an idea or a theory, but that doesn't really say a whole lot.

So by show of hands, how many of you believe that Sir John A. MacDonald was the first Prime Minister of Canada? Show of hands. Oh, there's not a lot of hands going up.

Well, there's about half. So really, you don't necessarily believe. So for those of you who put your hand up, how do you know that? So perhaps you, okay, perhaps you learned it in school, fair enough.

But I can safely assume, I think, that no one here this morning ever met Sir John A. MacDonald. Right? Hopefully not. Not quite.

So, nobody met him personally. Nobody voted for him. No one necessarily had any direct experience with that. And yet, for most of us that put our hands up anyway, I forgot to put mine up, we believe it.

[8 : 41] And that's partly out of a trust in information or facts that have been passed along to us. Because really, there is an overwhelming testimony that we have received from others that Sir John A. MacDonald records about things that he said, things about him.

We have enough information available to us that we can believe that he lived, was our first Prime Minister, and did what people said he did.

But I want to suggest to you this morning that merely believing something is very different from believing in something. As we explored last week, the belief reflected in the Apostles' Creed means much more than simply believing in something to be true.

To believe in God means a great deal more. Theologians have suggested that the Creed's opening words, I believe in God, are an English translation of a phrase that was coined by the writers of the New Testament.

So for them, the phrase actually translated more into, I am believing into God. See the difference there?

[10 : 03] I am intentional. Believing into. This is part of me. This is something I am a part of. I am believing into God.

And from that perspective, it means more than simply believing in the idea of God or even believing certain things about God to be true.

true. We are talking here about the idea of a relational commitment to God in trust and union.

Theologian J.I. Packer suggests that when we say, I believe in God in the Creed, we are declaring

that we are living in a relationship of commitment with God.

and that we are also declaring that our conviction to God indicates that He has invited us to this commitment and that we are also declaring that we have accepted that invitation.

There is a lot implied there in that short English phrase, isn't there? Four words. But those words in the Creed have always been intended to convey a greater depth of truth and meaning than most of us probably would have ever considered.

[11:28] In Hebrews 11, 6, we read, And without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

And as we consider that verse, I think we can all agree this morning that belief in God requires what? Commitment? Faith.

Faith seems like an overwhelming answer. The word faith in the English, sorry, the English word faith is used to represent a Greek noun which is pistis, P-I-S-T-I-S.

And it's formed from the verb in the phrase believe into, which is the Greek word pistevo. It's all Greek to you.

So this is where the idea of faith really conveys the idea better than belief. Do you see that? We're moving from the idea of belief to faith.

[12:37] Because belief merely suggests that we're acknowledging something to be true and believing in something or someone to the depth that's intended in the words I believe in God is the way we might believe in a spouse, a doctor, a medicine that you are taking for a specific illness.

You're declaring your trust in something and committing yourself accordingly. your belief in that person or thing means that you are all in.

You are having faith that by letting go and trusting in something you are willingly putting yourself at risk because of your faith in something or someone.

You are trusting and believing to that degree. And belief in God is definitely like that. But I believe we can agree I said believe there that it's also even more because belief in God reflects the ultimate level of faith and commitment.

And faith in God also declares belief in a specific by a specific person a belief by you a belief by me a belief by us in another specific person God.

[14:16] And it's not something that we initiate ourselves but it comes when God reveals himself to us through his word and through all creation.

For some of us that faith comes easily and letting go of control in our lives is the only logical and sensible thing that we can do. But for others it's important to recognize that the level of belief that's required here can be a daily challenge as we acknowledge God's perfect will for our lives which really makes it clear that we have never really been able to simply do as we please.

Right? It's important for us to also recognize I love this guy that with faith can also come what? A little louder? Doubt. Right. Doubt. As humans with a limited mortal perspective we can really wrestle with doubt can't we?

have you ever had prayers seemingly go unanswered noticed I said seemingly have you ever been angry with God over the ways in which you have perceived hear me say you have perceived that he has ignored your pain that he has left you alone to struggle do you know what that says about you?

[15:57] says that you are human congratulations have you ever read through the Psalms even a little bit not just to check it off the list of things that you're reading but to absorb those words others while the Psalms speak of joy and adoration they also at times speak of frustration anger pain and honestly a limited perspective and it's no coincidence that the book of Psalms was included in our Bible the rawness and extremes of human emotion and experience that are reflected there show us the depth of the compassion of our God he knows every possible challenge that we will face as we seek to follow him in faith and through

Christ God is intimately familiar with our doubts and our questions don't be afraid my friends to doubt and struggle but don't feel like you have to do it alone share your doubts and your questions and your struggles with a trusted friend or a loved one or have coffee with your pastor because none of us are immune to doubt and struggle but we can walk those roads together and that is our opportunity and community together it's one thing to have doubts and take them to God but I want to challenge you that in bringing our concerns to God while we may have doubts with our circumstances and struggles we must approach

God with faith and confidence in him doubt but do not doubt God as James 1:5 to 8 says if any of you lacks wisdom you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to you here's the important part but when you ask you must believe and not doubt believe in God because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind that person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do if you ever heard a prayer like that dear Lord if you exist wrong bad start dear Lord

I really want this to happen so if you love me wrong bad start believe in God trust his will for you absolutely bring your questions your struggles and your doubts to him but do that in full confidence of who he is and in humble recognition of his authority over your life as we continue on this morning you may chuckle as I did when I thought about this as I was studying this week what does it mean to say that we believe in God the Father Almighty wow all of scripture points us to the immense depth and breadth of what those few words convey there's so much power there Michelangelo's painting the creation of

Adam and you're probably most most of you are familiar with it it's an image that's really familiar to us and it's the famous painting that's on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome it depicts God reaching out to Adam bridging that gap between creator and created and for me it conveys the humble reality that God created all things and yet he knows each of us personally and intimately Chris and I were talking about this a bit this morning God the father almighty knows me and loves me I don't get it but I'm sure glad so for me that statement conveys the humble reality that again [21:13] God loves us intimately so let's look at that the idea of the father almighty first to declare God as father is very important because it gives us a window into our trinitarian understanding in the creed and our faith as Christians we believe in God as three beings in one the idea of God as father son and holy spirit is a fundamental declaration of Christianity so by being clear in referring to God first as father in the creed we're beginning to explore the nature of the trinity which was so important in the early church and continues to be important for us today it's both unique and essential to what it means to us to be Christians and there's no denying that recognizing

God as the father our father reflects what so much of what it means to be involved in a loving relationship with the God who created us and that relationship could also never have been possible without the son Jesus Christ and we'll explore that part more as we continue in the series but Jesus was always clear that in experiencing him in relating to him in being in relationship with him the persona and nature of God the father they were experiencing that as well because the two are one for me personally the window into the heart of God and his love for me lived out in the words and actions of Jesus make me feel all the more connected with and loved by God as my heavenly father the tenderness of Jesus the kindness of Jesus that is what

God is God and his love for us and his love for us and his love for us because referring to God as father does not mean that he's a human being referring to God as father is an analogy that helps us to be able to connect with God in a mortal way of understanding his love and care for us and I've known people for whom the idea of God as father is not helpful and you've maybe heard people say this before if their own experience with a human father was broken or toxic or simply absent that may make it difficult for them to relate to God in that way and this is why we also see in scripture comparison of God to a human mother or a hen mother hen taking care of her chicks it's the concept of the love and compassion that we're trying to get to but we're very clear that God is father and ultimately it's through

Jesus that we receive the most clear and helpful ways of relating to God the father because as I said if you think of the love and care and kindness that you see reflected in Jesus that you maybe feel yourself when you interact with Jesus that is what the love of God for you is like it's not even like that it just is that so as we continue on in our phrase from the creed this morning what does it mean for us to say that God is almighty not a rhetorical question what does it mean for us to say that he's almighty come on thank you Don almighty so I find it interesting to see that the main definitions if you look up almighty they still relate directly to the idea of a Christian God if you look up the definition for the word almighty you will see having complete power or omnipotent and a name or title for God that's pretty neat isn't it God still has influence who would have thought one day I plan to have a sermon series on the attributes of God and we'll unpack those together because we need to focus at times on what God is and how we're not it because those concepts are so fascinating and humbling for us the idea of being almighty or omnipotent all

powerful are really ideas that are far far beyond our complete understanding our comprehension all powerful it's not something we can really begin to wrap our heads around but perhaps you've heard a bit of an argument that people have that goes something like if

[27 : 10] God really can do anything then can God make a triangle with four sides no no he can't God doesn't arbitrarily change the rules on us he doesn't arbitrarily change things that we experience in everyday life certainly not in a nonsensical way because that serves no purpose God is not ridiculous in psalm 135 verse 6 we read the Lord does whatever pleases him in the heavens and on the earth in the seas and all their depths even by extension the entire universe and again this is not to reflect on a sense of God's will being somehow removed from us and random but intentional over all of creation and infinite can be very comforting

I think for us as Christians particularly in a world that seems completely messed up and broken sometimes more all the time that God is still in control friends can you receive that this morning God is in control of this God is in control of what we perceive to be a total mess he's got it God is still in control and things are despite what we may think despite our limited perspective things are according unfolding exactly according to his plan do you hear that exactly according to his plan and that includes his plan for your life and mine and the fact you know what the fact that we may not actually understand that plan that's okay and if that makes you pout too bad because God has got this the fact that God is almighty can also be a comfort to us in other ways as we can completely rest in the fact that even as things seem impossible to us they're completely within God's grasp he's got it he can do it he will do it just watch what did we learn in the story of Elizabeth and the virgin concept of Mary with Jesus nothing is impossible with God nothing you're not too old too slow he will use you he will use you in spite of yourself you know and I'm living proof of that you get in his way he'll go around you you fold your arms he'll get someone else to do it he doesn't even need us but he wants us and he loves us as

Paul so boldly declares in Philippians 4 13 I can do all things through Christ through Christ who strengthens me God in Christ was Paul's strength and source and that same Jesus and God his father and ours is our almighty source strength and refuge as well it's not lost on me that there is so much depth and richness in all of the statements that we make through the Apostles Creed and as is the case with many topics and ideas that we'll explore together on Sunday mornings my prayer is that our time together each week will whet your appetite to dig deeper into

God's word yourself because you can read it just as easily as I can my friends and he will speak to you just as clearly as he's speaking through me this morning dig in for yourselves and explore the truth that he has for you there let's do 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 and he will come to judge the living and the dead

[32 : 46] 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 let's pray and I'll invite the worship team to come up father you are the almighty God and yet you are as we say father you are Abba you are our daddy and so father at the same time as we bow humbly before you we fall to our faces in recognition of who you are father we also thank you for the opportunity to come before you as children to be loved by you to be under your care and to be your agents in this world that so deeply needs you father

I thank you for all that you are to us for your love your kindness and your care and we pray these things in the name of your son Jesus Christ Amen