

Apostle's Creed: The Holy Spirit

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, Braemar Baptists. So, we tried to go to K-Days last weekend, and we realized that everyone and their dog who had a library card could get in free.

So we thought, oh, that seems unwise. So guess what? We went yesterday. Yesterday. I wore a T-shirt and shorts.

Emily wore a tank top, shorts, and flip-flops. Michelle wore a T-shirt and shorts. We were drenched cats, completely drenched.

I thought I had hypothermia at one point. Mini donuts, turns out, are quite rejuvenating. Wow, it was a good time. But we had a great time as a family, and it felt like, just like our summer vacation crammed in the Yaris, so it felt like God was forging our family into something new.

So we came through. We survived. So for anyone who may not know me, and there are a few of you here this morning, my name is Kent Dixon, and it's my privilege to be the lead pastor here at Braemar Baptist Church.

[1 : 14] And so Juanita's not here, which is unfortunate, but you can tell her that I said this. I want to take a moment to thank Juanita for her leadership of Summer Fun Club, because it really couldn't have happened without her.

And I want to thank as well all the volunteers. There are some volunteers here this morning. People gave their time every evening this past week to share the love of God with children, not only from our church, but from the community and surrounding communities.

So actually, at the peak, we had, I believe, probably 20 kids, and two of them were from Braemar. The rest were from the Arabic church. Many were from the community around us.

And so we've impacted people, and that's important. And it's not about numbers. You'll hear churches say, oh, we have 100 kids that come to our VBS program in the summer. So that's irrelevant, as far as I'm concerned.

God will work, and God has worked this past week. And it was a great week. So let's give a round of applause to the volunteers. Thank you so much for all you've done.

[2 : 21] It's truly, truly appreciated and was recognized. So this morning, we're going to continue our exploration of the Apostles' Creed. And Leah said to me, man, it feels like this sermon series is going on a long time.

Anyone else feel that way? So what I want to give you is a bit of context. A sermon series is not intended to be, oh, it's four sermons. Done.

It's six sermons. Done. A friend of mine said, you cannot preach, my friend, you cannot preach the Apostles' Creed without 15 or 20 sermons. And I went, yikes. I said, it'll be just me by the end of that.

Preaching to myself. But what I want to give you, and going forward, I love sermon series. And that's kind of the way I've learned. And I want to give you a bit of a context for it.

Think of it as an umbrella. So each of these sermons in this series, they are in a theme together. They are connected by the fact that they are part of the Apostles' Creed. And that the creed addresses them.

[3 : 24] So that is our anchor point, our umbrella. But however, if you think back, you won't remember any of them, I'm sure, but if you think back to previous sermons that I preached in this series, each one is a standalone topic.

Each one is a sermon unto itself. So try not to think of, there's no light at the end of this very long tunnel. But think of it as an overall umbrella that ties these individual themes of God's truth together, if that's helpful.

And if it's not, forget everything I just said. So this morning, we're going to continue in our exploration of the Apostles' Creed with the phrase, I believe in the Holy Spirit. And it's such a simple phrase, and yet such a powerful one. Because through the Apostles' Creed, if you think back to it, or read back through it, it moves from the creating work of the Father to the rescuing work of the Son, and then transitions to the third paragraph of the Creed where we find the recreating work of the Spirit, whereby we're actually made new in and through Christ. And this morning, we're going to look, take notes quick, because I'm going to change the slide fast. No, I'm just kidding. This morning, we're going to look at a few concepts. So in a basic sense, we're going to understand, what does it mean to say, I believe in the Holy Spirit?
[4 : 55] We believe in the Holy Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit, and what does the Holy Spirit do? What is the Holy Spirit's relationship to us?

And how should, this is always a so what moment for any preacher, how does knowing what we're going to talk about this morning, how should it affect our lives? So to begin with, what does it say, what does it mean to say that we believe in the Holy Spirit? Not only as we recite the Apostles' Creed, but as we recognize how important that fact is to our faith. To put it simply, if we profess to be Christians, then we must believe in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is clearly identified through all of Scripture as an equal member of the Trinity, with a specific role, who's taken and continues to take specific actions in the world and in our lives. But it's fair to recognize that I believe the Holy Spirit can often be misunderstood, or somehow seen as a lesser member of the Trinity.
[6 : 14] Because we can relate to the Father, we can relate to the concept of God as our Creator, and the Creator of all things. That's a relationship that we can understand.

We can relate to Jesus as a man, a great teacher whose life and example for us was unlike any other in human history. And as the Son of God, who came to die for our sins, and who bridged the gap sin created between us and God. But when it comes to the Holy Spirit, I believe many people can be confused. So last week we talked a bit about the challenge that we have as human beings with things unseen. We talked about the fact that Jesus, in His physical form, is not here with us right now. His presence is with us. He is with us in an unseen way that is mysterious, but He is here nonetheless.
[7 : 19] So the same concept becomes true with the Holy Spirit. We struggle, I believe, with getting a truly solid grasp. I just realized this is an unintended play on words.

A solid grasp on the spiritual realm. Physical and spiritual. We struggle with those pieces. We have a head knowledge of what happens in the spiritual world. And Scripture talks about it, but it can also be kind of vague for us, can't it? We may find spiritual things challenging to grasp. And I believe we tend to set them aside somewhat, rather than seeking to dig in and understand them better. And I believe that can be the case for the Holy Spirit. Because if you ask someone to explain or describe the Holy Spirit, you may get ideas like an unseen force, a vague power of some kind, somehow part of God. When people use the phrase the Spirit of God, do you think of it as part of God acting? Or God's will acting? I know lots of people perceive it that way because they can't wrap their head around it.
[8 : 40] But when we speak of God's Spirit, some people may draw a connection between that and the idea of a human spirit that is part of a person.

Or even, to go further, the essence of that person, but not somehow something that stands on its own or has its own identity. And I realize now, this is heavy theological stuff, but stay with me. So there's some things that we just cannot know about the Holy Spirit, but there's a lot that we can know. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 29, 29, and feel free to read this with me, the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all of the words of this law. So it's important for us to understand what is knowable to us as we submit to God and Scripture as our authority. Something we've been clear about in this series as we've explored the declarations of the creed is that we are Trinitarian in our belief. We believe in several gods? No. We believe in one God who is, do you remember? Three persons.

[10:12] And I want to stress that, persons. But have you ever heard of someone referring to the Holy Spirit as it? I don't want to use the term, I'm going to use it anyway, the term gender neutral, because that is incredibly, incredibly baggage laden at this point in our history.

But people tend to see the Holy Spirit as a thing. It is at work. I believe the Holy Spirit, I believe in the Holy Spirit, I believe it is at work in this place.

Have you ever heard that? But in our declaration, in the belief of a Trinitarian God, we recognize that the Holy Spirit is not an it, but a whom.

I spoiled that a bit for you at the beginning of the sermon as I said, who is the Holy Spirit? For me, I simply cannot declare my belief in the Spirit without recognizing a distinct person.

But when we declare the Holy Spirit to be a person, we also need to, human beings the way we are, clarify that definition somewhat.

[11:22] Because the Holy Spirit does not have a physical body any more than God the Father does. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a person as a being characterized by conscious apprehension.

rationality and a moral sense. A being possessing or forming the subject of a personality.

So do we believe the Holy Spirit has a personality or the characteristics of a person? And we'll explore that a bit more. To begin with, the Holy Spirit is spoken by Jesus himself as a person.

Jesus used pronouns such as he, him, his, himself, who, and whom.

Jesus recognized a person when he spoke of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. But the masculine identification here is a bit limiting.

[12:31] But it's nevertheless clear that the Holy Spirit is a person. person. So as we talked on Father's Day when we talked about believing in God the Father, for some people that idea of a male role, that idea of a male connection, a male personality, is not helpful if they've had unhealthy male influences in their lives.

So we recognize that again here. It's not perfect. Jesus also referred to the Holy Spirit as comforter, and I believe that's helpful.

And in the Greek translation, comforter is used as a masculine noun. So again, it's a masculine noun. We struggle with that a little bit.

But when Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit merely as spirit, capital S, still a person, it's a neutral noun, which doesn't specifically indicate gender.

So again, gender neutral, very heavily laden for us in these times. But you can see that that term of spirit, Jesus at times didn't intend to reflect a masculine identity.

[13:48] But as with other issues that arise between translations, we must rely on God. We need to rely on him for a complete understanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit and recognize that the full understanding may always remain outside our grasp.

and that has to be okay. But not surprisingly, theologians and denominations disagree on the issue. That's shocking, right? So for our purposes this morning, I'll continue to use that masculine language, not to dance around a subject that's ultimately unknown to us.

Does that make sense? So don't get stuck on the he and his. Just let it go. Because we're going to dig into Scripture quite deeply for a moment to identify some key things.

The Holy Spirit possesses the characteristics of a person. And I'll read these Scriptures for you. The Holy Spirit possesses, according to 1 Corinthians 2.11, knowledge.

Where we read, for who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person which is in him? So also, no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God.

[15:11] And that's all capitals. Capital S, capital G, so there is a person identified there. The Holy Spirit possesses the characteristic of love.

As we read in Romans 15.30, where Paul says, I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit to strive together for me in your prayers to God on my behalf.

1 Corinthians 12.11 talks about how the Spirit empowers and wills when it says, all these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Characteristics of a person and clearly a person identified. The Holy Spirit can also suffer or be hurt like a person can.

The Holy Spirit in Ephesians 4.30 can be grieved. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

[16:21] The Holy Spirit can be spited or insulted as we read in Hebrews 10.29. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the Spirit of grace.

And the Holy Spirit can be lied to as we read in Acts 5.3. I can't go into the full details of the story of Ananias and Sapphira but suffice it to say they were folks who professed belief in God and decided to try and be a little sneaky about something.

Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of this land?

So now that we have a better sense of who the Holy Spirit is, some of those characteristics of personhood and identity, let's move on to the work of the Holy Spirit.

What does he do? The work of the Holy Spirit is still very much the work of a person as well.

Because the Holy Spirit speaks, we read in 1 Timothy 4.1, Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teaching of demons.

[17:59] The Spirit speaks. The Spirit teaches in 1 Corinthians 2.13, and we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The Spirit teaches. The Spirit guides, John 16.13. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.

For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. The Spirit forbids, we read in Acts 16.6 and 7.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And the Holy Spirit searches in 1 Corinthians 2.10.

These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

[19:14] So that brings us to our next main point this morning, that knowing something more of the identity, the person, and the work of the Holy Spirit. What's the Holy Spirit's relationship to us as humans?

For people who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior, the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives. That may surprise you, but it's true.

Because the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts people of their sin, convicts them of their need for Christ, creates that yearning and that longing. This conviction of sin is not necessarily of a specific sin, but more of one that would keep someone from going to heaven.

The sin of unbelief, the sin of rebelliousness. As Jesus said in John 16, 9, the Spirit will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

Concerning sin because they do not believe in me. Friends, the Spirit creates and stirs that sense of need in a person.

[20:34] the sense of something more. The sense that leads a person to satisfy their yearning in Christ alone. Each individual chooses whether to accept or reject that conviction of the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit also convicts the world for denying God's righteousness through people's continual sin. The Bible says in Romans 1 18, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

The sense here is that people who are consciously denying belief in God, consciously resisting, willfully suppressing the truth that God is trying to reach them.

That's the sense we're seeing. So that certainly contrasts strongly from I can take it or leave it. Do you experience that indifference in people or even a blatant antagonism towards Christianity?

Our society seems to increasingly demonstrate that. An antagonism, not merely indifference, but antagonism towards the things of God.

[22:01] And that's what we're hearing about here. God has no time for that. The world may turn a blind eye to its rebelliousness and indifference, but God certainly does not.

So what's the relationship then if we zero in on a relationship between a Christian and the Holy Spirit? makes me sad that there seems to be such a disagreement on this issue between Christians and within denominations.

Terminology and arguments about how spiritual people are, how filled with the Spirit they are, how they define the way, a specific way, a person is either filled or not filled with the Spirit.

I think that's wrong. And so I'll steer clear of that and I'm going to focus on some of the core realities that Scripture conveys. Before Jesus left the earth, he spent time with his friends and followers and during that time he spoke clearly about the coming of the Spirit.

The Bible says, and feel free again to read this with me if you feel so inclined, John 14, 15 to 17, if you love me you will keep my commandments and I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever.

[23 : 35] Even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you.

And it continues in verse 26, but the helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Just as the Son was sent in the Father's name, the Holy Spirit was sent in the name of the Son. The Spirit testifies to the work of Jesus.

His task is to point us back to Christ. And so when you see Jesus Christ in people trusted and loved and imitated, you see the Holy Spirit at work.

Is that helpful? I've quoted Michael Bauman, the author, through our series a little bit, and he just says some things far better than I can.

[24 : 51] One of the clearest ways that the Spirit brings glory to the Son is in our transformation. Christians are being made over again in the image of the Son.

Though the process may be slow, it is truly miraculous. Nothing could bring the Son more glory than a people filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Bauman rightly draws attention here to what we know as the fruit of the Spirit. It's the outward evidence, the outward behavior, the outward action of the Holy Spirit at work in a believer's life.

The Holy Spirit is probably most active in the hearts and minds of believers through the church, through the preaching of the Word, through acts such as communion and baptism, through the beauty of worship and praising God together.

These are some of the ways in which the Holy Spirit is most active. As we sang this morning, Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. I often chuckle to myself, I have throughout my life, when we say, God be with us this morning.

[26 : 22] Jesus, come and join us. Holy Spirit, come. They're already here. It's good to be welcoming, but they've never left.

And God loves it when his people gather in community together, when they care for one another as we do here. As individuals, the Holy Spirit teaches our hearts as well to love the right things.

He teaches us, as I touched on in the prayer this morning, he teaches us when and how to pray. He prompts that in us. As Bauman says, in fact, the Spirit himself prays in us with words and expressions that we cannot fathom.

When our own words fail, his do not. Prayer is addressed to the Father by means of the way open to us through Jesus' sacrifice.

And this we do under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit who teaches us how to pray. His is a ministry of intercession.

[27 : 38] So perhaps most importantly, the Holy Spirit himself bears witness that we belong to God. His is the seal, the pledge, the down payment on us for our salvation.

So if you think of Jesus' sacrifice is making our salvation possible, the Holy Spirit stamp on us. If you can think of wax embossing they used to do on letters, I think of it that way.

Hot wax dripped with a seal pressed into it which can never be removed. The seal of the Holy Spirit, my friends, is on you as a believer.

so hopefully you're getting a better spent, you've gotten or are getting a better sense of the Holy Spirit this morning.

And as I thought to myself, how do you preach one sermon on the Holy Spirit? Good luck with that, so, but here we are. Do you take time out of your day to pay attention to the stirring of conviction as to how you should act or not act in a given situation?

[29 : 09] That's the Spirit. Do you seek to display the fruit of the Spirit in your life? The fruit of the Spirit is not just a Sunday school lesson.

Many of us either have that list of characteristics memorized, the fruit of the Spirit, or certainly we know it well, but are those qualities displayed in our lives?

If you've accepted Jesus as your Savior, the Holy Spirit is your advocate, your comforter, your counselor, so lean into that amazing truth.

And if you've been left with more questions about the Holy Spirit this morning than you started out with, or if your comfortable spirit in a box has been shattered, that's okay too.

Lean into that. Ask God about it. Ask me about it. Grab your Bible and read what Jesus said about the Spirit throughout Scripture.

[30 : 20] Scripture. He said a lot. Read the book of Acts to experience the coming and the action of the Holy Spirit in the early church.

It's awesome, awesome stuff. That Holy Spirit is the same Spirit that is in you. He is available to you.

Like Jesus and God the Father, you can talk to him as well. Don't put him on a shelf. If you don't understand him, ask him to open your eyes.

And if this morning you're here and you say, I don't know Jesus as my personal Savior. This Holy Spirit stuff, God alone is way too complicated.

That other stuff is just over my head. Speak to me about that after the service as well because there is a relationship there that we can introduce you to.

[31 : 22] There's a journey that you can begin that all of us in this room are on. And it's a journey that never ends in all the best senses of that phrase.

The relationship that I'm talking about with Jesus Christ will change your life. life. And if you have a relationship with him, is it not changing your life every day?

Think about that too. Let's pray. Father God, thank you for the gift of the Spirit.

Thank you for what he does in our lives. Thank you this morning that you've given us inspiration and thinking to do about who the Spirit is.

About a more full understanding of what he does and how he can connect with us and how we can connect with him. Because, Father, there's a richness in you, there's a richness in your Son, there's a richness in the Spirit that we often pass by, that we often oversimplify.

[32 : 38] but we don't want to over complicate it at either, Father. So, we trust you with that this morning. We trust that each one has taken away something from this morning that is meaningful for them.

That you are at work in each life that is here this morning and that you leave this place with us throughout our day, throughout our weeks, and throughout our lives.

And, Father, we come before you again this morning and we declare our love for you, our submission to your will in our lives, and we ask all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.