

Sunday, June 12, 2022 – Trinity Sunday & “I Believe” Series Introduction
“Credo”

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Philippians 2: 5-11

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Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

“That’s my credo.” Ever heard that said? It’s often used by someone describing their philosophy of life, and it can be a little tongue in cheek, a little flippant. “Work hard, play hard.” “You only live once!” And what 80s kid doesn’t know, “Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in awhile, you could miss it.”

The word creed has as its root the Latin word credo, which means “I believe.” There’s nothing flippant about the way it is used here today. I believe in God the Father Almighty, I believe in Jesus Christ... I believe in the Holy Spirit...” I believe!

No, it’s actually pretty heavy stuff. Every wish you could believe for someone who doesn’t—that the faith of parents, for example, could be extended to their children or that we could one day stand before God and say, “Yes, I know that my friend or loved one has gone astray spiritually, but can’t you make an exception and let him or her into heaven on the coattails of my faith?” The apostle Paul even mused about that... if only I could trade my faith to give it to those of my people who don’t believe in Jesus.

That’s not the way faith works. Ultimately, each one of us is held accountable to the God, each one of us must walk the walk of obedience to the Word God’s will, each one of us must receive, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God’s redeeming love through Jesus Christ, each one of us must make our own confession of sin—and of faith!

I believe! There is nothing tentative about our confession of faith, nothing hesitant, nothing uncertain and nothing glib. “I believe that the sun may come out tomorrow,” but I can’t know that for sure. It may rain, and it may not (truth be told, it’s highly unlikely here in Vegas... but who knows?). By

contrast, when I stand—and, at worship, we stand for a reason when we say the Creed – stand on our own two feet, if you will, and as an act of worship—we say, “I believe,” I say that with all my heart and mind and spirit. I am ready to stake my life and my eternal destiny on that belief, and I disavow any and all other gods. Have you ever heard someone say, “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe.” Or, referring to other religions, “When all is said and done, we really all believe the same thing.” A case of wishful thinking, to be sure. The God we confess is pretty unique, distinct. He’s singular – there is no other!

All our readings today give us creeds, of sorts. Deuteronomy 6:9 is sometimes referred to as the Creed of the Old Testament. There is one God, and He’s the one we worship. Philippians 2:5-11 is thought to be an early Christian hymn – that’s why the editors chose to offset the type in your Bibles. It’s an early Christian Creed, put to song. Jesus does more than speak what He believes, He speaks truth about Himself – “Before Abraham was, I am.” These, along with many other parts of Scripture have been boiled to their essence to get at those core things to know about our God and why they matter. Today there are three Christian Creeds, widespread as they are ancient.

What’s in a Christian Creed? The God whom we confess is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons, yet only one God! Early in my pastoral ministry, I approached the teaching of this truth almost apologetically, especially as I saw the glazed eyes of our confirmands, both youth and adults. I’d dread days like today, Trinity Sunday, wondering how in the world I could make an esoteric and wholly mysterious doctrine applicable to what it means to be alive today. No longer. Now, I am grateful for the privilege of teaching and confessing the God who is beyond us, whom we can’t fit into a neat little box of our understanding. If, rationally, I could fully explain the person and work of God, then there would be no place for the faith to which God commands and calls us. Infinitely beyond our ability to imagine, comprehend, describe, or even defend—by human reason—the doctrine of the Trinity is the bedrock and foundation of faith that distinguishes Christianity from any other religion. To confess, to

believe something other than what is distilled in these short words from the pages of our Scriptures is to believe in someone other than God.

Since we are surrounded by a plethora of “gods,” including all of the “isms” out there in the world, it is imperative that we declare clearly and loudly and unequivocally that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – He is one and only and ours! As long as we live on this earth, the Trinity remains a wondrous mystery of faith. Think about it: if any of us were able to explain the fullness of God, then the Almighty would cease to be... almighty. Cease to have the awe and utter amazement and compelling adoration that God can command of us mere mortals.

Jesus Christ has paid the full and final price for our sin through his holy life, bitter suffering, and death on the cross. He has proclaimed victory over the power of sin’s curse through his glorious resurrection. There is nothing we can do to deserve God’s love. There is nothing we can say to get into God’s “good graces.” Jesus has done that for us. When we stand before the Almighty—and we will, on the Day of Judgment and Glory, every knee, including ours will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that by His grace we will speak those words believing.

“The love of God [the Father]”: We sometimes imagine the great and mighty God as unbending and unyielding, the harshest of taskmasters, filled with righteous wrath and uncompromising judgment. But, as John writes, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” The Father loves us because we are his children, one and all. The God of might is also the God of mercy.

“The fellowship of the Holy Spirit”: Some translations use the word communion. Either word stresses our oneness with God and with one another. It is that Spirit who brought us into faith in the first place through water and the Word, that Spirit who has bridged the hellish gap between us and our God, that Spirit who empowers us to live as God’s people, that Spirit who lives within us and among us, binding us together as one, that Spirit whose presence and power enable us to confess, “I believe!”

And so journey with us over the next several weeks, as we dig in not only on who God is – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – but what God does for you and me and why it matters. I pray that we'll leave this sermon series recognizing our Credo as so much more than a frivolous one-liner or a superficial description. That we'll recognize the truths... yes, the knowledge, the facts, but even more so the impact on what those truths mean to love others and live in God's grace today as the single most important thing we can say about our own identities. That "I believe!" would make me secure and at peace, because who God is and what He does for me and what He says about me matters more than absolutely anything that I think about myself, or identify about myself, or others say about me. And that what "I believe" and "we believe" would be so evident and different and, in God's hands, powerful to make a lasting mark in the hearts and lives of the people around us who don't yet believe in the God who is one, only and ours. In Jesus' name, Amen.