

March 1, 2020

This I Believe – The Apostles’ Creed, The Faith in which we are Baptized
Sermon 1: God the Father Almighty

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GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY

Lent was once a time of doctrinal teaching for the new converts preparing for baptism at Easter. Lent was a “catechetical” training period, like adult confirmation. In that same spirit, this year at Ascension during Lent we are teaching and reviewing some of the basics of the faith that arise from the baptismal creed of the church, the Apostles’ Creed.



- The title of this preaching series begins with a small but very important word, “**This**.”
- The “This” refers to how the Christian faith has a defined content.

“**This** I believe.” The Christian faith is not a faith in having faith, as if any faith would do. No. The Christian faith is specific in terms of the object and content of that faith.

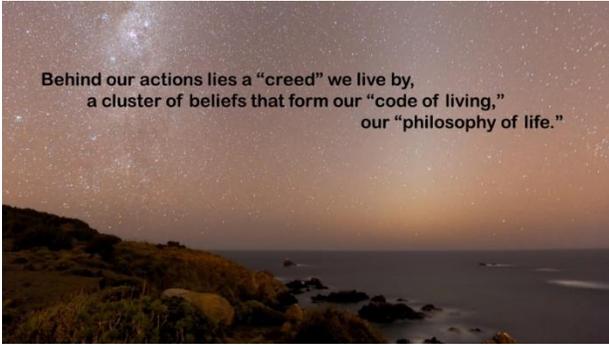
- This Lent will be exploring the “**this**” of our believing.
- “**This** I believe – The Apostles’ Creed, **The** faith in which we are Baptized.”
- The Apostles’ Creed is an ancient, time-tested, and shared summary statement by the historical church of what the Bible teaches is true about God.
- It is the creed that is confessed when a person is baptized. The creed of the whole church. The creed of the individual believer. Even denominations that choose not to use the creed in their worship services still abide by the creed’s content, or else they would be departing from the historic and biblical faith of Christianity.
- It is “**The Faith**” in which Christians are baptized.

Beliefs are important. Beliefs are not trivial matters. People live according to their beliefs. People die for their beliefs. People create close bonds of community and friendship with others who share their beliefs.

Beliefs are not simply matters of subjective, personal small-t “truths” that are such the fashion to emphasize these days. Beliefs are about external, objective, factual capital-T “Truths” that are true no matter if you believe them or not.

Imagine lying back on a starry night and staring off into space as you ponder the question, “What do I believe?” In this act of thoughtfulness, you join with all humanity dating back to even the primitive world, you join with people of all time and all places who have done likewise, pondering the question of God and belief.

Behind most things people do lies a belief.



- People believe all sorts of things: about God, about people, about themselves, about how the world really works.
- People may not even know exactly what their own beliefs are.
- Their beliefs may be shallow or deep.
- They may even think they have no beliefs in particular.
- But they do! We all do!

- Behind our actions lies a “creed” we live by, a cluster of beliefs that form our “code of living,” our “philosophy of life.”
- Bottom line, our beliefs are serious business!
- Our beliefs about God are the most important beliefs we have!
- Our beliefs about God shape everything else about us: The internal construction of our deepest understandings. How we live our lives. The choices we make. The values & ethics we live by.
- Our beliefs about God can even make a difference in our ability to trust & love, or to hold on to hope even the face of suffering.

What do I believe?

- About God?
- About why we’re here at all?
- About how we should live?
- About where the world came from?
- About what happens after we die?



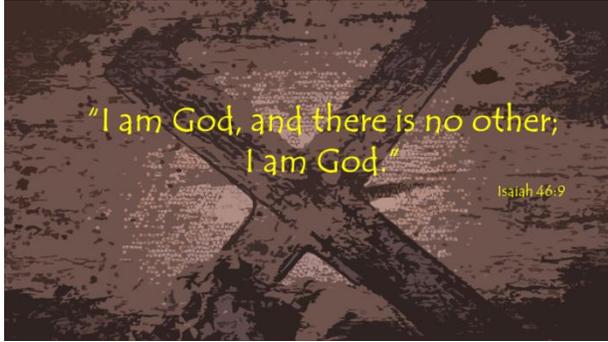
Are we alone?

- Is the universe and each one of us nothing more than a cosmic accident?
- Is life, like the atheists say, basically short, full of suffering, and ultimately meaningless?

Or is there something more, something greater out there and behind it all?

- I believe - in God – The Father – Almighty – Creator – Of Heaven – And Earth!
- Each word is important.





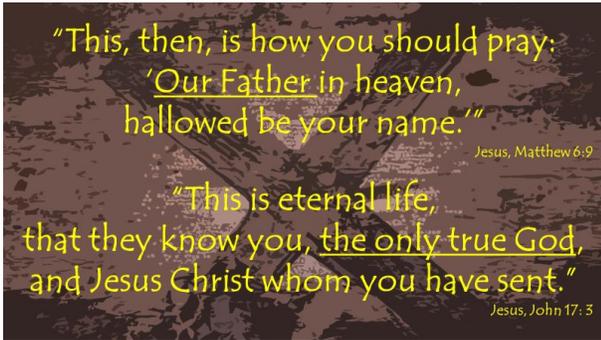
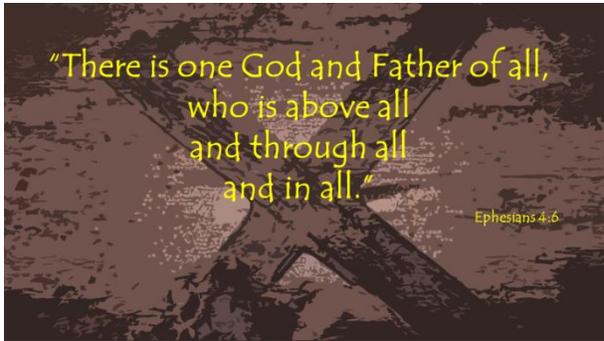
“God” - The object of faith is God, of course.

- There is only one God.
- Hear God’s own word on the matter, *“I am God, and there is no other; I am God.”* ~ Isaiah 46:9

In Ephesians 4:6 we read, *“There is one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”*

There is only one God, but there are many mistruths about the one God.

- There are many false teachers.
- Our teacher, the teacher above all teachers, the true teacher, is Jesus.



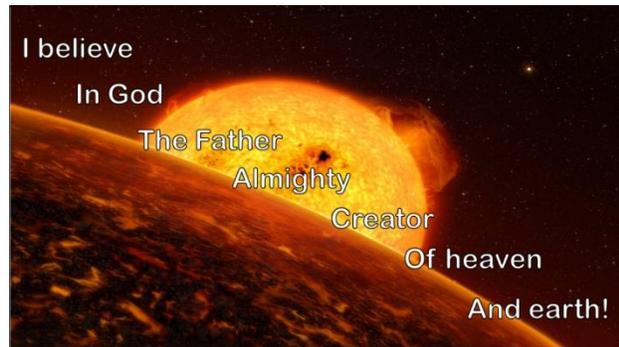
It is Jesus himself who taught us to name God the Father as “Father.”

- *“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.’”* Matthew 6:9.
- In John 17:3 Jesus himself says, *“This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”*

The historic creeds of the church are summary statements of what the Bible teaches is true about God, including what is true about God’s Son, Jesus, and about God the Holy Spirit.

There are actually three historic creeds, but the two we use in worship are the main ones – the Apostle’s Creed and the Nicene Creed. (The Nicene Creed is that longer one we use less often.)

- Each has three parts, called the three articles, one each for the three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



- The Apostle’s Creed is the baptismal creed. As a feature of the confession of the individual faith of the person being baptized, each article begins with the word “I” – “I believe.”
- The Nicene Creed came later and is the creed of the church. It’s saying that we all, along with everyone else who is also church with us, confess this together, so each article begins with the word “We” – “We believe.”

The “I believe” and the “We believe” work together.

- When we confess the “We believe” of the Nicene Creed, of course, we are still confessing the “I believe” of individual faith as well.
- And when we confess the “I believe” of the Apostles’ Creed, our group confession creates a “We believe” in the shared speaking.

So, here’s the thing... In the worship service, the confession is not a prayer. It’s a public testimony to one another, to the world, and even to ourselves – “Yes, I believe this, too. I’m in with the rest of you.”

- We create a “we believe” out of the “I believe.”
- I’m not saying it’s bad if you use it as a prayer, but let’s think about this.
- Prayers are God focused, often very internal, individual experiences.
- But the confession of the creed is meant to be an outward public expression also for the ears of those gathered around you. It’s meant to create and foster faith community.
- “Oh, wow, you believe! I believe, too! We’re both believers. I’m not the only one. I’m not alone. You’re not alone. Look at all of us believers.”
- The “we believe” strengthens and blesses our “I believe.”

Journey with this Lent at Ascension as we explore our “I believe” together. May the Holy Spirit bless us on this journey so that our “we believe” encourages our “I believe,” and our “I believe” enriches the joy of our “we believe.” Amen.