

File: Apostles Creed      Text: Romans 10:9-10

Dear Friends in Christ, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen!

I'd like to begin this morning by showing you a very brief clip from a commercial for Tire Rack....Every time I see this commercial I smile because I'm sure the exact same thing has happened more times than we know. Guy thinks his truck is stronger than the stump and them BAM!!! That is one tough stump that can endure anything.

Wouldn't it be great to have faith as deeply rooted as that stump? The kind of faith that endures! The kind of faith that has roots so deep that when life gets really unfair, I mean really unfair, faith wins out! The kind of faith that endures the trials and temptations of life! The kind of faith that when you look in the mirror and you aren't sure who you are that you can trust that God does and still loves you. The kind of faith that isn't blown about by the winds of culture or convenience. A person would be blessed to have that kind of faith don't you think? I sure do!

So how does that happen? What tools do we have at our disposal that help us sink our roots deeply? You might be surprised by this but an important one is The Apostle's Creed. Like The Lord's Prayer it is something you might have said

so many times that it's lost its punch. It might be something you easily just whip through in church. It might be one of those things that you ask yourself, why do we do this are they just trying to find filler material for the service?

Contrary to that I hope you'll discover in the next few minutes the beauty and importance of The Apostle's Creed. Here are some quick and really important things about the Creed. First of all it's not in The Bible. The Apostle's Creed witnesses to what the Bible says. In the early years of Christianity there was some weird stuff was being taught. So the early church fathers put together what are called "creeds". There are three primary creeds that remind us of the basics of Christianity and The Apostle's Creed is the shortest. And if taken seriously they give us a more robust understanding of The Bible. It's used to correct really bad theology and it's important in the spiritual formation of God's people.

The creed you might say is kind of like The Moon. The moon doesn't give off light though it looks like it. It reflects the light of the sun. If you wanted to distill the message of the entire Bible and God's relationship to His people down into a few paragraphs The Apostle's Creed would be it.

I really like the way one person put it: the Apostle's Creed helps give balance to our faith. Suppose you went to a personal trainer and said I want to get in shape, get stronger and do weight training. But here's the deal I want to only

work on my right calf. I want to have the best looking, strongest and most toned right calf humanly possible. Hopefully your trainer would sit you down and have a little talk about how if you really want to be healthy and get in shape you can't just develop your right calf, you have to do a whole body workout.

It's easy to get overly focused on God who created the heaven and earth. If that's the only part of one's faith that is developed then faith is in a God who did something that happened somehow a long time ago. If you're overdeveloped in that area of faith it's gonna be like "well yeah I believe in God but it doesn't really matter much in my life day to day."

Also pretty easy have an overdeveloped faith that is only about Jesus. I'm really glad you've accepted Jesus and you want others to accept Jesus but maybe it didn't or won't happen for them exactly the way it did for you. We can't forget about this incredible God who created everything or about The Holy Spirit who is God's presence with us now. We can't have one without the other two. The Creed helps keep our faith in balance and alive and dynamic. To be overdeveloped in only one area isn't healthy. Just like having only an overdeveloped calf isn't helpful without developing the rest of our bodies.

In addition to balance the other thing The Creed does is give us clarity about the Christian faith. Survey after survey tells us of the widespread beliefs among

Christians. And by that I don't mean that one denomination teaches infant baptism and another what's called believer's baptism. I mean that in surveys we see that many people who call themselves Christians have turned Christianity into a spiritual buffet. Taking a little from this religion and that religion and some from pop culture and have watered it down so much that there's confusion about the God revealed in The Bible. The Creed is very clear about who God is.

Yet contemporary Christianity has been turned faith into entertainment and faith that is primarily entertainment has shallow roots. Think about it like this and I'll use a Lutheran example because that's what I'm most familiar with but It happens in all churches: What's the first question a lot of parents ask their kids when they pick them up from Sunday School or Confirmation or youth group...Did you have fun?

Adults will ask the same question of other adult when they've been to church---"Did you enjoy church today"? If fun is always the bar things have to measure up to then we're in real big trouble. It's meant to be formative, to help us sink our roots deeply into a faith that trusts in The Lord not first and foremost fun. Contrary to what it might sounds like and what some may think, I am all for fun. But when it comes to the deepest stuff in life, developing the kind of faith that has deep roots and weathers and deals with the stuff of real life head on formative is what's most important.

In addition to balance and clarity the Apostle's Creed reminds us that we are part of this community of faith that is really diverse and really global and historical. We say the Holy Catholic church and the communion of saints. When we say The Holy Catholic Church, the word Catholic means universal so we're saying we believe in the church around the world. It's so much bigger than us, so much bigger than our denomination. It means that we're stronger than we could be on our own. Yes The Creed is not new but it reminds us when we talk about the communion of saints that it's our turn to run a faithful race.

The other interesting thing about being reminded of the Holy Catholic Church and the communion of saints is as Pastor Matt Chandler put it and I paraphrase, in the last 150 years or so Christianity has enjoyed a lot of favor in this country and as we know that is now changing for all kinds of reasons. And we as Christians used to define ourselves by things like how we saw baptism or communion or our differences on some small theological issues. That is falling away and we need to be getting back to the basics and know that our borders go beyond being Baptist or Lutheran or Episcopalian. That's what the Creeds reminds us of—community beyond our congregation.

Along with balance, clarity, and community The Apostle's Creed helps us in how we counsel others and ourselves when it comes to making choices in life. How can that be? Well you know those words “he is seated at the right hand of the

father and he will come to judge the living and the dead, and in the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting..”

Think about it, if you really believe as Scripture teaches that there will be a judgment and you believe in the forgiveness of sins you don't run and hide from the forgiver, you run into the arms of the forgiver who provides life everlasting.

Think about the context in which the creed was written during the first couple of centuries. When the followers of Jesus gathered to worship they didn't gather in air conditioned or heated buildings under the protection of law and freedom of religion. They rejected the popular narrative of the day. In that day it was that the emperor was God. And they're saying We reject that and believe that Jesus is Lord!

When we confess our faith using the Apostle's Creed and it talks about God the Father being Creator, The Work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit we in essence are standing up and saying we're not buying into the popular narrative of our day. Rejecting that materialism and stuff will ultimately satisfy our souls. Rejecting that everybody has their own way and that whether they discover Christ or not really doesn't matter. No we are confessing that knowing Christ matters.

Romans 10:9-10 “If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord” and 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 confess and are saved.”

It's the confessing that we're doing when we say the creed, these incredible words that have been wrung out of the Bible that remind us that there is such a thing as sin and separation from God so God came into the world to save sinners, that Christ died for our sins, that he came to make known to us the path of life.

Far from being just something we say to fill a few moments in the service, each time we say the Apostle's Creed it's like having the entire message of Scripture distilled down into a few paragraphs. It's no accident that followers of Jesus have been saying it for three thousand years. And far from being just some ancient words it is a tool that helps us maintain that deep rootedness in the faith, and stability and fruitfulness in our faith. It's one of the tools that witnesses to Scripture that helps develop a faith that endures.

Invite you to stand and let's join together in confessing our faith along with the video using the words of the Apostle's Creed. ....