

“God”
Apostles Creed
Genesis 1
06/25/2023

Recap of Week 1 + Why of AC Series

Goodmorning. Good to be with you. **Genesis 1.**

In case you missed last week we kicked off our summer series where we will be working together through what is known as the *Apostles Creed*.

The Apostles Creed is a short confession or summary statement of what Christians have believed for centuries. It summarizes in 8 short sentences the core doctrines (core beliefs) of our Christian faith.

And since the 1st century, followers of Jesus have used the Creed to do 2 specific things – **form their doctrine (Orthodoxy) and fuel their discipleship (Orthopraxy).**

And so as we said last week it’s our hope that as we explore the creed line by line together over the next few months, that it will do the same for us. That we would grow in our knowledge and understanding of these core doctrines of our faith. And then not just that we would *know or affirm* these truths in our minds, but that it would lead us to **surrender to them and live in light of them.**

So to kick us off this morning, and we’ll do this for the rest of the series, let’s begin today’s teaching by standing and joining our voices to the ancient church as we read the creed together...

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. 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.

Pray + Seat.

Trinity

Now before we get into the specific line we’re covering today, one of the things I want to make sure we’re clear on is how central to the creed the Christian understanding of God is. The Christian understanding of God is different from the Islamic understanding of God, the Jewish understanding of God, the Mormon understanding of God.

As Christians we believe in the *Triune God*. God is a Trinity. The God of the Bible is **one God, three distinct persons.**

One God, one nature. Three persons. You and I as humans are one nature, one person. God as we worship Him is one nature, three persons. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

You've got **Deuteronomy 6:4 – “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”**

In tension with **Matt 28:19 – Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

Don't try to give it an analogy like a 3-leaf clover or an egg or the three forms of water, they're all heresy. Just keep it clear like this – we worship – **1 God, 3 persons.**

And if you're like - That is confusing. Me too. It's one of the great mysteries but yet truths of our faith.

And I wanted to start with that because the Creed is distinctly trinitarian. Meaning in this creed we confess our belief in all three persons of the trinity and the unique roles and work they do.

God the Father

So next week we'll start talking about God the Son. A few weeks from now we'll dive into God the Holy Spirit. Today we're focusing on this line of the creed which talks specifically about God the Father.

The Creed says – **“God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.”**

Now there's several important realities in this line:

1. **God is Father** – He's a Father in relationship to Jesus, God the Son. He is a father in a generic sense who stands over all humanity who bears His image. He is also Heavenly Father in a special and specific sense to all who trust in Jesus. As Christians, we get to share through spiritual adoption, with Jesus, what it means to be children of God.
2. **God is Almighty** – God is the sum total of perfection. He's all-powerful. He's all knowing. He's self-existent. He's present everywhere at all times. He never changes. He does whatever He pleases.

Now, these are two overwhelmingly powerful truths about the God of our faith - His power and His fatherhood – we could spend at least a sermon if not more on each one. But I think each of those terms actually find a deeper meaning in the next line, where I want to focus our attention today – **Creator of heaven and earth.**

God the Creator. Now, let me disappoint you right away – I am not here to settle any creation debates.

We tend to, when it comes to our doctrine of creation – spend our time wondering and debating about the how.

- Was it 6 literal days but with the appearance of old age?
- Is Genesis 1 really a poetic telling of 6, 1,000 year ages?
- Was it some version of theistic evolution where God kicked off the whole process and then it ran the course he designed?

If you're hoping that's where I'm going to take this over the next 30 minutes – I'm really sorry to disappoint you, but that's not my goal today. And please, I'm begging you, do not make it the goal of your Community Group time this week.

First, because for us at Citizens the “how” of creation is what we call an “open issue”, meaning there's freedom to arrive at a number of various theological positions and still be a part of our church and a Christian within the bounds of orthodox belief.

But Second, we're not going there today because – **When it comes to our doctrine of creation, the Bible seems much less concerned about the *how* and much more concerned about the *who*.**

When you open the Scriptures, page 1 line 1 you are confronted with what becomes the resounding echo of the entire first chapter.

Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

And this is repeated again and again, 32x in the first 31 verses – God created. God spoke. God saw. God, God, God.

In the beginning, *God*. God, not theories about creation or evolution, God is front and center of Genesis 1.

Theologian JI Packer says it this way – **“It is arguable how much (or how little) Genesis 1 and 2 tell us about the method of creation – whether, for instance, they do or do not rule out the idea of physical organisms evolving through epochs of thousands of years. What is clear, however, is that their main aim is to tell us not how the world was made but who made it.”**

That's the point of Genesis 1. To make sure no one is confused about this reality – **God is the creator of the heavens and the earth.**

“Heavens and the Earth” is the Bible's language for everything.

- Everything you see and don't see – God created it.
- Everything in the material world and the spiritual world – God created it.

God is the who. In the beginning, God. If you're able to zoom out of the weeds of Genesis 1-2 and your questions on the “how” – 6 days, 6,000 years, let's debate the science! – If you're able to rise above all of that you're able to do what I think is the bigger point of the beginning of Scriptures – **to see the “what” of creation and then reorient your life in worship around the “who” behind it.**

Because Genesis 1:1 starts with God because the universe starts with God and then therefore points to God.

Psalm 19:1 – The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

We're meant to see creation and not spend our effort debating the how, but marveling at the who.

Who is God?

Who is much more important than how, because who you think is behind all of this will dictate why you think it's all here, and why you think it's all here will then dictate how you live.

So let's talk for a few minutes about this God. Let's form some of our doctrine, shape some of our orthodoxy around who the Scriptures show us this God is.

In Genesis 1:1, this one verse, we see 4 incredible attributes and characteristics of our creator God. Let's take a moment to think about these together and then talk about how we should respond in light of them.

Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

1. God is Eternal

In the beginning, there's God. Meaning before time itself even began, before there was a beginning to this whole thing, there was nothing, except God.

That is what it means to believe God is eternal. That the triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – have no beginning. They were there before the “in the beginning” even started.

We as humans have a beginning but no end. We will go on to live forever either in glory or in judgment based on our faith in Jesus. We have a beginning, but no end. God has no beginning or no end. He is eternal. He has always existed and He will always exist.

Revelation 22:13 – “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

God has existed from eternity past to eternity present.

And if that is not enough – God being eternal doesn't just mean he existed before time begins, but that also means He is the one who starts time. God is the author of time, who therefore exists outside of time.

Which, if I can just hurt our brains for a second – that means God doesn't work linearly like we do. God exists outside of time. Before time. Over time. And after time. So you and I, we're going to live today, and then (God-permitting) we're going to live tomorrow. And then Tuesday. 2023, then 2024, then 2025 and so on and so forth. That's how time works for humanity.

That's not how time works for God. He stands outside of linear time.

Look at Psalm 90:2+4 – From everlasting to everlasting you are God...For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

As theologian Henry Thiessen puts it, **“By the eternity of God we mean His infinity in relation to time; we mean that He is without beginning or end; that He is free from all succession of time; and that He is the cause of time...Eternity for God is one Now.”**

2. God is Infinite

If God created the heavens and the earth, that means He must be greater than this creation. Meaning – God cannot be and is not bound by the heavens and the earth. He exists outside of their limits. He is, as theologians call it – omnipresent. ***He exists everywhere at all times.***

God is not a corporeal, or embodied, being. God the Son takes on a body, takes on flesh when he comes to earth, but God Himself is not bodied. Meaning – to say God is omnipresent, that is present-everywhere does not mean he’s just really really massive. Like he’s just so big he takes up the whole universe. It also doesn’t mean that we’re pantheistic and that in some weird pocahontas style God is in everything.

Rather, it means that he is not limited by spatial presence or reality at all. He exists outside the limits of time (eternal) and He exists outside the limits of space (infinite).

This is why in 1 Kings 8, Solomon, the son of David and king of Jerusalem finishes building the temple - 7 years of construction on this magnificent, glorious place for God to dwell with this people and his response after completing it is this...

1 Kings 8:27 – “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!

In other words – welp, we’re gonna need a bigger place. God is infinite. He stands outside of and is not limited by space.

3. God is All-Powerful.

The theological term for this would be omnipotent – All-potent, all-powerful. God creates everything that exists without lifting a finger. This is a pattern that repeats in the first chapter of the Bible:

Genesis 1:3 – 3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

Genesis 1:9 – 9 And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so.

God speaks everything you see (and don’t see) into existence. The trees, the flowers, the ocean, oxygen, animals, puppies (on behalf of God, you’re welcome). God spoke that into existence and now, Psalm 104 tells us, sustains it and keeps it all spinning.

Now, just so we’re clear, being omnipotent doesn’t mean God “can do anything.” There are things God cannot do. Specifically God cannot act contrary to His nature. Since He is perfectly holy and good, he cannot perform evil. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2), he cannot sin, he cannot change (he is the same yesterday, today, and forever).

Rather, it is more accurate to say that God being omnipotent, all-powerful means **God can and will do all that he intends as He rules over His creation.**

Psalm 135:6 – Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.

You and I have things we want to do, but cannot do. We have things we want to control, but cannot control. God has never experienced that inability. God has never experienced a desire to do something and yet cannot.

That's what it means that our God is omnipotent. That He is in control of his creation, he exercises dominion over it. That he is not absent from the world but ruling and reigning and holding it all together.

God is not bound by time (eternal).

He is not bound by space (infinite).

He is not bound by inability (all-powerful).

4. God is Independent

God does not rely on anything in creation because He existed in perfection before He created it. God was perfect, before anything or anyone else was here besides God, God was.

Meaning he's not reliant on any part of his creation for His perfection or wholeness, including you and me. God does not need us.

There's this line of thinking that permeates the Church right now that tries to teach God created us because He was lonely. He created us because He needed a friend. God is love, and so He created humans because He needed someone to love. It sounds legitimate, it's not the Bible.

God existed before time began in a Trinity. In a perfect, love relationship - Father, Son and Spirit. 3 distinct persons, 1 God. Meaning – God didn't need you. He was perfect. God didn't create us to have someone to love, He was already exercising His love in the relationship of the trinity.

He created us out of an overflow of that love. The love the Trinity had for one another is what then gushes into all of creation.

God is independent. Meaning – God is totally ok by Himself.

- He does not need you to give him glory.
- He does not need you to affirm Him as if he's self-conscious or in need of a self-esteem boost.
- He does not need you to defend Him to the world.
- He does not need you to worship Him because He's forgotten who He is and what He's done.

He's GOD.

God is not bound by time (eternal).

He is not bound by space (infinite).

He is not bound by inability (omnipotent).

He is not bound by neediness (independent).

Bigger view of God

And I think this is essential for us to contemplate and think about because if you're anything like me – my view of God is way, way, way too small.

Though the God of the Scriptures is extraordinary, the God in our minds is often functionally ordinary.

- I might say I believe in an eternal God, but then I start freaking out and doubting Him when His plans don't match my timeline. I start thinking – “Why is God delaying here? Why is He not acting sooner?” – Thinking my timetable is better than the one who stands outside of time.
- I might claim to believe in an infinite, limitless God, but how often do I live with the reality of feeling alone? God is everywhere, active, present and yet often I fall into the trap of thinking He's not present with me, or that He's far from me, or distant from me.
- I might say I trust the all-powerful, does whatever He pleases God, but then when pain enters, hardship enters suddenly I suddenly wonder if God really is powerful or if His purposes are in danger of failing.
- I might say I worship an independent, self-sufficient, ways are higher than my ways and thoughts are higher than my thoughts God, but then when He acts differently or provides differently or tells me in His word something different than I want, suddenly I start wanting to reform God into my image to do what I want and act how I expect Him to act.

So the invitation of the creed as it points to and illuminates Genesis 1 is to form our doctrine, and then reform our doctrine back time and time again when we want to shrink God in our minds and our hearts, when we want to functionally bring an idea of a small, ordinary God into our lives and circumstances, to instead elevate our view of Him and His greatness.

That's the orthodoxy we want. That's the right belief we desire – a view of God as He has revealed Himself to us – big, massive, in control, good, kind, trustworthy.

Orthopraxy

And when we let our orthodoxy be formed in that way, I think it leads to a few distinct parts of our orthopraxy, a few right responses in our lives. Let me just help us think about 2 before we close, maybe this week in your groups you can think through some other right responses.

1. Humility

What tends to happen in our lives is that when we shrink our view of God, we replace Him with ourselves. We become our own functional gods who then God is supposed to serve.

So I pray about my will, not God's. I ask God for what I want, way more than I ask Him what He wants.

I'll say it this way – far too often, we are tempted to form our view of God as someone made in our image, not the other way around. We are functionally creator, and He is the creation.

Meaning – we think God should think like us, act how we expect him or want him to, and be generally fashioned in his views on life and the world as we would desire him to be.

This comes out often when someone is explaining why they don't believe in God or want to reject a certain part of the Scriptures. They will say something like - "I could never believe in a God who..."

As if in order for God to be God He has to agree to our decided upon standards.

Tim Keller – "If your God never disagrees with you, you might just be worshiping an idealized version of yourself."

But church, let the words of Scripture, let the truth of the Creed, remind us and convict us – **God is God.**

He does not think like you and I. He does not operate like you and I do. He is not subservient to your demands or view of the world. He is not created in our image, we are created in His image.

He is the creator, we are the creature. He has what theologians call "creator rights". Because He created us, He gets to call the shots over our lives, not us. He gets to call the shots over our theology, not us. Because He is eternal, and we are finite. He is infinite, and we live with so many limits. He is omnipotent, we are frail and weak. He is independent, we rely on Him for everything.

Look at what **Psalm 100:3** tells us – **Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his.**

Because if God is God, then who is not God? You and me.

And we get the beautiful invitation from the Scriptures to humble ourselves before Him.

To lower ourselves in His presence. To come before Him with confidence because of the blood of Jesus and trembling because of His awesome power and might. He does not despise a humble heart, the Scriptures tell us. He exalts the humble heart.

So we in humility, as we learn to view God rightly, surrender to Him and His ways and His commands and His teaching.

This shapes us:

- It shapes our view of the Scriptures – Humility means we don't read the Scriptures as if we're the authority over it to take it or leave it, we read in submission to God's authority as revealed in His Word.

- It shapes our view of surrender – Humility means when God calls us to give something up or sacrifice something we don't argue back, or excuse our way out of it, we learn to humbly submit to our Heavenly Father.
- It shapes our view of gender – Humility means not seeking to make our body something other than what the creator has designed us to be, and bringing ourselves under His design.
- It shapes our view of sexuality – Humility means we listen and follow How he has told us to function within our bodies and how we use them or don't use them sexually.

And so on and so forth.

There's a repentant humility that should come as our view of God is lifted up by the creed and by Genesis 1. As we say each week "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth" let it be a reminder of how big our God is and therefore His appropriate rule and reign over our hearts and lives.

2. Trust

The second response it leads to is one of trust. A life of deeper trust. We do not worship a small, incompetent God. We do not worship an absent God.

Psalm 115:3 – **Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.**

And let that bring you to your knees in humility and surrender, but also let it deepen your heart-level trust in the rule and reign of our heavenly father.

- The world is not outside of God's control.
- Your suffering is not outside of His sovereign will.
- His purposes for this world and your life are not in danger.

He does what He pleases.

So when you pray, you're not throwing out wish dreams into the sky. For those who are in Christ, who trust in Jesus for salvation:

- You are calling upon your mighty Father. Who is not bound by time. Who is not bound by space and limit. Who is not bound by inability or capacity. Who is not bound by need.
- You are calling upon the God who controls the wind and the waves, causes the grass to grow (or in my yards the weeds), sends the rain, spins the world on its axis.
- You are pleading with the one who gives life and breath and everything to all mankind.
- You are petitioning the one who hung the stars in place, who knit you together in your mother's womb, who appoints the rulers over the world.

You can trust Him!

Let this line draw you into worshipful trust – "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth."

He's more forgiving than my sin.
He's stronger than my weaknesses.
He's more faithful than my doubts.
He's more present than my fears.
He's more comforting than my sorrow.

I am His. And glory upon glory in the gospel He is mine.

And so we trust Him.

This is my Father's World. This week as I was working on this sermon, I was reminded of one of my favorite hymns from my childhood, you may be familiar with it, it's called *This is my Father's World*. And as I was thinking this idea of trust, I kept coming back to a few stanzas in that hymn.

They say this:

**This is my Father's world: I rest me in the
thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
His hand the wonders wrought.**

**This is my Father's world, the birds their carols
raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.**

**This is my Father's world: why should my heart
be sad?
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring!
God reigns; let earth be glad!**

**This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.**

He rules and He reigns.

Over you, so humbly repent.
Over your life and the world, so trust Him more.

Pray.