

“Creed: What Christians Believe and Why: God”  
Psalm 90:1-5 (CEB)  
February 18, 2018  
Rev. Dave Baldrige  
Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rDcCeiYxTU> (Indescribable: Cut around 2 min 29 sec.)

I believe in God the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth. Look up and see how great our God is. Look around and see His creation. Look at yourself and know you were created by God. (How Great is our God, How Great Thou Art).

And yet in this passage of scripture that was read we have the phrase, “You return people to dust...” On Wednesday we began the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday---a 40-day journey to Easter. On Wednesday around 200 people came throughout the day to receive the Imposition of ashes, the sign of the cross on their forehead. As either I or Rev. Cathy places that ash cross on their head we said, “From dust you came and to dust you shall return.” The dust/ashes are to remind of our own mortality.

Never would I imagine that on Valentine’s Day...a day to show love to others and on Ash Wednesday a day to remember our mortality that while I was in the sanctuary doing the Imposition of Ashes I received word of the tragic killing of 17 at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. I have a United Methodist Colleague that has teachers and students that go to that school. Mortality realized way to soon. The largest High School mass shooting in American History. Grief, hurt, pain, anger.

When will violence with guns stop? It has become an epidemic and unfortunately somewhat ‘normal.’ I Believe.... I believe God the Father weeps, and so should we. Enough is enough. Gun violence must stop. O Lord help us. Help us to pray, help us to take a stand against the violence caused by guns. I don’t have the exact answer or solution, but something must be done. Let’s work at figuring out a way to stop this---for the love of God, for the love of others. My heart breaks.

**A prayer of Moses, the man of God.**

**90 Lord, you have been our help, generation after generation<sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born, before you birthed the earth and the inhabited world—from forever in the past to forever in the future, you are God.**

Lord we need your help. I believe...I believe...I believe that we are in a world than more than any other time in my lifetime we need to know what we believe and why.

In 1944 the Gallup Poll did a national survey asking, “Do you personally believe in God?” 96% said yes. In June of 2016 the Gallup Poll asked in a survey, “Do you believe in God?” The statistics changed. Now rather than 96% only 89% said yes. 10% said No and I find it interesting and very perplexing that 1% had no opinion.

Today we begin a Sermon series until Easter called “Creed—What Christians Believe and Why.” It will be Biblical study on The Apostle’s Creed. Adam Hamilton, Senior Pastor of Church of the Resurrection United Methodist Church, which is the largest United Methodist Church in the United States with over 11,000 in attendance per Sunday, wrote a book in 2016 that will be our study resource. **(image)**

You will notice on the back of your bulletin there are classes and small groups that you can attend that will be using the book as a resource. Those classes begin today. The Wednesday Night Study will also be using this. Books are available in the Multi-Purpose Room. You may want to get a book even if you are not in a small group.

In our society we have 3 options of belief available to us. 1. You can believe anything. Culture seems to say it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe in something. Society says, it is a free country, believe what you want to believe. The world says, it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere in your belief. It ends up that some people believe in everything a little bit, but nothing very much.

Second option of belief. You believe wrong things. You can sincerely believe, and be sincerely wrong. There is a social stigma that the world says believe in, buy into this philosophy and it could be the wrong thing to believe. There can be a belief in false doctrines, heresies, and simply wrong teachings.

Thirdly, you believe right things. I want to be a believer. A believer in right things. For Christians, those right things are found in God’s Word.... the Bible. I believe in God is today’s message. Next week: I Believe in Jesus Christ.

The Apostles’ Creed says, “I believe. I believe in God.” In just over 100 words in the Apostle’s Creed is some indication of Why We Believe What We Believe. What does it mean to be a Believer? This historic confession of the Christian faith written in the 4<sup>th</sup> century contains the basics of why we believe.

The earliest creedal statement was simply, “Jesus is Lord.” Although not written by the Apostles’ the Apostles’ Creed contains a summary if you will of what they believed. An Apostle as you may know is the brother of an Epistle. No, just kidding. The Apostles’ were basically the original disciples who saw Jesus first hand.

In Latin the first words of this statement are Credo in Deum. Now I took 4 years of Latin in High School. Primarily because I had a crush on the teacher.... Mrs. M. She was even shorter than I was.... long brown hair, any way I digress.... Credo in Deum then, the first words are, “I believe in God.”

Christians in the early church used this as a summary and confession of faith. Baptism in early Christendom was so significant to a public confession of a new way of living. During Lent, 40 days prior to Easter, those to be baptized were given instructions in the Christian faith by understanding and learning the Apostles' Creed. On Easter Sunday those new Christians were baptized and together recited the Apostles' Creed. It was a public declaration of faith.

I believe in God the Father maker of heaven and earth.

**Psalm 8:3-4 Common English Bible (CEB)**

**<sup>3</sup> When I look up at your skies, at what your fingers made— the moon and the stars that you set firmly in place—<sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you think about them; what are human beings that you pay attention to them?**

Of all creation and the galaxies and stars...God was the maker of us. How did He make us? Hamilton in his book (page 25) says, "Astronomer Fred Hoyle suggested an often-cited analogy for the improbability of life on earth organizing on its own, saying the chances were about the same as those of a gale-force wind blowing through a junkyard and, after it passed, revealing that a Boeing 747 had spontaneously assembled itself."

Or even as Miles McPherson said at our XO Marriage Conference simulcast...If you believe in the big bang...who banged it?

Hamilton uses another great illustration that I like the best. That illustration is.... well...you will have to go to small group to find out.

**Genesis 1:27 English Standard Version (ESV)**

**<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**

I believe in God the Father maker of heaven and earth. Not just maker of heaven and earth...but my maker, your maker. Our Father. God the Father who is grieving and caring about His children around this world He created. To say I believe in God the Father presumes a relationship. Unfortunately, a sign of a fallen world is there are many father/children relationships that have not been good or strained.

But think about it...this God who created the universe thinks about us, pays attention to us. We have the privilege of calling Him Father.

**Romans 8:15-16 Modern English Version (MEV)**

**<sup>15</sup> For you have not received the spirit of slavery again to fear. But you have received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God,**

By saying, “I believe in God.” Means there is a one on one relationship. No one can be a substitute for your faith. Your faith must be personal; it must be your own. It’s really not that complicated. You see no one can take a bath for you. No one can take your medicine or have an operation for you. No one can believe for you. It has been said, “Faith is like a toothbrush. Everyone should have one and use it regularly, but you shouldn’t try to use someone else’s.” Oooh. Everyone should have a faith....it is personal.

Author Alister McGrath in his book, “I Believe, Exploring the Apostle’s Creed” said this, “A surprisingly large number of people who think of themselves as Christians never get further than accepting the truth of Christianity. They believe that God is here---but they have never met him. They believe that God is able to forgive sins---but they have never allowed God to forgive their sins. They believe that God is reliable---but they have never relied on him. In 18<sup>th</sup> century America, people like this were called “halfway” believers.” (Alister McGrath, “I Believe”, Exploring the Apostle’s Creed, page 23, InterVarsity Press)

Hamilton in his book calls them “practical atheists.” “People who live their daily lives as though there is no God while giving mental assent to the idea of God.” (Hamilton, page 30)

Friends I certainly don’t want to be a practical atheist and I don’t want to be a halfway believer. I want to be all in.

I believe...in God the Father almighty maker of heaven and earth. I believe not just with my head, but with my very being. I have felt Him. I know Him. He has been there with me. He has cried with me as I cried over the tragedy on Wednesday. He has comforted me when there has been loss in my life. He has been with me in hospital rooms and funeral homes. He has been there when I felt that no one else was there. He has given me direction when I have been so lost in my life. He has forgiven me when I have messed up and sinned. He has given me guidance when I needed direction.

I believe in God the Father almighty that made the heaven and earth and yet cares enough about me to know my thoughts. He knows the hair and lack of it on my head. He knows my concerns and cares...He is God the Father. He, the maker of heaven and earth and I have a special relationship. I give Him honor and glory. How great is our God. I believe in Him and therefore there is always hope. I believe in Him and there is a faith that changes the way I live daily.

I believe. I believe in God the Father almighty maker of heaven and earth.