

Series: Ancient Faith

We Believe

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Ephesians 4:2-6

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, April 27, 2025

Good morning, church. My name is Charlotte Schmaltz, and I am privileged to be on the First Impressions team and also to serve in the kids' ministry. Today, we have a reading from Ephesians 4, verses 2 through 6: "Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to be one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all," the word of the Lord.

Thanks, Charlotte. Hey, good morning, everyone. How are we doing today? How is the post-Easter hangover? Do you guys feel that at all, like coming back? Last weekend was such a beautiful weekend celebrating the resurrection of Christ, and I just wanted to take a moment. One of the things that just warmed my heart was how many guests were invited last week. I talked to so many people that Waterstone is not their home church, and so much of that is thanks to you and you taking that risk, taking that bold step, and inviting someone who maybe does not go to church here, and so just thank you for that, and I especially want to say thank you to those of you who invited someone who said no, because I know sometimes that can be hard. You take the risk, you ask them, and like, "No, sorry, we are good," but keep that invitation out there, so just thank you for that.

Also last week I got into a couple of conversations afterwards. I made a few comments about men wearing lavender on Easter. I do not know if you remember that. I actually meant to wear a lavender shirt today a little bit ironically and just could not get it ironed in time, so I am just in this shirt, and that is what we got for you, but I am excited to start off this new series on the Nicene Creed. We are looking at this ancient statement of faith that has grounded the church for over 1700 years, and did anybody catch the bumper video we were playing, what song that was? "Creed," yes, we had to, right? Like it is on the nose, but I feel like if we did not, I do not know whether to be embarrassed or really proud that we went there, but I for sure know my middle school self would be like, this is a top five highlight of my life, that "Creed" is being played in church, and I am about to preach, so I hope you enjoyed that. As we get started today, let me just take a moment. I want to pray for us, and then we are going to jump into this new series.

Heavenly Father, God, we come before you today, and Lord, we just lift up your name, and we make space for you here today. God, I ask that we begin this journey over the next few weeks of looking at the Nicene Creed, this statement of faith that has lasted for the church for over 1700 years, God, I pray that it would be a series that anchors our church, that provides us with space to examine what it is we believe and how we live out that belief into a world that is questioning what we believe and what Christianity is. I pray that you would form us, that you would shape us, that you would transform us through our time together today as we open your word. May you speak through me where it made anything I have to say that is not of you, straight away, may your word shine through, and God, we just ask that your Holy Spirit meet us in this place. We open ourselves to you now. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

All right, so today as we are diving into this series, Ancient Faith, I want to just give you a premise up top that we are actually not going to be spending a lot of time going into the Creed today. We are going to back up and do a historical perspective, and we are going to look at these three questions, why we need to examine the Nicene Creed right now in the cultural moment we find ourselves in. We are going to look at this idea of what the Creed even is, and then we are going to finish up with this question of how the Creed is relevant for the church today.

So first, why would we even choose to examine the Nicene Creed? Why would we build an entire sermon series on the Nicene Creed? I have another question for you. Have you ever felt lost before, and I mean like really, really lost, where you had no idea where you were, how you ended up there, and that you just had no idea even how to get home? Has anyone struggled with the sense of direction or getting lost sometimes? Okay. Oh, man, Hannah just like, yep. All right, Hannah and I are good friends. Yeah, I get lost all the time. I have so much trouble with directions. In fact, when I was in college, I was going to college in a small town in Arkansas, and for breaks, oftentimes I would go to try to visit my grandma in Missouri. On the trip up there, it happened without fail, almost every single time there was this one area where it was like these three highways came together, and I could never figure out which highway I was supposed to take to get to my grandma's house, which sounds like the start of a weird song, but it was true, and I just could not figure out how to get there, without fail, every single time, and I would print out. This was in the day of Map Quest, so I would print out the directions, and they were supposed to tell me where to go. It was before GPS or Google Maps or any of that, so it was a little bit like it does not know how to reroute you when you have printed the directions, and I would end up lost again and again and again. It became so bad that I started calling this little area the Bermuda Triangle of the Midwest, where I was just like, my dad would call, "Did you make it okay?" "I don't know, Dad, I got lost again." I feel like I would have to stop at the same gas station, and by the fourth time, I and the guy were becoming friends, "All right, here you are again." It was just a mess, and I would get lost all the time.

Now, here is why I am asking that question. Have you ever felt that way about your faith? Have you ever felt like you just ended up somewhere where you are not quite sure what you believe anymore, how you got there, or what the right thing to believe is? Sometimes when it comes to our personal faith, we can feel lost, and I think sometimes if we expand out beyond that, and we look at the church in America, have you ever looked at the broader church or maybe even Waterstone and thought, "Man, where did we go wrong?" like somewhere, some way, the church has taken the wrong turn, and we ended up somewhere that we really were not supposed to be, that we never intended to go.

There could be all sorts of reasons why we might look at the church and feel that way. I think sometimes we look at the church, and we see things like the church is really good about trying to win arguments and forgets that it is supposed to be winning people, or we look at church, and we can look at the American church in particular, and we have things like Pastors with Props on Instagram or Preachers and Sneakers, or the different platformed preachers that are celebrities, and we are like, "Was this really what the church was supposed to be about, pastors with private jets and famous Instagram handles?" and for some reason, we have traded celebrity and platform for humility and servant leadership. We can just evaluate some of what is going on in the church, and we can wonder and question, "How did we end up

in a place where we traded allegiance to the kingdom of God and to Jesus Christ for political leaders, and when did that swap happen, and how did we get there?

There can be all sorts of places where we feel this tension, this frustration, this sense that we are lost and that we do not quite know where it is we are going. We can trade things like being obsessed over external appearances rather than internal transformation, and just as when I would be driving through the Midwest, and I would be drinking my coffee and singing my songs, and then I would end up somewhere I did not intend to at all, sometimes we can be in church, and we are singing our songs and we are drinking our coffee, and we are just wondering, how did we get here? Where did we go wrong? What turn did we miss? When that happens, when we get to that place where we are not quite sure how we ended up where we are, when we feel that sense of loss, then the question is, how do we find our way home? How do we have something that holds us to our true north, so that we can navigate the cultural waters we find ourselves in? I could give you a bunch of statistics about how the church has lost its way and how people do not trust the church anymore, but it goes deeper than that. It is not just that we could look at Barna Research and be like, yeah, people are confused about the church or do not know what to believe about the church.

I was in a conversation with someone who is very close to me, and as we were in this conversation, they know I work in the church, and they essentially said about the church that, “As I think about the church, and I look at Christianity, I am not really skeptical. No, and I do not really doubt what the church believes. I actually just question whether or not it is a good thing.” He went on to say that the church is not, in his opinion, a net positive for the world, and it is not even a net neutral. It is actually a net negative. I want you to think about that for a moment, because I think it is not just this one person. I think a lot of people can look at the church, and they do not think, they just have this skepticism towards the church. They think it is actually damaging. They do not think it is just irrelevant. They think it is actually harmful. That is where we are. That is where the church has gotten to. That is what people are feeling about the church, and I do not know if you are here today, and you personally feel that sense of lostness or that questioning. It is hard to argue with when you look at some of the abuse or the political entanglement or some of the scandals the church has endured, or maybe it is even just the doctrinal shallowness of the church. You look at the church, and you wonder “What in the world is going on? How did we end up here? How did we get so lost?” What if in those moments we began to shift our perspective?

One of the responsibilities I think as I have as a pastor here is to teach us and equip us to navigate the cultural moment that we find ourselves in, and I think something has happened over the last few years where the question our culture is asking about the church and Christianity has shifted pretty drastically. I think people used to ask around Christianity, “Is this true? Can you prove to me verifiably that what you believe is true?” So, “Is the resurrection true?” or “Is the Bible true?” and “Can I trust this doctrine? Is this actually true?” I think over the last few years, the world has actually stopped asking whether or not Christianity is true, but asking instead, “Is it credible?” Like, is this even worth believing in? Is this even something that is good to believe in? That is the question that I think many people are asking, and what if the way we answered this question was not something new or flashier or louder, but something ancient, something rooted and tested and trusted and true, a landmark that has been true for over 1700 years?

I mentioned that I have a really bad sense of direction. Do you know what helped me overcome that bad sense of direction? It was not GPS on my phone or Google Maps. It was moving to Colorado.

Why? The mountains, yes, some of you are my people. You know. Yes, you move to the mountains, and the mountains are always out to the west, and so no matter where you are, you can always find your way home, because you know where you are in relation to that landmark, because it always tells you what the directions are. I grew up in Dallas. There are no landmarks like that there, and you will be driving down Northwest Highway, and somehow you are going south and east, and it does not even make any sense at all, and the street is not going literally what it is named for, and you have no idea how you are supposed to get home, but when you have a landmark, when you have something that is fixed, that is steady, then you can understand, you can know where you are, and for Christianity that in so many ways is the Nicene Creed. For 1700 years it has been a landmark that has just been a foundation for the church of what we believe, and it transcends different denominations and traditions, and so Catholics adhere to the Nicene Creed, Greek Orthodox, Protestants, all Christians can look to this Creed and say, “No, this is what it means to be a Christian,” and it is not all-encompassing. There are things that we believe that are outside of the Creed, but it is the core. It is the essential beliefs of our faith. It is the things that we hold to you in the cultural moments that feel challenging, so I think it is incredibly appropriate for us to step into this series answering this question, “Why?” by understanding that it actually can serve as an anchor for us, a landmark that helps point us in the right direction in the cultural moment that we find ourselves in. So that is the reason why. We have chosen to examine the Creed right now in this moment because it can serve as a landmark for us about what we believe, but what is the Creed?

Some of you might have grown up in the tradition that actually spent a lot of time with the Creed. Did anyone grow up in a Catholic or a high church tradition, where actually part of your confirmation was examining and studying the Creed? Yeah, some of you, we have a lot of people with a lot of different expressions of faith background here at our church. Some of us, I grew up in a small Bible church, and in the small Bible church I did not even know what the Nicene Creed was, so I went to college, and people would never talk about something like that, and so we have a varying degree of understanding of what even the Nicene Creed is. Where did it come from? Here’s what you need to know. I am just going to give you a brief story, a brief history of how the Nicene Creed came to be, so we can understand what it is.

Essentially, we go back to the year of A.D. 325, so about three-hundred years after Jesus walked the earth. The church is about three hundred years old, and it has been enduring wave after wave of persecution. The church has endured persecution for centuries as people have tried to stamp it out, and Roman emperors have tried to kill the martyrs in the Colosseum, and it is just after that period of time, when Christianity has become legal and accepted, that the threat no longer is outside of the church. Now it is coming from within the church, and there is a teaching that begins to arise around this time where people begin chipping away at the understanding of who Jesus is. Central to the development of this idea of the Nicene and Creed and how it came to be is that there was a man named Arius, and he was teaching essentially that there was a time when Jesus did not exist, that He is the most important creation of God, but He is not God Himself, and so he was teaching, and this teaching about Jesus not actually being the Son of God, not actually being one with God, began to spread like wildfire. For three hundred years the church had adhered to this idea that Jesus was one with God, that He was the Son of God, that He had not been created, and so bishops begin feeling divided. Churches begin splitting, councils begin to be frustrated and not sure how to deal with this situation, and so the Roman Emperor Constantine, trying to

protect his fragile empire, he calls every bishop in the Roman world to the town of Nicea, the city of Nicea, where they are going to hash out this disagreement. He invites bishops from all over the Roman world, and what you have to understand is these men, they were not just academics coming to a church meeting. Many of them came, and they bore the scars of enduring persecution. They had bled for the faith, and they come to Nicea to try to figure out what the church believes and to be centered and rooted. This is not just some boring church meeting where they are arguing about worship or the carpet. I mean these guys got after their stories. They have raised voices and people yelling, and in fact, there is even a story that says Saint Nicholas, yeah, that Saint Nicholas, Santa Claus, where he got so angry at one of these meetings, he slapped Arius across the face. I bet you did not know that about Santa Claus. You had no idea. He was on the naughty list himself. That is where he started. It was not just this meeting where people are like, “Yeah, I do not know. Maybe He is. Maybe He is not.” They were battling for the soul of Christianity, and so as we go through this series, and we begin to read and profess it together, I want you to have that background in your mind. This is not just some boring statement of faith that we read and has no meaning. These people, these men, they were fighting over these ideas, and after weeks of frustration and debate and prayer and conviction, they came up with the Nicene Creed, a bold declaration of what the church believes, a fixed anchor point to where they could say, “No matter what happens in the world, no matter what empires rise or fall, no matter what happens in the culture, no matter what people begin to believe, this is what holds the church to the center.” That is what the Nicene Creed is, a solid foundation for the church. It is not just an anchor point for us today. It has actually been that for the church for 1700 years. It has been a thing that Christians can look to and understand, “This is who Jesus really is. This is what He did. This is who God is and what the church believes,” so it helps us remain grounded when the winds of culture are constantly shifting.

So that is the why and the what of the Creed, but now, let’s answer the question of “how?” How does the Creed remain relevant to us today? How is the Creed important for us today? It really comes down to this, the big idea of our time together today is that the Creed guards our theology, it grounds us in unity, and it guides us in uncertainty. I am still about this pastor thing, so I still had to do a little bit of alliteration there for you guys, okay? So, it is the Creed guards our theology, it grounds us in unity, and it guides us in uncertainty. So first, the Creed guards our theology. What do I mean by that?

The Creed arose in a time of theological confusion. This man, Arius, was teaching that Jesus was not who He said He was. Jesus was not truly God, and so it arose as a guard, protecting the church from drifting into error. It is not an exhaustive list of everything that Christians believe, but it is the core essentials. It draws a line guarding the essentials. The apostle Paul said something like this in Second Timothy 1:13 through 14. He says, “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching,” so focus on the sound teaching, the things that the apostle Paul himself has taught you, “with faith and love in Christ Jesus” I think Saint Nicholas missed that part when he slapped Arius, but we need to understand it is faith and love in Christ Jesus, and then let’s listen to this: “Guard the good deposit of what was entrusted with you. Guard the good deposit of this sound teaching that was given to you by the apostles. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us.” The Creed serves as a way for us to guard our theology, so that we do not drift into trends and patterns that arise over the ages. I mean we live in a time where there are all sorts of trends that arise, all sorts of different moments.

I mean, if you go on social media for any amount of time, you will be just overwhelmed with the number of trends where people will tell you what you need to do with your life and what you need to believe and what you need to think, and you will see someone tell you that if you want to live a long and healthy life, you need to really eat keto, and that is the only thing you are supposed to eat, and then someone else will say, “You know what? Keto is actually killing you slowly. You need to make sure you become a vegan, and you do not ever eat any meat,” right? Or you might have someone say, “You need to do a cold plunge,” but, “No, actually you really need to do a sauna,” and there are so many different ways that people do that, like financial advisors, “Credit cards are so evil, you should never have a credit card,” and then someone else says, “You know what? Credit cards are actually the key to building wealth.” There are so many different trends. How do we know what is true when everybody has a different trend that they say we are supposed to follow, and that bleeds into the church? Different doctrines or theologies begin to be pushed away and pushed to the side as people say and try to follow different trends about what they feel or what they believe, and the Creed can help us guard against those different trends, the different ways, when we hear these different ideas. It is tested and trusted truth. The Creed helps to point us to truth, not to trends, and it anchors us in what is timeless, not in what just comes and goes in the moment.

One of the challenges that church has is that when we begin to fall into trends, we typically go one of two directions. Sometimes the church can follow local trends or trends that are happening in our cultural moment, and we go to this area, this place of superstition and this idea of sentimentalism, where when we become sentimental about the faith, when it is not rooted in sound doctrine. The faith just really becomes about how I feel: “I do not really like that idea about God, and that does not really feel true to me, so I am going to choose a different path. I am going to go a different way,” and it is just a sentimental version of faith where we begin to just dull the sharp edges of the truth, and things like repentance or submission or discipleship begin to just fade into the background, because we just want faith to feel warm and fuzzy and sentimental and to make us feel good.

On the other side, when we do not have sound doctrine, Christianity can easily fall into a kind of superstition. It becomes a faith where it turns into rituals or slogans or practices that are performed not with a deep understanding, but almost like magic tricks to try to get control over outcomes, and so we say things like, “If you say the right prayer, you attend the right service, or if you post the right Bible verse, then God will make this suffering not happen or fix your problems or bless you in a certain way,” and faith just becomes this superstitious way that we try to control God, or this sentimentalism where we try to make God into what we want Him to look like. When Christianity is untethered from its historic, rooted, theological truth, we will always become either sentimental or superstitious, but neither of those things can actually sustain our faith when the cultural moments we find ourselves in happen, because we are not actually worshipping God in those moments. We are worshipping a God we have created in our own image, and so the Nicene Creed helps guard our theology to make sure that that does not happen, but beyond that, it also grounds us in unity.

One of the critical elements you will see about the Nicene Creed is it is not a statement where we say, “I believe.” It is a statement where we say, “We believe.” It binds us together around the essentials, and at a time when politics and personality and preference can all divide the church, the Creed calls us to the essentials. It calls us back to the center. Ephesians 4, verses 2 through six, which Charlotte read just a

little bit ago, it says this: “Be completely humble and gentle,” so as we hold this truth, as we guard our theology, there is still a call to be humble and gentle. “Be patient, bearing with one another in love.” The truth of the Creed is not meant to be something that we berate people with. It is still something we hold with love, but we need to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Now look at this: “There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all, and through all, and in all.” How many times did it say “one” in that passage? What is so influential in what we actually will see as we read and profess the Creed together is that there is one faith, one baptism, one God, one Son, and one Spirit. It is that there are not supposed to be these different angles that we take on these things. It is not that we can just make ideas up. It calls us back to being anchored around unity and the essentials.

Sometimes I think what happens in Christianity, and I do not know if you have felt this way. We can get to a place where we are just like, Christianity is like luggage that you are taking on a plane, right? There’s just so much baggage that gets added to it. It is like, “Oh, yeah, we need a little bit of this, and we need a little bit of this, and we are going to add this to it,” and so it might be about worship styles, or it could be about things like Christians are supposed to be the people who never watch HBO. If you are a Christian, you should never, ever watch HBO, and if you watch HBO, you might not be a Christian, right? There are some chuckles, because some of us watch HBO, and that is all right. I am not trying to say that. There are other people that look at Christianity, and they think things like, “To be a Christian, that means that your kids have to be home-schooled. If you really want your kids to grow up in the faith, then you need to make sure you homeschool your kids,” and then there will be other believers, other Christians who say, “You know what? That is actually completely wrong. If you really want your kids to follow Christ, then you need to put them in the public schools so they can be missionaries to their friends, and that is what it means to follow Christ,” right? We can get to a place where it is, “If you really want to be a believer in the power of Jesus, how could you dare ever vote for someone who is not in the Republican party?” or “How could you ever vote for someone who is in the Republican party?” and we just draw lines every which way, and we add all of this baggage into Christianity, and we just add all this superfluous stuff that of course matters, but it is secondary. It is not the core essentials of the truth. It has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit or the Son of God or the Father, and it all gets lumped in together in saying, “This is what Christianity is supposed to be,” and I think some people look at that. That caught me. They look at those ways that we add baggage, and they think, “Okay, if that is what Christianity is, then I am out. I want nothing to do with a faith that looks like that,” and they are not actually even rejecting the faith at all. They are just rejecting the cultural baggage that we have added to it.

The Creed calls us back to what is essential, what really matters. At Waterstone we like to quote this saying that comes from church history, that in essentials, in the core things that we need to believe, we must have unity. In non-essentials, in places where scripture is a little bit less clear, then we want to have liberty. There is room to disagree, but in all things, we want to have charity. We want to exist together, humbly and gently, patiently bearing with one another in love, so we have essentials around the core, but around the different expressions and the different ideas and the different ways we hold some of those essentials, there is freedom to disagree.

In fact, one of the things I am excited about in this series is over the next few weeks we are actually going to invite pastors from other churches to come in and essentially practice what we preach, that they might have a different expression of faith on Sunday morning, and their services may look very different than our own, and yet we still adhere to, we are still held together by the core essentials of what it is we claim to believe, unity. The Creed helps us to hold together and grounds us in unity, but finally, it guides us in uncertainty. The Creed guards our theology, it grounds us in unity, and it guides us in uncertainty. When we find ourselves in the cultural moment that we find ourselves in, where it seems like things are shifting, and we are not sure what to believe, when we have lost our direction, the Creed serves as a North Star. It reminds us of who God is and anchors us in what Christ has done, and it points us to where history is heading. In times when we feel lost and confused about our faith, we need a steady compass, a consistent landmark to point us back to unchanging truth, so Hebrews 13:7-9 says this: “Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.” Do not allow the trends or the different things that rise up to cause you to lose your footing or lose the thing that has held it together. Jesus has not changed. The gospel has not changed.

When I look at the world today, I think I see people who walk away from the faith because of what they have experienced in the faith and what they have experienced in the church, and they have these different experiences, and it causes them to begin to question and feel lost, and it looks like the church has lost its way, and so they are not quite sure what to believe. You see this in younger people who walk away from the faith after they graduate from high school and go to college. You see people who have different life experiences as they begin to grow, and they begin to question, “This is what faith was handed to me, and I am not quite sure it aligns with what I believe anymore,” and they are not actually walking away from the faith. It is that their faith was not built on the foundation that was meant to hold it up.

Some of you may have noticed we have a Jenga block up here, right? Does someone want to come play Jenga with me really quickly? Anyone? All right, Liam, come on up. He is so excited to play Jenga right now. Welcome Liam up. All right, Liam, you are going to come. Yeah, everybody, give it up for Liam. All right. We are going to play Jenga really quickly, so what I need you to do is you can stand right here, and now there is a little trick to this game. I am not actually going to pull any blocks out. I am just going to tell you some things that happened to you, and then you are going to have to pull the blocks out yourself, okay? All right, so the first thing, Liam, that happened to you. I am so sorry, and this is like, so hard, but you actually just lost someone that you really care about. They just passed away, so you have to pull a block out now, okay? It is like a hard way to start. You thought you were going to have some fun and play Jenga, and then it went really dark, really fast. Oh no, that was so fast. Oh, man, we were going to go through seven other scenarios that happened to you. All right, Brendan, we are really going to have to work on this base, okay? Like it is really, really shaky. Thank you so much. Give it up for Liam. That was awesome.

You are all lucky, because now the sermon is going to end way faster than it was about to, so we were going to go through like seven different scenarios that challenge or cause our faith to crumble, but that is what happens, right? It is like maybe you get into a scenario where you experience some new scientific discovery, and it challenges the way that you read scripture, like, “I do not know how to reconcile

these two things,” or maybe something that happens to you where a person you looked up to in the faith, they experience some sort of moral failing, and they end up in jail because of something that they have done, and you question, and you wonder, “How can my faith be true if this has happened?” There are so many different things, so many different experiences that happen to us that cause our faith to just fall apart and crumble, but one of the things about that scenario is that when the last stick is pulled out, and it causes our faith to crumble, we begin to ask, “Is this real?” Was this faith actually real, or is there a way to rebuild, not with some fragile blocks, but something that actually can stand the test of time in so many ways?

That is what the Creed is supposed to be. When we lose our faith, so many times it is based on human institutions or personalities or traditions or politics, so that we built our faith on a shaky foundation, and when the storms of life come and happen and knock our faith over, then we look at the faith, and we think the faith we have been handed, there is something wrong with it, and it is actually just so many of these things that were surrounding it. The Creed is something that is supposed to help us understand that we are not the first people who have walked this way before. It guides us in moments of uncertainty.

Has anyone ever spent some time building trails? In high school I spent some time building trails. Has anyone here built trails before? Okay, a few of you. If you have not, never do it. It is like, the worst way you can spend your time. It is so hard. You are clearing out trees and debris, and you are making a way, and the one thing about spending the summer in Iowa and the humidity and heat, building trails, that actually has just put this heart of gratitude within me is that now every time, let’s say I go on a hike with my family in Colorado, I am so grateful that somebody else built the trail and that I did not have to, because it is such hard work. In so many ways, that is what the Creed is for us. It is a reminder that people have gone this way before, that the faith can actually stand up to and endure the challenges, and it is a safe guide to lead us to where we are trying to go. It does not have to be that you are the first person that has ever endured some of these challenges or the cultural moment we find ourselves in. The Creed can be a safe guide to help us get to where it is that we need to go, even when our faith feels like it is falling apart. That is how the Creed gives us a firm foundation in times of confusion and compromise.

The world today is not primarily asking, “Is Christianity true?” They are asking, “Is it credible?” and “credibility,” and “creed,” actually come from the same root word. Both are about belief. To be credible is to be believable, and to have a creed is to have something that you believe in, that shapes how you live. In the time we find ourselves in, belief can often feel fragile, and when trust is thin, when it feels like the words are cheap, the Nicene Creed can stand as a firm foundation, a time-tested confession, a reminder that we are not the first to believe, and we are not alone, but it can shape us and help us live out our faith in a way that is credible for a world who is watching.

Leslie Newbigin said this: “How is it possible that the gospel should be credible? How is it possible that the gospel should be believable, that people should come to believe that the power which is the last word in human affairs, with everything going on in human history, that the gospel would actually be the thing that is what is believable? It is represented by a man hanging on across,” and he goes on to say this: “I am suggesting that the only answer, the only way the gospel becomes believable, the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it,” and so as we go through this series over the next few weeks, it is not just that I want to tell you what you are supposed to believe, although, for some of you who are maybe questioning and wondering, I hope that happens. I hope you

understand what it is you are supposed to believe, but more than that, it is a call of how we are supposed to live because of what we believe.

The Nicene Creed is not just words we repeat. It is actually words we are supposed to embody, that we live out what we believe, what the church has adhered to for 1700 years, and part of learning to live it out is beginning by confessing it together, the faith that has been handed down to us, a faith that has stood the test of time, not dead words, but living truth that can hold us in and anchor us in the moment we find ourselves in, so each week we are actually going to take time to recite and to profess the Creed together. I am actually going to invite you now to stand. As we close today, we are going to close with a reciting and professing of the Creed, but before we do that, as we engage on this journey of the Creed, and as we look at what we believe and how we live that out, I want to invite you at this moment to just receive a simple prayer. If you feel comfortable with it, I am going to invite you to just open your hands and to close your eyes, and I am going to pray and invite the Spirit at this moment, invite Him into this space.

Heavenly Father, God, as we come before you, and as we endeavor to go on this journey of what it is we believe and why we believe it and how we can live it out, Father, I want to pray that ancient prayer, "Come, Holy Spirit, come." There may be people in this room right now who look at Christianity and feel like it has lost its way. There may be people in our church right now in this moment who feel like they have lost their way and no longer understand their faith, feel like they have taken a wrong turn somewhere. Father, there are those who are questioning how we live this out in a way where an unbelieving world would want to follow Jesus. Holy Spirit, wherever we might be today, we invite you into this space, and I pray that as we go on this journey together that you would be the God, you would be the one who leads us, that this series would not just be an exploration of what we believe, not dead words that came around 1700 years ago, but a living testament to a faith that can stand the trials of time, that even as different cultures rise and fall, as different churches open and close, as different expressions come and go, it has been the core essential truths that have held us together for nearly two millennia. Father, we pray in Jesus' name that you would guide us on this journey. We open ourselves to you, and it is in Christ's name that we pray, amen.

If you would, now please profess the Creed with me. "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and Earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father, through whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit. He became incarnate of the Virgin Mary and was made man for our sake. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day, He rose again in accordance with the scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, amen."

As we close today, just a quick reminder, if you are newer around here and want to get to know Waterstone a little bit more, after service today, we have a meet and greet right up through those doors and to the left. We would love to hear your story, what has brought you to Waterstone, and how we could help you connect with us as a church, and so looking forward to that, and I think Brooke has some amazing snacks for you, so if you are hungry, it is an even better reason to show up.

As we close today, I just invite you now in this moment to receive the benediction: Heavenly Father, God, as we go from this place, as we go to live for you, as we go to live out our mission to become like Jesus and to live for others, Father, I pray that we would go from here rooted in our faith that has stood the test of time, that is not something that just appeared yesterday, that was not just a moment in the wind where someone felt like something should exist. God, it is anchored in the story of creation and what you are doing in the world. May we go, may we live for you and proclaim that story to those around us. May we live what we believe this week, and it is in Christ's name we pray, amen, and go in peace.

41:35 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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