

Sermon October 30, 2016 - Reformation Day

HEALING WORSHIP Confessing our Faith

Various Texts



Dear Friends,

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

In the name of the Triune God, amen!

It is in the name of the Triune God we have gathered this morning. As we learned a few weeks ago, God gathers us in his name, and that name is what we confess. That’s the theme for today’s meditation, the confession of our faith through the Creeds, continuing on our series on worship.

It is my prayer and my desire that as we continue with this series you will have a fresh outlook and a renewed appreciation for our liturgy

and our worship services. For in them God blesses us with all kinds of gifts and brings about healing for our souls, therefore our theme of Healing worship.

All through these several weeks we have learned that Worship begins with God, it begins with his actions as he comes to us bringing healing of the soul. Worship is not something we initiate but it is our response to God’s goodness.

Through the Creeds we do confess, we do teach, and we also worship our Lord, as we say the words that summaries the content of what we believe. Actually, not so much what we believe, but rather what God is as he reveals himself to us, through His Word, through what he does for us and in us, and through the gifts he brings us throughout our liturgical process.

Confessing the Creed, or our faith, is an ancient practice even in the Old Testament when God’s people will confess the “Shema” which was a summary of biblical teaching and was probably recited by Jesus and the apostles as well. And later on the Church also summarized the Christian faith which developed into the creeds as we know today.

There are three Creeds we use, the Apostles Creed which summaries the work of Triune God; the Nicene Creed which explains the Nature of Christ, and the Athanasian Creed which emphasizes the nature of the Trinity.

No creed but just the Bible some Christians would say, other will hold to the Creeds but will not use them in their worship services. And even others groups who think are Christians but are not, reject any of the Creeds.

But for us, those who are gathered in God’s name we see important reasons to confessing our faith in the words of one of the creeds. Take the apostles Creed for example, which I would like to use to show the reasons, actually three reasons.

I. First, The Creed teaches us that faith is individual.

The first reason is that the Apostles Creed teaches us that faith is individual.

The word creed has as its root the Latin word *credo*, which means “I believe.” I believe! Me, no other on my behalf! It is not a collective belief, but a singular and very personal.

Ultimately, each one of us is held accountable to God Almighty; each one of us must walk the walk of obedience to the Word and will of God; each one of us must receive, by the power of the Spirit, God’s redeeming love through Jesus Christ; each one of us must make our own confession of sin—and of faith!

The word “believe” is not dependent upon our own conception or interpretation of the reality but upon that reality. In other words when I say “I believe” I’m saying, it is what is, not what I think it is. For example, in the Creed we confess and say: “I Believe in God the Father Almighty creator of all things.” In these words I’m not saying I think God is the creator but God is the creator and there is no other besides Him.

So, when we say “I believe!” we are confessing a certainty. There is nothing tentative about our confession of faith, nothing hesitant, nothing uncertain. Sometimes we say something like “I believe that the sun may come out tomorrow,” but I can’t know that for sure. It may rain, or snow, but then again it may not. But when we confess our faith in the words of the creed, we are saying it is what it is, there is no other way.

Now, here is something special, when we stand, during our worship services to say the Creed, we stand for a reason. And do you know why? Confession of our faith is also an act of worship, an act of praising God. When you and I say “I believe,” we do say those words with all our heart and mind and spirit. Or at least that’s what needs to happen. And when we say those words we are ready to stake our lives and our eternal destiny on that belief, and with that we disavow any and all other gods.

Now, how often we hear somebody saying “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe.” Or, referring to other religions people say, “When all is said and done, we really all believe the same thing.” You have heard that before, haven’t you? I just hope is none of us saying those words, because the God we confess is unique, singular; there is no other! That’s how he has revealed himself to us, that is his way, that’s who he is.

II. Second, The Creed teaches us the mystery of the Trinity.

Second, The Apostles Creed teaches us the mystery of the Trinity.

That God has revealed himself in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons, yet only one God! At this knowledge and revelation we are grateful, it is a mystery, yes! But a mystery that brings about the strength of faith as we receive the reality of the Trinity in our lives, enriched by the works of the Holy Spirit.

We are different, our faith is different, not to pride or consider ourselves better, but because by faith we have seen God’s revelation through His work, through His gifts, through His word. Therefore, and so we can continue worshipping God even as we confess him, it is imperative that we declare clearly and loudly and unequivocally that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; he is one and only and ours!

III. Third, the Creed points us to a Trinitarian benediction.

The third reason for confessing the faith in the words of the Apostles Creed is to show that we are blessed in a three-fold manner.

The apostle Paul ends his Second Letter to the Corinthians with a blessing, a bestowal, he says in chapter 13 verse 14, (2 Cor. 13:14). If somebody would please

read: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” be with you all! Grace is the heartbeat of our faith, the core of our confession. Bringing about the life that God gives. That’s what keeps us going on.

It begins with the forgiveness of our sins, won by Christ. For Jesus Christ has paid the full and final price for our sin through his holy life, bitter suffering, and death on the cross. He has proclaimed victory over the power of sin’s curse through his glorious resurrection. There is nothing we can do to deserve God’s love. There is nothing we can say to get into God’s “good graces.” Jesus has done that for us. When we stand before the Almighty—and stand we shall—on the Day of Judgment and Glory, it will be because of God’s grace through Christ. It is through His grace that he has come to make you free, as Jesus says in our Gospel reading for today (John 8:36): “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

The Gospel reading for this Reformation service deals with truth and freedom. The word “truth” in our passage from the Gospel of John does not mean simply the ordinary meaning of the word or a philosophical concept. Jesus talks about the truth—the ultimate truth, the highest truth, the truth that is of greatest importance for every human being, and that truth is Jesus who sets us free. Free from being slaves to sin. Free from the guilt of sin. Free to worship God in truth and spirit, free to live in God’s grace.

And in that truth and freedom by and because of God’s grace, God also gives you a purpose in life and sees that that purpose gets completed and attained, whatever it is in each one of us. Life is different when we are in God’s grace, isn’t it. Praise be to God for his grace that comes through His Son Jesus!

“The love of God [the Father]” be with you all! We sometimes imagine the great and mighty God as unbending and unyielding, the harshest of taskmasters, filled with righteous wrath and uncompromising judgment. But, as John writes, if somebody would please read (John 3:16). “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

The Father loves us because we are his children, one and all. The God of might is also the God of mercy who we are to give glory. As the Angel proclaims in the book of Revelation (Revelation 14:7) would somebody please read: “And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

And the last blessing: “And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Here is another word of comfort: This is not just a “wishing well” statement, but the assurance that the Holy Spirit is with each one of us. In the face of disbelief and so much rational thinking, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit who comes to help us. When we are full of doubts and confusion, the Holy Spirit will bring us to the truth and back to the path of life and salvation.

The Holy Spirit is the one who brought us into faith in the first place through water and the Word; that Spirit who has bridged the gap between us and our God; that Spirit who empowers us to live as God’s people; that Spirit who lives within us and among us, binding us together as one; is the same Spirit whose presence and power enable us to confess, “I believe!” And that same power that has created us, will

recreated us again. And when at last we will stand in the presence of Almighty God, we will become like the Son, and then have a completed life just as God created us, but as we wait that moment, we can certainly live and keep on confessing our faith, confessing God, praising his name as we confess.

Therefore, let us keep confessing His name through the Apostles Creed, the Nicene and Athanasian creeds. Let us keep worshiping him as we confess his mighty deeds, let's do so here in worship but also on our own private devotions, our family devotions.

And as we keep confessing you will see that your spiritual life will get strengthened, having and exercise more and more our power over sin, so that our fruit-bearing for the Lord will increase, in the worship and praise of his name.

Today, in this Reformation service, we rejoice that, by God's grace, Martin Luther recovered "the truth"—Christ's Word, the Gospel which we confess in our Creeds, for we are indeed free!

He has made us free, and in him we rejoice, him we confess.

In His name we say amen.