

I Believe

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I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

This is the day in the church year that we pay special attention to what God has told us about who He is, **Trinity Sunday**. The problem is, He has told us more about Himself than we can ever hope to understand. A lot of times you will hear people complain that God didn't tell them everything they want to know about Him. Like why does God let babies die? How can He stand by while a woman hangs her children and then herself? Why does he allow war and senseless tragedy? How did He get all those animals on the ark, and what did he do with the dinosaurs? Why did He make mosquitoes and fire ants? I'm sure you have your own questions. But as I said, even if God doesn't tell you everything you want to know about Him, He has already told you more that you can understand, and in the process told you everything you need to know about Him in order to be forgiven for all your sins and live eternally with Him in paradise.

“Trinity” and “Triune” are terms that don't appear anywhere in the Bible, but they have been used by the church since the first century to explain what the Bible tells us about God. “Tri” for three, “une” for one, Three-in-One. In His Word, God tells us He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In His Word He also tells us He is One. Jesus says He is equal to the Father. At the Baptism of Jesus, all three are present. They are united, yet distinct. They are One yet Three. Beyond our ability to comprehend, but nonetheless what God has told us about Himself.

We affirm that as we **begin our worship services** in His name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That invocation is a reminder of the name that was placed on us at Baptism, as it was today for these two boys, labeling us as God's redeemed and forgiven children, part of His family.

- We believe in the Father, our Creator, who made all things
- We believe in the Son, Jesus, our Redeemer, who bought us back from sin and death
- We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, the one who makes us holy and keeps us holy.

To be able to tell others what they believed about God, based on what He had told them about Himself, the Church came up with **Creeds**, or statements of belief. “Creed” comes from the Latin word *credo* which means “I believe.” We all say together what we believe, but it is still an individual confession of faith. In the New Testament, to confess meant “to say the same thing back.” That is exactly what we do in the Creeds: we say back to God what He has said to us in His Word. We affirm that we believe what God has told us about Himself in His Word.

There are three creeds that have been, for the most part, universally accepted among Christians as being accurate statements about God based on the Scripture. The oldest and most widely known is the **Apostle’s** Creed. The second and certainly well-known among Lutherans is the **Nicene** Creed, which we use on most Sundays when we celebrate Holy Communion. It pays special attention to the second person of the Trinity, the God-man Jesus Christ, but also speaks about who the Father and the Spirit are. The third creed is the one people moan about when it is usually pulled out on Trinity Sunday, the one on page 53 in the front of the hymnal, the **Athanasian** Creed. It is a lengthy attempt to make some sense out of the concept of the Triune God.

Creeds are important, because they try to summarize what “I believe.” They are good for making a statement, but your faith should not be limited to a specific formula. You are told to always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you the reason for the hope that you have. You should be able to say what you believe in your own words as well.

I believe in a God who lovingly created a world and put man in that world to enjoy a peaceful life with the Creator. He gave us everything we need. Even after man sinned, the Father continued to lovingly provide for all that man needed to support this life, a life that had now become full of hardship, toil and trouble as a result of sin. But the Father was still there, acting in love to discipline, guide, direct, and even save His people. We see Him rescue His people in the Exodus from Egypt, in battles to take over the Holy Land, in delivering from their captors. And through it all, He promised that there would be one who would redeem mankind, buying them back from their sins, offering pardon for all sins.

I believe in a God who kept that promise in a surprising way. The Savior was not just a man, but was God Himself. He came into this world as a man, born to a descendant of the people to whom He had promised a Savior. He came to Redeem the world. He did that by living a life free from

sin. He was tempted like we are, but didn't give in. That wasn't just to show off or say that He was better than we are -- which, of course, He certainly is -- but He did all that to give you perfection. That's that same reason He paid the penalty for sin by dying, so that He could give that payment to you. And He rose again on Easter to give you eternal life as well. He will return to take me and all believers to Himself in heaven.

I believe in a God who has kindly, graciously, and without my deserving it led me to the wonderful news of Jesus Christ and given me faith in Him. He started that by making me part of His Family, the Church, for which I am ever in His debt. Through Baptism, I became God's child, and the Holy Spirit's been working in me ever since through His Word and Holy Communion. His job is to make me holy and keep me holy. If you are anything like me, you know that is a constant task. Temptations to sin keep coming, calling me to act in a way that is not holy, not what God has called me to do as a disciple of Christ. I give in, at which time the Spirit of the living God leads me to repent and assures me through the Word and Sacraments that I am forgiven for Jesus sake. And then He keeps right on working in me, trying to make me more and more like Jesus. He keeps me in the community of believers until I join the faithful who are already with God in heaven.

I don't believe all this because it sounds good to me or even because I pretend to understand it all. I believe in this Triune God because this is what He has told me about Himself in **the Book**. It is all in there. You can and should check it out for yourself. We have an awesome God.