

"God: Creator of Heaven and Earth" - Genesis 1.1-5 - Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. (Genesis 1.1-2 NIV)

This week we begin a sermon series by Rev. Adam Hamilton entitled **Creed (book cover)**. The word comes from the first word in the Apostles' Creed in Latin – Credo which translate as "I believe". So, in this series during Lent we will look at what we believe based on this creed from the 3rd century. The season of Lent was used for centuries as a time for preparing new believers for their baptism at the Easter service. We will use this season as a way to deepen our faith and belief.

As you read the creed below realize that some of us learned it in slightly different terms in an earlier English version. Some of us may believe it all, others may believe only some of the statements, and some here are new to the faith and may have never heard it or some of these concepts in it and wonder what they mean. Over the next six weeks we will look at what it might say to us today and how it might help each of us grow in our faith journey towards the Cross and the Resurrection.

The Apostles' Creed begins with God. As we heard today from the first two verses of the Bible it also begins with God who then creates the heaven and the earth. Here's is what this version of the creed says: **I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.** It does not say a lot about what we believe about God. But it says a couple things that I want to talk about today and to challenge you to think about today. First let me tell you that the United Methodist Church is not a creedal church. We do not have one creed that we say all people have to believe it word for word to belong. We do not believe you have to believe the Bible word for word either, but we do believe in the Bible and encourage people to read it and study it and follow it. The same is true for the creed, we believe it can help us to believe what we believe.

The creed begins with **I believe in God**, and I hope we can all agree with that, but I would suspect there are a couple people here today who aren't so sure about that? And that is okay. One of the scriptures I use to define God simply states that – *God is Love* (1 John 4.16b) Today let me share the belief found in the full verse: *We have known and have believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who remain in love remain in God and God remains in them.* (1 John 4.16) I believe that God is Love. And so, people who do not believe in God might believe in Love, and because of that might come to believe in God! Some might believe that no one loves them, and we have the opportunity to affirm that God does, and as children of God, we do too.

The creed goes on to describe God as "*Father Almighty.*" These are not terms that I use because I believe they are too confining for the God I believe in. Father is a term many of you use, at least I hear it when you offer prayers to God. It is not a term used in the Old Testament – it would be too personal for the mighty God known as LORD from the Hebrew *YHWH* or "*I Am Who I Am*" as spoken to Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). But in the New Testament we hear Jesus use a different term speaking to and speaking of God – *Abba* usually translated *Father*. But scholars have pointed out that may not be the best

translation and some theologians agree. It appears to mimic the formality of the Old Testament and approach to God. But Abba is the term a baby would first learn like Papa or Dada, which I would use or maybe Dad as an intimate relation with God of Love. Personally, I never called my father "Father." He was my "Dad." If you want to personify God, what term might you use? Some who have had abusive fathers or ones who left and disappeared – Calling God "Father" or "Dad" might be problematic.

I affirm God as *creator of heaven and earth*, (or *maker of heaven and earth* in earlier translations) and though it comes directly from the creation story today, again it is too formal for me. I prefer to affirm God as creator - of you and me! God is an intimate creator and parent of all God's children – all of humanity. As I rewrite the creed for myself and what I believe these days, I will start with: **I believe in God, a loving parent of all, creator of both the vast universe and intimately each one of us.** How about you? Take some holy time with God today to determine what you believe and how you might write it down and share it with others. As we go through these 6 weeks of Lent, I hope it will help us to understand what we believe and to grow in our belief.

In the gospel of Mark there is a story of Jesus being called by a father (or dad!) and being asked if he can do anything to cure his son, to which: *Jesus said to him, "If you can do anything? All things are possible for the one who believes." At that the boy's father cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!"* (Mark 9.24 NRSV) I believe we are here to help one another believe more and unbelieve less! And as we believe we can then put that belief into action. If we believe, we can act on those beliefs. If we do not believe, then we give up or do nothing. Today I invite you to claim what you believe about God and then because you believe that - what are you going to do about it? Tell someone what you believe. Believe it. Alleluia and Amen.

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,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again 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.