

Ezekiel 36:27; Lenten Service 2A; 3/15/17
The Creed

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Tonight, our focus is the Apostle's Creed. Crafted in the early days of the church, the Creed provides us with several short statements of faith, intended to summarize the message of Scripture. Simple in expression and easy to remember, the Apostles' Creed is divided into three sections, or articles for study and reflection. This threefold division articulates God's self-revelation to us as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. Luther writes, "I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their power." Whatever the facts of ancient history, science or contemporary physics, one thing is certain. You did not bring yourself to birth, nor can you take the least credit for the origin of any of the things that sustain your life. According to scripture, what you eat, what you wear, and the shelter you call

home are all gift. The people you think of as family, the work you do, all the things essential to life are sheer and unearned gift. The maker and giver of these gifts is God. The Creed invites us to remember that God does not simply create and abandon the world as if it were a self-winding clock or self-sustaining organism. God is always doing the work of creating and sustaining the world, caring for it from day to day. And, beneath the celebration of God's creative work is the acknowledgement of human responsibility for creation and the opportunity to join with God in the care of it. That is why, when some in our world are deprived, we are called to share and care for others, providing for each other in ways that reflect God's abundance. That is why, when we as people do things that are destructive to creation, we are called to work for restoration and wholeness of creation.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. The thought that a divine God would choose to reside in human flesh and walk among us remains one of the greatest mysteries and central tenets of our faith. In a world that divides things into

sacred and secular, Christianity offers an alternative, one that has the power to bring about restoration. Our brokenness is responsible for Jesus' journey to the cross. But by choosing to become human, God showed us that we are **worth** restoring. By living a life that encompassed all the joy and pain that come with existence, Jesus **submitted** to humanity, that **all** may come to know the liberating power of God. After Jesus' death, God's power was at work, helping us to see that the story doesn't end with death. No one and nothing is outside of God's liberating, restorative power.

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. Left to ourselves, with the knowledge of God as creator and the story of Jesus, we would not be able to believe it or entrust ourselves to it. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to trust this story as our own and to join the community of others who know the same trust. It is the Holy Spirit that is also constantly nudging us to live into the forgiveness

of our sins. We move from focusing on ourselves and never believing we have enough **to** being open to the world around us and **believing** God's promise of abundance. We act in ways that are freeing and seek out opportunities to serve and give and love. We are empowered to co-create and transform present-day realities. We are freed from sin to live in ways that promote justice and peace so that all may experience the love of God. This way of thinking and being isn't possible without the Holy Spirit working in us and reminding us again and again of our purpose. So, listen. Pay attention. Follow. The Spirit will lead you to a place where all flourish.

The Apostles' creed ends where it begins – with the gift of abundant life. As creator, God gave us life as a sheer gift. As redeemer, Jesus Christ took our lives from the clutches of sin. As Spirit, God ushers us into a community of faith where life is lived to the fullest (even in the midst of suffering and death) and where the promise of endless new life is ever before us.