

8/16/2020

## **Apostles' Creed Series**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

### **Genesis 1:1-4**

1 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. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

### **Revelation 1:8**

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

## **God Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth**

As we work through our study of the Apostles Creed, last week we started with the very first phrase of the creed : "I believe in God, the Father..." and today we will be looking at the end of that opening sentence of the creed: "I believe in God, the Father *Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*" This second half of the opening statement in the creed has echoes of the very beginning of the Bible and of course, as Julie Andrews famously sings in *The Sound of Music*, "starting at the very beginning is a very good place to start." Well, the Apostles Creed falls in line with Julie's advice and begins its statements of belief at the very beginning of scripture: Genesis 1:1 – "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This first verse of the Bible is *the most fundamental* statement in scripture, which is precisely why the Apostles Creed opens with echoing the first verse.

But why is this first verse of the Bible so fundamental to us? Today in the year 2020, you and I might not fully understand what a history-altering sentence that first verse of scripture really was. You and I are very used to the belief of there being one God. Even if you didn't grow up in church, historically, America's primary belief system has revolved around the affirmation of the idea of the Judeo-Christian God. The pledge of allegiance to the American flag says, "one nation under God" and our dollar bills say "In God we trust." When we say "God" today, there is usually a general understanding what (or who) we mean. But that was not the case in the culture and time when the Bible was being written. The Hebrew people who, with God's grace, formed the Bible, believed in an absolutely counter-cultural idea that there was only one God, as opposed to many gods – and they made that belief loud and clear with the very first sentence of this sacred text: the Book of Genesis.

In school did you ever read Roman or Greek mythology? There are pantheons in both these religions (the word literally meaning many gods – "pan" meaning many; "theons" meaning gods). Even if you haven't read mythology, you've definitely heard the names of Roman gods – Mars, Venus, Neptune, Saturn, and Jupiter are just a few. But these weren't the only religions that believed in many gods. In fact, before the Hebrew people, there weren't *any* other tribes or nations that believed in the existence of only *one God*. So, the opening sentence of the Bible "In the beginning *God* created the heavens and

the earth” was an absolutely unique and probably quite a surprising belief when the words were first being penned.

But even today, that sentence can be countercultural and even surprising and for some to hear. While the Hebrew people affirmed the existence of the one and only God as opposed to a pantheon of gods, today when we affirm the existence of the one and only God, it's counter-cultural for a very different reason. Today you and I affirm the existence of God in a world growing increasingly atheistic, believing that there is no God. Isn't it astounding that thousands of years after these words of scripture (“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”) were even uttered or written, that the fundamental belief in the one and only God is still a counter-cultural statement.

So let's you and be counter-cultural together right now as we say this first statement of belief of the Apostles' Creed. Can you remember it from last week? Don't worry – we'll say it twice. If you remember it, say it with me: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” (repeat) Remember the challenge I gave us last week – as we study the Apostles' Creed together, have it posted somewhere you'll see it every day so that you can work on memorizing it by the end of our time studying it on Sunday mornings.

Alright, so again, last week we focused on God's name as “Father” but there are two other words that describe God in the first statement of the Apostles' creed. Can anyone name them? (Almighty and Maker). Let's focus on “maker” or “creator” as some versions of the Creed say. If we look at the second verse of

the Bible, we can see that God is a creator or maker unlike we humans create or make things. For example, if I wanted to make some cookies, I would need other things to make them, right? What would I need? (eggs, flour, sugar, salt, vanilla extract, etc). But all those ingredients existed before I mixed them together to make the cookies. Or how about if I make a bookshelf...I would need to get wood, nails, a saw, sandpaper, etc. to make the bookshelf. But God, the ultimate creator, didn't need something to make the heavens and the earth. *God created everything from nothing!* Can you wrap your mind around that? I sure can't. Genesis 1:2-3 says, "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. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light." The word "formless" in Hebrew means "the wilderness, wasteland, emptiness, desert, nothing" and the word "empty" is sometimes translated void – without anything. God's spoken word of "Let there be..." – his will to create – is what caused our world, our universe to come into being. Whereas you and I create with what is already here, God creates from nothing and he is indeed the maker of heaven and earth.

And finally, the last word to describe God in the opening statement of the creed is...Almighty. Just like how we might think today that believing in one God is a no-brainer, we might also think of God being almighty as like...well, duh...if God wasn't almighty then he wouldn't be God. Which is correct, but not all civilizations believed their gods to be almighty. Much like how other religions might have multiple gods, these gods always had limitations that made them not

all-powerful (or almighty). Greek gods were thought of to be like humans, but with 2 differences: they were immortal (meaning they could live forever) and they were more powerful than humans, but they were not all-powerful. Some of the Greek gods might have more power than others (like Zeus was thought to be the *most* powerful) but even god was all-powerful. So, just as the Bible makes the counter-cultural claim that there is only one God, the Bible also makes known that this one God is Almighty.

There are honestly too many verses to count in the Bible that proclaim God as the Almighty or speak of his greatness, power, and majesty, but here are a few examples:

- (Genesis 17:1) When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,
- (1 Chronicles 29:11) Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.
- Psalm 91:1-2 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

And of course, our other scripture lesson we read earlier this morning – in Revelation 1:8 God declares, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

The Bible affirms and reminds us over and over – from the very beginning in Genesis, all the way through to the book of Revelation - that God *is* Almighty.

But why is that important to remember? Why is it important to reaffirm within our own hearts and with our own lips with words like we find in the Apostles' Creed? Because we human beings often forget the almighty-ness, the power, the majesty, of God. Without meaning to, we tend to put limitations on God, trying to fit him into our own boxes of what we think God is like.

And that is why worship is key to the life of every believer. The very reason you and I come here every week, or tune in online, is to be reminded of the almighty-ness of God. We come to church, we read our Bibles, we pray, we talk about God with other believers because we have to keep declaring to ourselves and to the world that we do indeed believe in God the Father *Almighty*. That's what worship is – praising and thanking God for who he is – God the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. Worship is the way that we human beings can be reminded that there is someone greater. Worship is when we say to God, "How Great Thou Art!"

[Play "How Great Thou Art"]

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee  
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

And when I think of God, His Son not sparing  
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in  
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing  
He bled and died to take away my sin  
[refrain]

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
And lead me home, what joy shall fill my heart  
Then I shall bow with humble adoration  
And then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art  
[refrain]

As we go out into the world, I pray that we don't only worship God inside the walls of this sanctuary or the walls of our home, but that we will you go out and tell others about the greatness of God so that they might know the almighty saving power of the one who created them.