

Sermon for The Holy Trinity

Date: June 16, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Acts 7:55-60

Epistle Reading: 1 Peter 2:2-10

Gospel Reading: John 14:6-11

Sermon Text: John 14:6-11

Sermon Title: The Nicene Creed

Introit: Psalm 16:8-11; Antiphon: Ancient
Liturgical Text

Hymns:

LSB 506 – Glory Be to God the Father

LSB 907 – God Himself is Present

LSB 953 – We All Believe in One True God

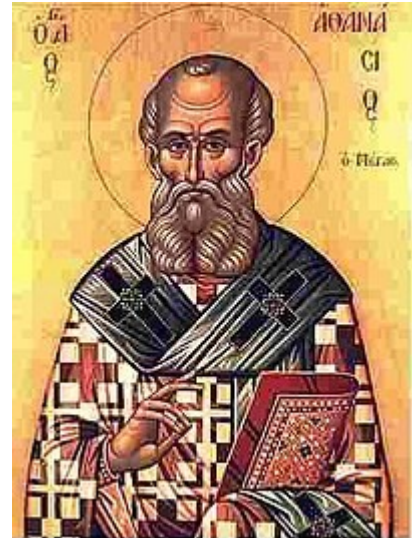
Distribution:

LSB 507 – Holy, Holy, Holy

LSB 822 – Alleluia! Let Praises Ring

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203



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Text: John 14:6-11

Jesus said to Thomas, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one goes to the Father except through me. If you have known me you will also know my Father. From now on you know him through me and have seen him in me.”

Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and that will satisfy us.”

Jesus replied, “I have been with all of you for a long time. Don’t you know me yet Philip? The person who has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? What I am telling you doesn’t come from me. The Father who lives in me does what he wants. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me. Otherwise believe me because of the things I do.

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May the Holy Spirit give you grace and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

You've heard the old adage, "those who are ignorant of history are destined to repeat it." Whether it is an ignorance of history, or a lack of concern for it, the result is the same. History proves that statement to be true, especially within the Church. For 2,000 year the Church has struggled against the forces of darkness.¹ Through all of that it is clear that there really are not any new heresies or false teachings out there. Those that might seem new are really just rehashed, reshaped and regurgitated forms of the same old same-old.



Jimmy Buffett, that great philosopher and singer, put a point on it. When asked if the problem we face is one of ignorance or lack of concern, said, "I don't know and I don't care."² Proving that it is really some of both. Whether we are ignorant of our history, or just don't care, the fact too often remains ignorance is not bliss.. Hopefully today we can remedy some small bit of that deficiency.

In the 300's the Church was facing a serious problem. Many were confessing things about Jesus that Scripture does not say. The problem was primarily about His Divine nature.



Where is Nicea?

1 Ephesians 6:12

2 Jimmy Buffett, "Beach House on the Moon," © 1999

Justo Gonzalez, in his books “The Story of Christianity,³” writes this:

It was the year 325 when the bishops gathered in Nicea, a city in Asia Minor..., for what later would be known as the First Ecumenical Council. (That is, the first universal Council.) The exact number of bishops present is not known... but there were approximately three hundred,...

In order to understand that event as those present saw it, it is necessary to remember that several of those attending the great assembly had recently been imprisoned, tortured, or exiled, and that some bore *[the scars of their persecution]*...

Many of those present knew of each other by hearsay or through correspondence. But now, for the first time in the history of Christianity, they had, before their eyes, physical evidence of the universality of the Church.

The council at Nicea was given the task of dealing with several issues that were troubling the Church but none was more important than dealing with what was called the Arian⁴ controversy. The question: Is Jesus truly God, or was He a creation of God?

Gonzalez writes:

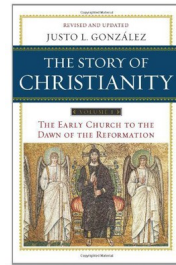
The assembly ... decided to agree on a creed that would express the faith of the Church in such a way that Arianism was clearly excluded.

That Creed is the one we all know today as the Nicene Creed. The main thing the bishops, driven by Scripture, wanted to confess about Jesus is that He is of the same substance with the Father. In other words as Jesus said in our Gospel reading today:

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me.⁵

or earlier, before His crucifixion when He said:

I and the Father are one.⁶



Arius

3 Justo Gonzalez, The Story of Christianity Volumes I & II,” HarperOne © 2010

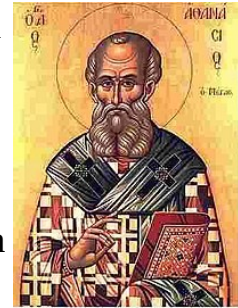
4 Arius, Ἀρειος, ~ (AD 256–336)

5 John 14:11

6 John 10:30

As clear as that confession may seem to us, in the year 325 the Church seemed to be on the brink of dividing over this confession of the most essential question concerning eternal life, namely, “Who do you say Jesus is?”⁷”

The ultimate champion of the Nicene council was a man named Athanasius. He would go on to fight against the Arian heresy that seemed to persist even though it was strongly condemned at Nicea, and truthfully still lives on today in several groups. What was at stake was getting it right on the person of Jesus the Savior of the world. Is He God, of the same substance with the Father, or is He in some way less than the Father?



There is no doubt heresies will continue to rise and fall. So against 4th century heresies and its contemporary regurgitations, we confess what we have learned about Jesus from God’s Word. He is:

...the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.⁸

So then we get to the question at the point Jesus died on the cross: did God die on the cross? God died on the cross. God died for you. God the Father brought God the Son back to life on Easter Sunday⁹ so that you could be saved from sin, death, and the power of the devil. It is now God the Holy Spirit who keeps you in that faith until the day you die. One Holy Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working in perfect unison and unity to save you.

Why do we worship a God like that? Because God did not ask us who He is. God came down to us because we could not get to Him. He came down and introduced Himself to us. He told us who He is, what He wants, what He thinks, and what will get us safely home to Him. This is the God to whom we submit, the God we worship, the God we praise, and the God we respect. We do not make Him what we want Him to be. He makes us what He wants us to be. We worship God this way because this is how God has introduced Himself to us. He came down and

7 Matthew 16:15-16

8 Nicene Creed

9 Romans 6:4

said, “Hello, how are you? I Am God.” Then He said, “I know your name. You are mine.¹⁰ I will be your God,¹¹ and you will be My children.¹²”

We are all destined for condemnation and yet God your God loves you, forgives you, saves you, and calls you His own to live under Him in His kingdom.¹³ He has called you His child. Not His slave, not His servant, but His child! What does He ask from us? Only an honest apology for sin and a desire to live in a way that proves you belong to the God who calls you into His kingdom and glory.¹⁴

Why do we worship a God like that? We worship Him because of what He has done for us. He has saved us.

Amen.

10 Isaiah 43:1

11 Jeremiah 30:22

12 John 1:12

13 Luther’s Small Catechism: 2nd Article of Apostles’ Creed

14 1 Thessalonians 2:12