

Sermon for The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: August 4, 2019

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

Old Testament: Genesis 1-2 (*Selected verses*)

Epistle Reading: Romans 8:18-25

Gospel Reading: John 1:1-5



Sermon Title: The Apostles' Creed – The First Article

Introit: Psalm 1:1-5; Antiphon Psalm 1:6

Hymns:

LSB 858 – O Father, All Creating

LSB 817 – Earth and All Stars

LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own (v.1-2)

LSB 717 – Eternal Father, Strong to Save

Distribution:

LSB 617 – O Lord, We Praise Thee

LSB 704 – Renew Me, O Eternal Light

LSB 595 – O Blessed Spring

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special (*Excerpts from Divine Service I*)



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LSB 817 – Earth and All Starts (v.1-3)

Grace to you and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today we begin a short three week series on the Apostles' Creed. We'll look through this creed and explore what it teaches us now, and what it was intended to teach when it was written nearly 2,000 years ago.

There is often a misconception that this was written by the Apostles. That is not true. It was written by those who followed them as a 'creed' or confession of faith stating what the Apostles taught.

It starts out with these simple words:

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

In that short sentence there is a lot that we can learn. First it is an extension of the First Commandment. How does Martin Luther teach us the First Commandment?

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

There is only one God and He alone made and maintains all things. In the Bible the creation record begins with:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.¹

There is no explanation about which god, or what god. It is simply God. It is simply God because there is only one God. He created everything. Not just Heaven but sky, space, the inter-galactic-void and Heaven, as well as not just planet Earth, but earth as in all dirt, dust, sand, rocks and planets. God created Heaven, Earth, and everything in between. In other words:

Everything came into existence through Him.
Not one thing that exists was made without Him.²

Why is this important? Because the first three chapters of the Bible are the most important of all. It is important to realize that these chapters are a real record of real events as they actually occurred. It was six literal 24-hour days and one additional day of rest. Adam and Eve are real people who ate real fruit, forbidden by God to eat. Satan is a real being that tempted them to do that. Without a literal

1 Genesis 1:1

2 John 1:3

understanding of Genesis 1-3 the rest of the Bible is useless, worthless and irrelevant.

That is because without Genesis 1-3 being real the promise of your Savior³ is also not real, and in fact you have no need for a Savior because there is nothing from which to save you. If the Universe is now functioning as God created it to function then everything is just as God wants it to be so why does God need to save us from it?

If sin, brought by Adam and Eve, corrupted all of creation,⁴ then there is something from which to save us, and that something is called sin and sin's affect. It is here, in the first few pages of your Bible, that sin is defined. Without that definition we cannot fully understand what sin is, what sin does, and why we need to be saved from it.

Sin is not just the bad stuff we do. Sin is everything that falls short of God's definition of perfect. Not our definition – God's. Sin is not just the bad stuff we do. Sin is a stain that permeates every aspect of creation from the largest planet to the smallest grain of sand. It affects our heart and our soul. It cuts us off from God, and God's love and care.

Sin is a sickness from which we cannot escape. It is everywhere and in everything. Sin causes people to gossip and tell lies. Sin causes people to think and act like the Church is a joke. Sin causes every unpleasantry on Earth. Sin even causes that stink in your rotting garbage. Sin causes all of the mess in the world. Sin causes pain. Sin causes sickness. Sin causes loneliness and sin causes death. Death of bugs, death of birds and death of people. Sin is the sickness from which none of us can escape.

So understanding what sin is I'll now ask you two questions:

Did mankind bring sin into the world?

or

Did sin bring mankind into the world?

Only one of those can be true. If amoebas became humans through countless misfires and mistakes in the genetic code as cells divided, (those mistakes and misfire which occur when the cell fails to operate perfectly the way God designed it), if that eventually brought people into existence then sin (mistakes and misfires) brought mankind into the world and you are a mistake, an accident of worthless walking dirt.

3 Genesis 3:15

4 Romans 8:22-23

If that's true, and you call yourself a Christian, then you need to ask other more difficult questions:

- When did humans become human enough to have a soul that needs to be saved?
- When did humans become human enough that God would command them to worship Him?
- Where would we find the figurative first Adam and Eve? The first male and female that were actually human, and not just advanced apes?
- Do animals have souls too and did Jesus die for them and their sins? (Find that in the Bible.)

You can see that a viewpoint that people evolved from bugs to Bubba, from aphid to Adam, from earwig to Eve, becomes a very complex matter if you still believe in a heavenly Father who sent His Son to save the world from sin,⁵ and has left His Holy Spirit to keep you in the one true Christian faith that leads you to eternal life.⁶ This calls for wisdom, but what kind of wisdom?

LSB 817 – Earth and All Starts (v.4-6)

The truth is: if you believe in macro-evolution, that a creature turns into another creature over time, then you cannot believe that Jesus has saved you. In fact there is nothing from which to save you. If however mankind brought sin into the world and all of creation is now corrupted, stained and broken because of sin and sin's affect, then we do need a Savior who will come and make all things new again.⁷ Then there really is a Heaven and a Hell, and those who put their trust in God, and God's promises, will alone be saved. All others will not.⁸

The first article of the Apostles' Creed is short, and it doesn't say much at first glance but it does force you to take a stand. Do you believe the Bible or do you believe evolution? This does not pit faith against science. Good science, that seeks to understand God's creation, does not start out with the assumption that God is fake; that God does not exist. It starts out with the assumption that God is real, God is right, and God make the rules. Any hypothesis, proof or test that fails to accommodate these acknowledgments must be wrong because we confess and believe:

5 John 3:16-17

6 John 14:26

7 Revelation 21:5

8 Mark 16:16

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

It makes us God's creation. In fact it make us much more than that. God created all things: the dirt and water, then sky and space, planets and plants, animals, birds, fish and flowers. Then when everything was complete He made us – people. Everything else was put in place for us to enjoy.

The entire Universe was made for us, for our pleasure and for our purpose. It is all ours to enjoy and is that for which we should care. We are the pinnacle of God's creation. We are the top, the most important. Nothing is more precious to God, in all that He has made, than us. Nothing on earth and nothing in Heaven. Since everything was given to us, when we sinned we messed everything up. We brought the curse of sin onto everything. That is why the world is the mess that it is.

Jesus is the One promised to come and fix our mess.⁹ Jesus did not come to save worms, wallabies or whales. He came to save us. The new heaven and new earth¹⁰ will be made for us too. Not for earthworms, emus or elephants. Jesus came to save you, because you are the reason for everything else in Heaven and on Earth.

More than that the First Article of the Apostles' Creed teaches us that all things come to us from God and nothing goes from us to God. We have nothing to give Him because He made all things for us. We are only the receivers. We are wholly dependent on God for all things.

Sin is our attempt to become independent from God, and in that effort we attempt to take the place of God, even usurp God's throne and try to unseat Him. Someone else tried to do that once and things did not go so well for him.¹¹ His name was Lucifer, and trust me, you don't want to take the same path he did.

The first article of the Apostles' Creed teaches us that God is God and we are His people. It teaches us what sin really is, and that God has saved us from sin and sin's affect. How He did that is found in the Second Article which is what we will explore next week, but understand right now that God the Father saved you through Jesus Christ His Son.

So in Jesus' name we give thanks.

Amen.

9 Genesis 3:15

10 Revelation 21:1

11 Revelation 12:7-9

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