

The Apostles creed – I believe in God

Dave Farris. 13.05.2018

Last week Helen started a 4 week series on The Apostles Creed. She introduced the idea of Christian creeds; gave some historical background and talked about their relevance.

I was particularly struck by a couple of comments and make no apology that I'll be referring back to them later.

This week I'm going to focus on the first part of the Apostles creed. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

12 simple words that mean and potentially demand so much of us, if we claim to do what we say. And that's where I'll be heading this morning – doing what we're saying.

So last week we heard that the early Christian believers used the creed that they said to bind them together. To be a show of unity for others, and also experience that unity when they repeated the words of their faith. Just pause for a moment and imagine those

early Christians. Excited for sure; perhaps nervous about declaring their faith in the face of threats or persecution, but doing it in a unison chanting whatever their language was. Picture them as they stood, shoulder to shoulder in a rudimentary room somewhere; most probably utterly convinced in the truth of what they were saying, and desperate to share it with others so that they too would become part of the group and know Jesus as their Saviour. They were experiencing the 'togetherness' that Helen mentioned last week. I hope we've all experienced such a feeling of togetherness at least once in our lives. Jackie and I were fortunate to stand in Wimbledon Tennis's Number 1 court and be part of the Songs of Praise congregation. That incredible sound as thousands of Christians worshipped together and prayed together is something that'll never leave me.

And so it can be when we all stand now and say the creed together. We can hear each other's voices and know we are part of a group; we belong; we are bound together.

Let's look at those 12 simple words.

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

I believe in God. Let's stop there a moment just to be sure we are clear what this is saying

Firstly, when we say "I believe in", we are not talking about a level of uncertainty to our belief. It's not like when asked if God created the earth we would say "I believe so." That implies that there might be some doubt. It sounds as if we are open to being persuaded otherwise. No. If we are saying "I believe in" along with everyone else around us, then we should actually believe it. And furthermore, I would suggest that if we say the words "I believe in," then that is an even more profound belief, that is akin to trust.

A child jumping off a climbing frame into their father's arms believes in him. That he won't let them fall. They absolutely trust in him.

That's what we're saying when we speak the words "I believe in God." 'I' and together 'we' trust in the existence of God. Personally I find it so reassuring that in my life I can fully, completely and with no fear

of being let down, trust. Trust in someone who really cares about me.

But I know this creed is not about me. It's all about Him; God; Father Almighty. He is at the centre of this. Creator of heaven and earth. I'm not creating anything here.

In psalm 148 (*that we heard earlier*) the psalmist writes that we should Praise the Lord for all he has created above and within the earth.

And listen to the first 2 verses of psalm 127

Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat for he grants sleep to those he loves.

It doesn't matter what we do, everything around us is God's work. I spent nearly an hour the other day emptying my compost bins, getting 5 barrow loads of compost for the garden. I didn't make that compost. Through God's nature and its processes He took the

waste I recycled and made it become productive again. Yes I had to obtain the bins, load them with waste, turn it, dig out the compost and spread it on the vegetable beds, but it was God's creative power that made it happen. And I played a part and rejoiced in what through Him I'd done. I'd been proactive and achieved more than if I'd simply thrown the waste away.

Which leads me neatly on to what Helen said last week; there's no creed without deed.

Or as James put it in chapter 2

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Oh dear. It was all looking so easy wasn't it? Could I really think that all I had to do was believe in God; say

the creed with others and we'd be getting the togetherness vibe, then job done?

A prayer from the Nicaraguan church says this.

"Lord, prevent us from falling into the sin that slavery of Egypt is better than the struggle in the desert."

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Here at St. Matthew's we've adopted the saying Seven whole days, not just one in seven, as a way of encouraging us to live out our Christian beliefs, every day. If we truly believe in God, the Father Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, then we cannot ignore the call to action. Standing in church on a Sunday and simply repeating the words of the creed is not sufficient. We have to act out our faith; our belief in God. Doing what we're saying

Through God the creator of heaven and earth we can show to others that He is to be believed in. We can shine and be seen to shine. Perhaps as a great parent to your children, or a grandparent to the grandchildren; maybe you're a natural money maker

and use that skill for the benefit of others; maybe your superb with your hands or mind and create things that bring joy to others. Let's reflect in silence what we do Faith and deeds. No creed without deeds.

And so the opportunity to stand with others, across the world, or here in church, or maybe even in small groups, and reaffirm our belief in God is something that should be filling our hearts with joy. We are not alone in our belief. Millions upon millions also 'believe in' the same as us. We believe in God, the Father Almighty, who made heaven and earth.

But that's not enough. We must never forget that there's more than just saying words. No creed without deed.

But one more thought before I close which I believe we can't ignore. Canon John Young wrote this in his book 'Lord Help my unbelief'.

A man died and St. Peter met him at the pearly gates. St. Peter said: "Here's how it works. You need 100 points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the

good things you've done, and I give you points for each item. If you reach 100 points, you get in."

"Okay," responded the man, "I've worked hard all my life to give my family a happy secure home."

"That's great, Said St. Peter, "that's worth one and a half points." A bit shaken, the man went on, "Well I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my money and time." "Terrific," said St. Peter, "that's certainly worth another full point."

"Only one point?" exclaimed the hapless man, scratching about in his memory. "How about this then: I started a soup kitchen in my city and worked in a shelter for homeless people."

"Fantastic, that's good for two more points," said St. Peter.

"TWO POINTS!!" Cried the man in dismay, "at this rate the only way I'll get into heaven is by the grace of God!"

"Wonderful!" responded St. Peter, "You've hit the jackpot. Come on in! Welcome to the exciting life of heaven."

Our deeds are fundamentals to our belief but not a way to heaven. Amen