

**GOD THE FATHER**  
**(OT: Gen 1:1-5; NT: Mt 6:9-13)**

---

**PRELIMINARY MATTERS**

- If new to our church, my pattern not to preach in June/July when school is out.
- Honestly, hard for me to be away from pulpit → I love to preach and nowhere I love to preach more than here!
- But, under wise counsel of our elders, I take very intentional/purposeful break from preaching over the summer.
  - Not sabbatical – I do take a week of vacation but don't take summer "off."
  - Instead, intentionally create space to pray, study, prepare for next ministry year.
    - Give focused attention to leadership matters in our church:
      - How we're doing, where we're going, what we need to get there.
      - All the leadership questions that come with M/L/B/F.
    - Prepare for upcoming preaching series – get year mapped out/study.
    - Extend the impact of our ministry here by serving the larger church – this summer I'll speak at a couple of conferences and teach a seminary class.
- We believe this is healthy for our church:
  - Don't want to be personality-driven...
  - Also gives us great opportunity to hear from some other voices too.
    - Some great guests lined up for summer.
    - Hear from some of our own staff too → Want to be church that raises up another generation of pastors for God's mission.
- Excited to learn and grow alongside you this summer and grateful for how elders support me and the overall health of our church.

**INTRODUCTION**

**This summer we're doing a series on The Apostles' Creed.**

- What is TAC? Normally we say it together – but let me read it to you.

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

*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, And born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, And is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*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. Amen.*

- We're going to work through it line-by-line this summer → Memorize it as we go.
  - As a church family, we just finished reading through the gospel of John.
  - This is another spiritual practice we can do together.

- In its entirety, TAC provides **summary** of what the Bible teaches.
  - Not found in Bible itself → Not one passage that says all this!
  - Instead, it's a summary of those things that are essential to our faith.
- It's **ancient**:
  - First version of it was used as early as the second century.<sup>1</sup>
  - When we confess it, join voices with millions of Xns who have gone before us.
- It's **unifying**:
  - Not a *Presbyterian* summary or a *Baptist* summary or a *Catholic* summary.
  - Intended to get its arms around those things **all** Xns believe.
    - Why one theologian says: "*All Christians believe more than is contained in the Apostles' Creed, but none can believe less.*"<sup>2</sup>
    - Concise summary of the essence of Xnty.
  - When we confess it, don't just join voices with all Xns who have gone before us → Also join our voices with all Xns who are alive today!
- Something meaningful about that:
  - For all the differences/divisions that exist in the church...
  - This is a statement to which we can all rise up – across time/space – and say: "This I believe..."

### And don't you want to know what you believe?

- In a world that believes all sorts of things about all sorts of issues...
  - Don't you want to know where you stand?
  - Have a sense of your own convictions?
- When we say TAC → And we do so every baptism Sunday...
  - Shouldn't be sleepy moment in service → We don't just recite it to fill time.
  - Instead, it's a subversive declaration that we believe in something...

**Transition:** First thing we say we believe in is God → That's what we'll look at today...

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

- This is no small thing in itself:
  - **A. W. Tozer:** "*What comes into our minds when we think of God is the most important thing about us.*"<sup>3</sup>
  - Nothing will change your life more than what you believe about God.
- But it takes on larger proportions when we consider the kind of God we believe in...
  - TAC makes clear that we don't just believe in a generic god → Ambiguous "higher power," some detached "force for good," or vaguely in the "universe."
  - Instead, we believe in a **personal, powerful** God.
- Invite you to consider those two truths from the first line of TAC...

### WE BELIEVE IN A PERSONAL GOD

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

- Revelation of God as Father first seen in OT where image used to describe his strong/tender care.
  - **David** calls God: **Father of the fatherless and protector of widows (Ps 68:5).**
  - **Isaiah** says: **For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father... (Isa 63:16).**

- **Hosea** paints beautiful picture of God taking up his children in his arms, healing them of their diseases, bending down to feed them in his love (**Hos 11:1-4**).
- But image of God as Father takes on fuller dimensions as we come to NT with the arrival of Jesus, the Son.
  - Bc it is through this Son that God becomes *our* Father.
    - God is not our Father in a **general** sense.
    - He is our Father in a **gospel** sense.
  - Jesus lives/dies/rises/ascends to claim us as his own:
    - United to him – our Brother – we now share the same Father.
    - Which is why Jesus taught us to pray to *Our Father* → His Father is ours.

**Illustrate:**

- God is not some detached being who remains distant/alooof → Like some king who wants to keep his people at a distance.
- He is the loving God who calls into **personal** relationship with himself.

**Apply:**

- If Tozer is right – “*What comes into our minds when we think of God is the most important thing about us*” – the most important thing to think is this:  
**God loves you as a Father.**
- Painfully aware that for many of us, concept of a father may not be a positive one...
  - You may not **have had** a good father [Rosie’s experience...]
  - You may not **have been** a good father [My own experience...]
- But our heavenly Father isn’t like that → He is the perfect Father that we all want...
- Listen to how he describes his love...

**Hos 11:1-4:** When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.  
<sup>2</sup>The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.

<sup>3</sup>Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. <sup>4</sup>I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

- He is the loving, caring, guiding Father.
  - If you **didn’t have** a good father → He will be a Father to you.
  - If you’ve **not been** a great father → In his love, you can start anew.
  - If you **did have** a great father → He is the one your dad points to.
- He loves you → That’s what we confess when we say: *I believe in God the **Father** Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.*

**Transition:** But there’s more. Not only do we believe in a personal God...

## **WE BELIEVE IN A POWERFUL GOD**

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

**Do not think of God as some frail grandfather in the sky...**

- Our God – the one who loves you – is the **Almighty**.
  - **Ps 103:19:** The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.
  - **1 Chron 29:11:** Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.
  - **Jer 32:27:** Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?
    - This means God can do whatever he wants to do...
    - Doesn't mean he can literally do anything → "He cannot sin, lie, change his nature, or deny the demands of his holy character."<sup>4</sup>
    - "But all that he wills and promises he can and will do."<sup>5</sup>
- His might is seen in the fact that he is the **Maker of heaven and earth**.
  - Our world is no cosmic accident → It all came about by his plan.
  - And even now he is directing all of history according to his will.

**Our personal God is a powerful God.**

**Illustrate:** Two of my mentors died last week → Over course of one weekend.

- On Friday, **Tim Keller** died...
  - Impact he had on global Xnty is incalculable...
  - Fortunate that he impacted my life greatly as well.
    - Got to know him as a young pastor in DC.
    - Over the last few years, we met monthly.
  - One phone call with Tim actually instrumental in bringing us to Cedar Springs.
    - Rosie and I were in the car → Beautiful spring morning and we were on our way to a trail to go for a run.
    - Phone rang and, on *that call*, the three of us discussed *this call*:
      - Tim said some things about this church/then he told me some things about myself...
      - By the time we hung up, we felt a shift...
- On Sunday, **Donald MacLeod** died...
  - Theologian you'll read if you go through officer training at our church.
  - He was a member at the church I grew up in and no writer shaped my theology as a young man as much as he did.
    - He wrote about deep mysteries of faith with beauty/clarity.
    - Reading him felt less like an academic exercise and more like an experience with the living God.
- **Two giants** in the Kingdom → And now both are gone.
  - Bc – and I say this with great sadness/affection for them – isn't that the way of all men?
  - Preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten.<sup>6</sup>
    - They live on in the glory of heaven...
    - But here on earth, they are gone...

**Apply:** But while the **people** change, the **power** remains...

- God is still the Almighty...
  - His throne is still in the heavens and his kingdom still rules over all (**Ps 103:19**).
  - His is still the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty... He is still exalted as head above all (**1 Chron 29:11**).
  - Behold, he is still the LORD, the God of all flesh. And nothing is too hard for him (**Jer 32:27**).

*When we consider human frailty, we remember that he is mighty.*

- Personally, I find this combination energizing.
  - Our lives are but a blip → Consider the history of our own church...
    - In our 227-year history, I'm just the latest in a long line of senior pastors.
    - And there'll be many more after me as well → Won't be long till I'm nothing but a portrait in some hall.

*God's mission was here long before us, and it will continue long after us as well.*

- But that doesn't make our lives insignificant → We get to attack this season as best we can.
  - We're running a short leg on the relay of God's mission...
  - Knowing that in the end – by God's power – we win.
- So, let's live for him – and run.

**THE CLOSE: What might that look like for you this week?**

- Maybe it's in your **home**:
    - How you love your roommates or your spouse?
    - How you love these kids → Be a father/mother like our God?
  - Maybe it's in your **office**:
    - A colleague who needs some help?
    - Or a meaningful project that makes our community a better place?
  - Maybe it's with the **poor**:
    - Supporting our families who've chosen to foster/adopt?
    - Signing up for a *Come Serve With Us* event?
- Maybe it's something else...*
- But together, let's live for him...
    - When we live in the power of our personal God, we live lives without regret.
    - And we can – bc we *believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

## RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

---

### Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Logos Bible Software.
- R. Albert Mohler, Jr. *The Apostles' Creed*.
- J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*.

### Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> See *The Apostles' Creed: Its History and Origins*, accessed [here](#) 5/24/23.

<sup>2</sup> R. Albert Mohler, Jr. *The Apostles' Creed*, xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Mohler, 3.

<sup>4</sup> J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Packer, 36.

<sup>6</sup> This famous line is credited to the Moravian missionary Nikolaus von Zinzendorf.