

SERMON: “Words of Hope: *I Believe in God the father, Almighty*”

Rev. Geoff Ross. Sunday, March 5, 2017. St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Brampton.

[New series. Excited. AC] Close your eyes. It’s ok; I’m giving you permission! Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths; feel the air going in and out. Keep your eyes closed. Let your mind rest and think of the most beautiful place, thing, – or most amazing experience, or amazing thing you can think of – and, as you keep breathing, I want you to enjoy it for a moment. [silence] Time to wake up! I hope you’re relaxed from spending time in that moment.

The reason I had you relive that memory is because there are two things we need to know about this first statement of the Apostles’ Creed. First, when we say “*I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth;*” what we’re saying is that we believe in the One, True, Eternal God – the one God that the scriptures reveal and celebrate, the one God that existed before time (and will exist beyond time), that exists eternally as Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit; continually creating, rescuing, and guiding us. This God isn’t the god of this, that, or the other thing; He’s THE God of everything – everything that was, is, and will be; everything. Which is good since when we say, “*I believe in God, the Father almighty....*” we’re not just saying that we believe in a Supreme Being, we’re placing our trust in and committing ourselves to this Higher Power, the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God who, in the beginning, out of nothing, created all that is. God spoke and all things came into being and everything God created was very good.

What was your ‘happy place’? I’ve travelled around the world, and have seen a lot – and done a lot – of things. [GBR, Himalaya’s, Scotland, Sea of Galilee/stars, hurricanes, sun rise ...] I’ve never doubted there is a God – an awesome/amazing God; a God who set the stars in motion, who gave birds flight and taught fish to swim: God the architect; God the scientist; God the astronomer; God the botanist – the Lord God who made all things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small – but it wasn’t until I witnessed the birth of each of my children that I truly marveled at, and was wonderstruck by the power of a God who could make something/one so beautiful and fearfully and wonderfully made! Yes, we are made in God’s image (only God could be so exquisitely complex!), but as Rick Warren wrote; “It’s not about you[me/us]” – it’s about God. That’s why the Apostles’ Creed starts with our submitting ourselves to God!

The second thing we need to know is that while God is mighty in ALL things – nothing is impossible/too hard for God – God’s power is only matched by God’s great/steadfast/eternal love. Throughout the Bible God’s love is shown in how God created and then calls us as His own children – and then through Jesus as a God who not only calls us but cares enough to come down to be-with us, saving us from ourselves, restoring us to be the best of ourselves. God does this because this is what God does. Jeremiah, after speaking of God as great and powerful – after proclaiming that God created “*the heavens and the earth by [His] great power and outstretched arm*” –

connects God's might/power to His love by saying; "*You show steadfast love to the thousandth generation!*" (Jer 32:17-18) Psalm 106 speaks of God's saving His people so that His mighty power will be known – not through acts of wonder and awe but through His saving love; a love we know through His Son, Jesus who God "*gave ... in order that the world might be saved through Him.*" (John 3:16-17) And God still saves us today. He saves us because he loves us. Who of us would do that? None, but God would. Who could save us? None, but God could. Who did save us? No one but God the Father, almighty, did.

Now, as we prepare to shift our focus toward the Table, and Communion – as we join together to stand and say what it is that we believe – think about this; when the early Church gathered together and stood recited the Apostles' Creed, it was simultaneously their greatest act of rebellion and the greatest act of allegiance. This is why we're going to be preaching on it line by line! When those sisters and brothers in Christ throughout history stood – not knowing if their faith/belief in the One True God who created heaven and earth, and who loved them so much to send His Son to die to save them would lead to their arrest/death – they were rejecting the popular narrative/culture of their day, whatever day that was. Like Paul in our reading, they proclaimed their belief in God, creation, resurrection, love, and in the Day of Judgment beyond this world. By doing so they rejected Caesar as lord. They rejected Kings as lord. They rejected Hitler as lord. They rejected the 'lesser-than,' just-in-case,' demi-gods who ruled by force and fear and embraced/believed the God of the Bible, the God almighty, the God of love – a love that Jesus taught us to remember/reenact through the Communion we are about to share. Amen.