

Today is a glorious day, today we welcome two new brothers in Christ into the Body of Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism, today we welcome Aaron and Slone. We will hear promises made on their behalf, we will hear our own promises to uphold them and strengthen them in the journey, and as part of the baptismal service we will hear Aaron and Slone's parents commit their lives to Christ through the words of the Baptismal Covenant. The Baptismal Covenant is a sign of our commitment to a relationship with God, and with his Son Jesus that marks our life as Christians, and at the heart of this covenant is a version of the Apostles Creed. We will all be asked "Do you believe in God the Father?", "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?" and "Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?". What follows after each question is the appropriate response from the Apostles Creed. And so at the heart of our Baptismal liturgy is this thing we call the Creed, this statement of belief, this set of statements about God, and about the story of salvation. But how often do we really think about what we are saying in the Creed? We say the Creed, whether the Nicene or Apostles Creed, week in and week out but how often do we think about what we are saying. To many of us the Creed can be an odd, perhaps it even archaic part of our service or at the very least it's confusing and full of statements we may have a hard time agreeing to, or finally perhaps we just don't think about it and say it almost robotically. Some have argued that since the Creeds are not found in Scripture, they should have no authority in the Church – and even that they should not continue to be used. Some congregations in our tradition have done away with the Creed on a regular basis, citing that in our current culture it can be inaccessible, a stumbling block to faith. These might be legitimate concerns, but yet at the centre of our baptismal liturgy, at the centre of the event which creates Christian community, is this thing we call the Creed, is this statement of belief that has been passed on for generations through the Church.

Today we baptize two children into a community that proclaims this Creed, today is also All Saints Day, a day we remember all those who have gone before us in the faith, many holding to the same Creeds that we proclaim week in and week out. And so today is the perfect day to begin our exploration of the Creeds. Over the coming weeks we will explore the Creeds in a three-part manner, exploring and using what it is we believe about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as the framework for understanding the Creeds that we say week-in and week out.

For the next three weeks we will explore what we believe when we say the Creeds together, but today I want to begin by exploring these questions: Why the Creeds? What are they and why is proclaiming the Creeds important? Why do we say these words every week, and what effect does saying them together have? Through exploring why we say these words together each week, through exploring why we find them at the heart of our service of Baptism I hope that the creeds might become an invitation into a deeper and more vibrant faith as you continue on in your journey of discipleship.

So why the Creeds? Why are they important for us to hold onto and to proclaim consistently? To begin with Creeds are a natural part of life, the word creed comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means 'I believe.' Any time we say that we believe anything, whether that be about God or about anything else in our lives we are proclaiming a creed. The simplest Creeds that we as Christians might say on a regular basis are "I believe in God", "Jesus is Lord", "I believe that the Bible is God's word." Belief is an integral part of the Christian faith – faith is about trusting God, trusting his Son Jesus, trusting the Holy Spirit, faith is about having belief in God, belief that God is good, and just, and merciful and loving.

Belief is at the core of the Christian life, and over time and much conflict the church developed a core set of beliefs together to mark out what it meant for follower of Jesus, to believe in God. The legend of the writing of the Apostles' Creed is not true, but it gets at the heart of what the church. The myth goes that after the Day of Pentecost, as the Spirit was scattering the apostles to the four corners of the earth, the 12 came together and each penned a line that would express the faith they carried. The Creed was called "the faith delivered" or the "Symbol" and it was said in one form or other as early as the end of first century. It took the form in which the church has it today by the fourth century, and was itself an answer to those who challenged Christianity. While the story is mythological, as we have no record of this happening, and very little record of formulated creeds until the 3rd or 4th Century. However, the story I think reveals to us the motivation behind the formulation of the creeds. The creeds developed as a means to gather up the apostolic and scriptural witness to answer the questions: who is God, who is Jesus, who is the Holy Spirit.

The creeds were in many ways a response to both the spread of Christianity and the threat it felt from forces outside itself. As the creeds developed they served as markers of apostolic faith, they served to define the Christian community. The creeds were part of the Church's understanding of canon, or measuring stick, the way by which

communities were measured to be adhering (or not) to the faith that had been passed down from the apostles, and the Hebrew Scriptures. It is here that the argument that Creeds are not scriptural, and therefore should not be used fails. While the creeds might not be Scriptural, they are the Church's response to the Scriptural accounts of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Creeds are deeply rooted within the tradition of Scripture, and even the more abstract theological statements (i.e. statements about the Divinity of Jesus etc.) are deeply rooted within the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life. The creeds serve in some way as a clarifications and summaries of what is said about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.

Each and every week we get to proclaim and hear the whole story of salvation as we pray and proclaim the creeds. Beginning with creation and moving to the saving work of Jesus and finally ending with the Holy Spirit's creation of the Church – a church we are part of – we hear the whole scope of the story, even if it serves merely as an outline of that story. Sometimes in we can get caught up in the minutia of the Christian life, we can get caught up and see stories only in isolation. The creeds remind us that everything is part of a larger story, that each reading, each prayer, each song we sing, points to something greater, points to a story which we are invited to share. The creeds broaden our experience of worship to encompass whole scope of God's story, they bring us into communion with the saints across every age. When we use the creedal formula at baptism we remember that we as the congregation of Grace Church, in South Scarborough are connected to each Christian community throughout the world and throughout the whole history of the Church.

When Aaron and Slone are baptised, when their parents and God parents recite the baptismal covenant on their behalf, they are connected with all the saints through every age, both living and dead who have proclaimed this creed, who have understood their faith in these words. On the feast of All Saints, we are reminded that men and women of every age have died to safeguard these creeds and the faith contained within them. When we say the creeds we should remember the great privilege and responsibility we have in praying and proclaiming them, they should draw us into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church today and throughout all ages.

As we say the together we also support one another in upholding this faith we lay claim to. It is normal to wrestle with the creeds, to have difficulty with various parts of it. One of my sisters has a hard time reciting "crucified under Pontius Pilate" because she feels that Pilate wasn't responsible, or perhaps you know someone that finds it hard to declare and proclaim "born of the Virgin Mary." I have heard tell of a priest who once asked the congregation he was pastoring to sit down during a recitation of the Creed when they came to a statement they had trouble believing, and by the end of it only two people were standing, his conclusion at the end of this exercise was that the Creed was inaccessible and a stumbling block to faith. But I would argue that he should have run the exercise the other way around. Instead of asking people to sit down when they had trouble he should have asked people to stand up when they came to something they believed – by the end of that exercise it would have been apparent that as a body, as the Church the Creeds were believed together. The beauty of the Church is that as we say this creed together we are uplifted by all those around us, we are supported and buttressed by the faith of all the saints both in our midst and in the heavenly choirs who recite this creed with us. When we stand together to recite the creed and we have trouble with parts of it, we are carried along by the prayers and faith of those around us; that is what corporate worship is about, our faith is not merely our own, but also the faith of the whole community. When we have difficulty we are invited deeper into the text, we are invited to wrestle and struggle with God, not to capitulate and give in to doubt.

While some might see the Creeds as inaccessible or stumbling blocks to faith, to some extent the opposite is true. In the Creeds we have a clear statement about what we believe. If the church is meant to be "the light of the world" then we must have a clear sense of our belief, and a clear sense we are able to share with others. The creeds provide us a framework of belief that allows us to answer the question "what do you believe?", a question that will arise as we missionally minister in the world in love and service. The creeds after all encompass the grand scope of God's story, and our part in it – they are an excellent witness to the faith in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Today as we welcome two new members into the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, let us lay claim to the creeds. Let us lay claim to the Creeds as prayers where we encounter the love of God, where we as sinners can find our hope. On this feast of All Saints, let us remember the multitude that has gone before us who have prayed and proclaimed these creeds in faith, and let us be buoyed by their witness and testimony to the Triune God. My prayer for us all is that over the next four weeks the Creeds might become for us all an inspiration to go deeper into our faith, an invitation to embrace our belief in the God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and that when we say them we might claim them as the prayers they are. Let us not be robots, but rather real in our proclamation and prayer.