

I Believe In One God.

Text: Romans 10:10a

Suggested Hymns:

528, 381, 352, 452, 161

- 1) When You Believe, You Abandon Your Heart
- 2) Now You Can Believe; Now God Opens Your Heart
- 3) When You Hear God's Word And Believe
With Your Heart, You Commit Your Heart
- 4) By Faith You Take Heart

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 10:10a, ¹⁰ ***For with the heart one believes unto righteousness.*** (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we begin a series of sermons on the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed is the second of the three great ecumenical creeds. The other two are the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed. The latter we used last Sunday.

The word ecumenical means worldwide, general, or universal. And these are called the ecumenical creeds because for centuries they were generally accepted among the major churches of Christendom.

The Nicene Creed is familiar to you from its use in the Communion Service. It is therefore profitable for us to gain a better understanding of it and thus be able to use it more meaningful in confessing our faith before we approach the Lord's Table.

The Nicene Creed opens with the statement: *"I believe in one God."* Last Sunday was Trinity Sunday and we dealt in depth with the fact that we believe in the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Not three Gods but one God.

Today we are focussing on the word "believe" as written in our text, ¹⁰ ***For with the heart one believes unto righteousness.***

"I believe" is a pretty vague expression used in everyday conversation. When people say, "I believe," they usually mean that they are not quite sure. Its

meaning lies somewhere between “I guess so” and “I know.” For example, “Where are the car keys?” “I believe I left them on the table in the front porch.”

But when you say, “I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” this is quite another matter; for then something radical and revolutionary is happening to you. This believing is a heart operation; and “heart” in the language of the Bible means all of a person’s feeling, willing, and thinking.

So let us consider the first part of the Nicene Creed, *I believe in one God*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. When You Believe, You Abandon Your Heart

“Abandon” is a word to make a person tremble. When the order “*Abandon ship!*” is given, that means serious and desperate business. Something similar happens when you come to faith. When you believe, you are facing the facts about your heart. God is forcing you to be honest about it for the first time in your life.

Until you believe, you have never really looked into your heart, and with good reason; for what you see there is not a pretty sight. There is a fool down there who keeps repeating to himself, “*There is no God*” (Psalm 14:1). The poor fool cannot ever quite convince himself, but he keeps on trying.

How wretchedly serious, how pitifully urgent, agnostics and atheists, are about their agnosticism and their atheism! They make more words about it than believers do about their faith. A man on a sinking ship, who does not want to abandon ship, is naturally more preoccupied about his ship than the person whose ship is bravely cutting the waves under a full head of sail.

The heart of man is a sinking ship. We read in Jeremiah 17:9 that ⁹ “*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked.*” There is no human hope for it, no survival that man can devise. In its own way the heart is strong, but it is a fatal strength. Its strength is all used up in a mad drive towards death. Psalm 36 discusses *An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.*

As a prophet is inspired and moved by the voice of God, so natural man is inspired and moved by the voice of transgression and sin. Man is driven to revolt

against God by the evil inspiration in his heart: *There is no fear of God before his eyes*. Transgression can speak to this heart, but nothing else can; it is a “foolish” heart.¹ It will not be told anything.

Your heart is the heart of Adam. It is the heart of man in revolt against God, the heart of man who wants to be “*like God*,” lord of himself, not dependent on the grace of his Creator. It is the heart of man in flight from God, the heart of poor Adam shivering in the bushes. It is the heart of Adam excusing himself. He even tries to accuse God to make a go of it: “*The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree.*”²

This is the heart of man who regards God as his enemy and will not listen to the music of the things God has made, music that woos him to glorify God and give Him thanks. Man with this heart will not listen. Rather he turns his back on God and makes himself gods after his own heart.

We read in Romans 1:18-23, ¹⁸ *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,* ¹⁹ *because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.*

²⁰ *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,* ²¹ *because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

²² *Professing to be wise, they became fools,* ²³ *and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man -- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*

This is desperate corruption. Only God can do anything about it. And He does. He confronts you and damns you in your revolt. He halts you in your flight. He flushes you out of your secret hiding places. The Psalmist says in Psalm 90:8, ⁸ *You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.*

God silences your pleas in your own defence, those careful psychological, sociological, historical explanations of your sins. God takes you out of the

world-forsakenness of your godless existence — the world holds no comfort for the person in flight from the world’s Creator.

God takes you out of your God-forsaken grey and meaningless solitude. God takes you out of your man-forsaken loneliness. God turns you into a *new creation*³ and gives you a new heart.

2. Now You Can Believe; Now God Opens Your Heart

Now you can face the infinite power of God and submit to it in holy fear. Now you can trust that infinite wisdom of His. Now you can cease grabbing things for yourself. Now you can trust His infinite goodness to give you your heart’s desire.

Now, above all, you can hear His Word. The new heart which God has given you was created by His Word, and it needs His Word to live. It cannot live on air or on itself. The Lord tells His people in Isaiah 55:3, ³ ***Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live.*** God’s Word gives your faith its content. You live the content of your faith.

You live and believe as a human being in time and space, in this world, which God has created, where God has acted for *us men and our salvation*, where He is acting now, where He will act to make all things new, to end forever all the agony of man and man’s world.

You need God’s Word to tell you this, to make you know that you are in His hand.

Some people seem to think that faith gets warped and that religion is no longer pure and undefiled when knowledge and facts get into them. But God created brains, and He hates nothing that He has made. He loves our brains, and He fills them with knowledge. God performs acts, and His Word speaks facts. He wants these acts and facts remembered.

God does not want His mercies to lie in unthankfulness.

The hymnist writes:

O bless the Lord, my soul:
Nor let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,

And without praises die.⁴

Indeed, to believe is to be wholly and totally exposed to these facts, to be no longer a prey to our own ideas, dreams, and fancies. But this being exposed is not merely passive. This knowledge is not mere knowledge of the head.

3. When You Hear God's Word And Believe With Your Heart, You Commit Your Heart

God is not a lecturer, to be listened to politely, attentively, and critically. His Word is not subject to our judgment. On the contrary, when He speaks, we are subjected to His judgment.

He condemns you, and He acquits you. His Word is power and invades your life. You live by every word that proceeds from His mouth. His promise shapes your present life and assures you of the life of the world to come.

When you hear His Word saying, "*Let us make man,*" you are concerned and involved. You are this "man." You cannot but say with Luther, "*God has created me,*" and live forever after with that knowledge in your heart.

When God's Son speaks of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air which your Father in heaven has made and clothes and feeds, that Word concerns you, your coat and your dinner.

When God's Word placards up before you the Crucified and you hear the one obedient Son of God cry out, "*My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?*"⁵ — that word concerns you, the disobedient son or daughter, who should have hung on the cross and should have been deserted by the Father whose grace you have despised.

Your life is forever altered by your knowledge of this fact. When you hear God's Son say, "*I will build My church,*"⁶ that word of Jesus implants you in the church, makes you a member in the body of Christ, with all the privileges, the joys, and the responsibilities of being in the church.

When God's Word speaks of the resurrection and the life of the world to come, that signifies your resurrection and your life in the world to come, and you taste even now the powers of the world to come.

And so, by abandoning your corrupt heart, by God opening your new heart to the Word of God, by committing your heart to His Word — all of which is not

your doing at all, but God's, who gives you power to turn to Him, to listen to Him, and to obey Him — so faith becomes power. If you believe with your heart, you grow powerful and bold.

4. By Faith You Take Heart

By faith you are filled with all the fullness of God.⁷ God is at work in you to make you, will and do, for His good pleasure.⁸ Because your little mustard-seed faith receives from God the very power of God, you can move mountains. You can do even greater things than that. You can love.

God, who is Love, sets your heart free for love toward your neighbour — a person nearby, a person far away, a white person, a black person, a good person, a bad person, a person who is your friend, or a person who is your enemy. You can love them with a *“love that is round and whole and the same to all.”*⁹

God's Word has set you free from yourself. You have been delivered from the curse of subjectivity. You can deny yourself and say no to your feelings. You can act when “You don't feel like it.” You can hope against hope. Holding fast to the Word of God, you can walk in the dark, step by step according to that Word. You can cast aside all your fears and worries.

It is obvious that believing is not just one of a number of things that you do in your life. It is life - life drawn from God and life lived for God. Faith is the whole disposition and motion of your life, the beating heart of all your work and worship. In fact, when you believe, your whole life is worship. When you believe, you lift up your heart unto the Lord.

To say “I believe” is a radical and revolutionary business. It looks like dangerous business. To lay your whole life in God's hand — what a risk! But what a hand it is - the Creator's hand, the Redeemer's hand, the hand that holds the reins of history and guides all history toward God's glorious goal!

To have your whole life hanging by the one thread of the Word - what a risk! But what a Word it is - the Word that created you and all creatures, the Word that justifies the ungodly, the Word of God who shall say, ***“Behold, I make all things new!”***¹⁰

This Word alone stands and endures when all the sure and solid things fade like the flowers of the field. Held by this hand, hung on this Word, we know our heart is at home, safe at home, forever at home. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Romans 1:21

² Genesis 3:12

³ 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁴ Hymn 452 v2

⁵ Matthew 27:46

⁶ Matthew 16:18

⁷ Ephesians 3:19

⁸ Phil. 2:13

⁹ Luther

¹⁰ Revelation 21:5