

Dr. Joe Jursa's Sermon

I believe in God

- Genesis 1:1-2

What do we believe? As United Methodists there is diversity in some of our beliefs, but we adhere to the basic beliefs of the entire Christian community. We have regularly returned to and included the historic Apostles Creed as one of our statements of belief.

For the season of Lent we will be preaching a series on our fundamental beliefs. The Apostles Creed is one of the earliest statements of the core beliefs of the Christian faith. We will look at what has been repeated so often and what it means, sometimes by comparing with what different persons believe and sometimes by explaining what the church has understood the words to mean.

The Apostles Creed came into existence because over time persons tried to change the basic faith to include things they felt or thought or to exclude things they felt were not in keeping. We talk in the creed about the physical birth and life of Jesus but some early heretics (persons who wanted to change our faith) believed Jesus was only a spirit. We talk about resurrection because some early Jewish believers were uncertain and the Apostles corrected their thinking.

And we begin the Creed with the words, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth." And where might these words have come from in our faith tradition? How about the opening words of the scriptures?

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Before there was anything else, we believe God was. There are lots of theories about how the world came into existence. Creation, Evolution, the Big Bang Theory and lots of others held from time to time and by differing scientific persons of religious people.

As Christians we believe that God created the world. Before God spoke the word, the world, the heavens, everything that is simple was not. Everything we know of the world of creation is a result of the fact that God spoke it all into existence.

I recall from college a joke about scientists getting to the point where they could create life. So God invites them to display their handy work.

The scientist begins by putting selected particles of dust and fixing into a jar when God holds up his hand and says, being with your own stuff not the stuff I gave you.

Before anything was, as Christians we believe that God was. Now there are arguments galore about the development of the world and differing species, but most scientist are coming to the conclusion that some place back there before everything or anything, there had to be a creator of some kind beyond what we know.

As Christians we call the creator, God. From nothing God calls everything into existence.

What is really important to me and I think to each one of us is the whole idea of what that means God is capable of and in particular what God can do if we are in good relations with God. Nothing that happens in this world is ever beyond God's ability to overcome. If God spoke it into existence, God can speak it out of existence.

What troubles you? Have you recalled lately that the God who created everything, even the stuff that causes us to suffer cares for you and has the ability to do something about your trouble? I believe in God, the Father Almighty.

One of the characteristics of good father's is caring. They care about their children. They watch over them, they provide for their needs and in times when they have gotten themselves into jams even when it is by their own poor choices, good fathers care for their children. Even tough lessons of love are attempts by good fathers to make the lives of their children ones that the children are going to care about, be proud of and are worthwhile.

What do we believe about this almighty creator of everything? We call him Father in our opening statement about God. I believe in God, the Father almighty.

The one who created everything, is Father to you and me. God cares for us. When we do things pleasing to God, when we wander and make poor decision. Anything and everything we do will never change God's perspective of us, we will always be God's children and God will treat us as such.

Sometimes we will find ourselves bless unexpectedly. God did it. Sometimes we will find ourselves being corrected. God is doing it. But always there will be God watching and caring for us.

Do you take advantage of that? I don't mean use God to your own advantage or misuse your relationship, but do you understand God will always see you as God's child?

Do you take opportunities to remind yourself that you belong to God? In hard times, even mildly difficult times, is your first thought of God or of how you can get yourself out of the mess you are in. A father may watch from some distance giving us room to be us, but God is always watching and waiting for even the hint of the sound of your voice calling out to him.

One of the great joys personally I feel with my daughters is when they call to just let me know what they are doing. They are not looking for me to help them, nor are they really in need of anything, they just want to talk. Do you ever just talk to God?

That great first story in scripture puts God and Adam and Eve walking in the cool of the evening. They are just talking about their day. Have you ever availed yourself of the great joy of just sharing yourself with God?

The Good News for us is that we are children of the creator of everything and God still wants to spend time with us. Are you during this season of Lent allowing yourself to just experience the presence of God by sharing your day in conversation with God? Don't make this a time of asking or wanting or listing of needs. You can do that certainly anytime you need, but for this season, just spend some time talking like you would to a best friend. Your heavenly father is prepared to listen, you will make God's day. After all, God created everything just so that you and God could spend some time together.

I invite you to just spend some time now with God.