

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER, MAKER OF HEAVEN & EARTH

Text: Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 5 **Read:** Matthew 6:25:34

1: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth
The eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 1:1,2)
The Father of creation, Creator of heaven and earth (Ge 1,2)
My God and Father, adopted through Christ his Son (Jn 1:12,13)

2: What that means for me:
I trust that he will provide whatever I need for body and soul (Mt 6:25,26,33)
I trust that he will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends me in this sad world (Ro 8:28)

3: Why would God do this? (Ps 8)
Because He can: He is almighty God (Ge 18:14)
Because He wants to: He is a faithful Father (Mt 7:9-11)

And so: Trust God in everything because he is our Almighty Creator Father!

HC LD 9 ser 5

Dear Congregation

The Apostles Creed starts, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

Do you understand just how powerful a statement that is. It's an interesting exercise to work through it word by word and think deeply about the significance of each part. If we all did that, it would be interesting to know how many of us discovered that we really don't take this to heart enough in the way we live our day to day lives.

For example, do you realise how powerful belief is – even belief in something that you may not know to be true?

Man set foot on the moon because some people believed enough that it could be done. They didn't know for sure that it could – in fact months before the launch date test rockets were still exploding on the launch pad. But enough people believed that it could be done, and it was.

Unknown continents have been discovered, new empires have risen from the dust, apparently hopeless wars have been won, apparently impossible cures have been developed, unbelievable achievements have been made – simply because some people believed enough that it could be done, and were therefore willing to give it there all.

And that's just a belief in possibilities. That's not even talking about how our Almighty Creator God actively

blesses those who trust him and watches over the details of their lives.

And so, this Lord's Day tonight leads us through what a deep belief in God, our Almighty Creator Father, means to those who trust in him with all their heart.

Point 1

We believe in God the Father.

And that can already be understood at different levels. The level we probably think of first is that *he is the eternal Father of the Son*, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we're probably inclined to think of this in terms of our own father/son relationships. Some of us are fathers of sons, some of us are sons of fathers, all of us are familiar with the relationship. A son gets married, has children of his own, and becomes a father.

One big difference, as John 1 reminds us though, is that "[already] in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Through him all things were made." The Son already existed with the Father from eternity. Those of us who are fathers existed before we had sons of our own, but in God's case the father has been a father from eternity to a Son who also existed from eternity. It's another big thing that sets Jesus apart from us as unique. But our father/son relationships are modelled on the relationship between God the father and God the son.

On the other hand, at another level, *God is the Father of everything*. He is God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. He created everything - he is its father. As Paul said to the people in Athens, 'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'.

And that takes us back to Genesis 1 again, doesn't it, when God created everything in that first creation week?

Andrew Kuyvenhoven, in one of his books gives us some idea of what God achieved in doing that. He says,

“Imagine that we could reduce the earth to the size of a [small] marble and place it on a table. Then we could place another marble, half the size of the first [one], two feet away from “earth”. The second marble would be the moon. 300 feet away from the earth-marble we could set a ball the size of a volleyball: the sun. The sun is our nearest star. If we wanted to include the next star, we would have to [put] it in China because, although the sun is 93 million miles away from the earth, the distance to the next star is 300 000 times farther. ... [And] in the depth of space are countless other stars and planets, somehow kept together in whirling masses we call galaxies. Only in the last few decades ... have we begun to realise how unimaginably vast the universe is and how planet earth is but a pinprick in space.”

Isn't that an amazing picture of what our Father God has created?

And if things had stayed the way they were in Genesis 1, every created thing would still be acknowledging God as Father to this day. But of course the fall in Genesis 3 cut the tie between God and us and creation. God's children by creation became his enemies. Like the prodigal son, all humanity disowned their father and went their own way. And it's not only we who were affected by that. As Paul writes in Romans 8, through that all of creation came under bondage to death and decay.

And so the most important level of God's Fatherhood now for us, is the way that ***he is a Father to those he adopts as his children through faith in Jesus Christ.***

We're possibly all familiar with the idea of adoption - parents adopting children not naturally their own to raise as if they were. Thankfully for us, God is taking that same approach and redeeming and adopting those who were his enemies before, as his children. John 1, again, says, 'to all who received [Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.'

And as it turns out, not only do we look forward to the fulfilment of that process. As Paul writes in Romans 8, 'The creation [also] waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ... in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the

children of God.” When God has completed his plan of redemption, all of creation will again acknowledge God as its father, as it did in the beginning.

This is what it means that God is the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

Point 2

But then, coming back to where we started, *what does it mean to a person to believe with all their heart and soul that these things are true*. What does it mean to a person to not only know this information in some kind of theoretical way in your head, but to believe it so much that you live your life by it, make your decisions by it, understand reality through it, and are shaped by it in every way? How does that change a person’s outlook on life?

And if we do believe in God our Almighty Creator Father in that kind of way, we need not fear an uncertain future in an uncertain world, because we know that this God, who is able to create the universe, continues to watch over us and care for us.

Maybe you remember what it was like, as a child, to not have a thought for where your next meal would come from. We just knew that Dad and Mum would look after that. We trusted them to look after us in every way. They’d never let us down before in that regard. Why should we even worry about it?

And the Bible teaches that if we know God to be this kind of God, then we don’t need to doubt that *he will provide everything we need for body and soul*. Jesus makes that clear in Matthew 6. He says, ‘Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. . . . For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.’”

And that’s not to say that we don’t need to work for a living. It’s not to say that we will never be sick, or that we won’t one day die. This isn’t to say that God will give us everything we want. But it is to say that in all of these things and more during our time on earth and then into eternity God will provide everything we really

need, so that when we look back from the perspective of eternal glory at his side we will only be able to say that we never lacked for anything we really needed.

And if we know God in this kind of way we can also trust that ***God will turn to our good whatever adversity he sends us in this sad world.***

Which means that first of all we're acknowledging that even our struggles and difficult times only come to us by God's hand. After all, he is almighty. Nothing can happen to us that he doesn't allow. Even in a sinful world struggling under the curse of sin, adversity can only come to us if God decides.

On the other hand, we're acknowledging that God takes no pleasure in the suffering of the world. He doesn't permit suffering without good reason. Even in a sinful world God uses suffering to serve his good purposes. Romans 8 says, 'We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.'

And isn't that a comfort? What are the struggles you're going through at the moment? Do you have issues at school or at work? Are there things happening in the family? Are you going through difficulties in your personal life – maybe even things you can't put a finger on yet, maybe things that you don't even know how to deal with? Are there pressures from within, pressures from without? Isn't it a comfort to know that none of this could happen without God's OK? Isn't it a comfort to know that God is using all of this to the good of those who love him? The only question then is whether you really love him. And if you do, all you're called to do is address these things as best you can according to the guidelines in his word the Bible, and even these things He will work to your ultimate good.

This is the perspective to which true faith leads us.

A book I'm reading at the moment talks about companies that maintain absolute faith that they can prevail in the end, regardless of the brutal facts of their current reality. Winston Churchill took the same attitude during the Second World War, maintaining the belief, in spite of German strength and opposition during the darkest days of the war, that Britain would not only survive, but thrive as a great nation. And this was only a belief

in possibilities that these people didn't even know would be realised.

If we believe that God is our Almighty Creator Father, who continues to be active in the world and in our lives today, we can have even greater faith than that – that God will lead us through, that he will provide, that he will turn to our good whatever adversity comes our way.

Point 3

One last question then is, Why would God do that? Why would he look after us in that kind of way?

After all, Psalm 8 asks the question, ‘When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, ... that you care for him?’ Aren't we insignificant in the scale of the universe – microbes in the backyard? Isaiah compares nations to a drop in the bucket, dust on the scales – why would God care about individuals in this kind of way when, to him, nations are only like particles of dust?

One part of the answer to that is because *he's able to*. God is the kind of God who responds to need in grace, love and mercy because he's able to. I've heard of a man, who when he had finished raising his own family, helped provide for and raise another family that wasn't his own, probably just because the need was there and he was able to. That's the kind of God that God is. As he says to Abraham when Sarah laughed at the idea of having a child in her old age, ‘Is anything too hard for the LORD?’

Another part of the answer is because *he wants to*. He wants to look after us in this kind of way because he is a faithful father. In Matthew 7, Jesus says to his disciples, “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

Why would God want to care for us in this kind of way? Simply because he can, and he wants to. It's in his

nature to respond to situations of need in love, grace, compassion, and mercy.

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And so, when we do use the Apostles Creed to confess our faith, don't let it just be well-known words rolling off your tongue. I know it's easy to let that happen, but try to think through the significance of these things as you say them. Believe these things with a Hebrews 11 kind of faith – 'sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see'. And think of what that means for us, so that we can increasingly live our lives in the comfort and security that this knowledge gives.