



Una Sancta¹

A SUMMER SERMON SERIES ON THE NICENE CREED

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10 Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16

1 Corinthians 12:4-27 Matthew 16:13-20

August 25, 2024

Pastor Dave Bolte

When you think about salvation, your first thought is probably *Jesus lived and died for me.*
THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE.

As a *Biblically literate* and *doctrinally sound* disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, you come to learn the fullness of what that means.

- ⇒ As you study Scripture, you learn that **God the Father** so loved the world that He sent His only Son to rescue you from your sins. He calls you out of this present evil age and into His eternal Kingdom. God the Father's love for you is *most clearly seen* in your salvation.
- ⇒ And as you study Scripture, you also learn that **Jesus, the Son of God**, not only died on the cross for you, to pay for your sins, but also that He lived a perfect and holy life for you, so that you are now declared holy and righteous in God's eyes. Jesus' work for you and on your behalf was total, thorough, and comprehensive.
- ⇒ And as you study Holy Scripture, you also learn that **God the Holy Spirit** has worked through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to create faith within your heart. And that the Holy Spirit is *continually at work* through His Word and Sacraments to nurture your faith and to keep you faithful to the Father and to the Son.

Salvation is a Trinitarian event; all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are your Savior.

As we continue to study the **NICENE CREED**, we learn that part of the work of salvation that the Holy Spirit does for us is to bring us into the **One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic CHURCH.**

¹ “Una Sancta” is Latin for “One Holy” — and it is the theological shorthand for “The One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church.” Frequently, this is how the Christian Church is referenced in theological writings.

The word “**Church**” means “*the called out ones.*” *On the one hand*, the word Church refers to all **the people** throughout history whom the Holy Spirit has called out of this corrupt and dying world and brought into the eternal Kingdom of God. This would be *all believers of all times and all places* throughout history. *On the other hand*, the word “Church” also refers to **the place** where believers gather together around God's Holy Word and His Sacraments².

Through faith in Christ, you are part of the Church.

You are one of those whom the Holy Spirit has created faith through the gospel, and has brought you into the Kingdom of God. For most of us, Holy Baptism is where the Holy Spirit created your faith. If you came to faith later in life, then the Holy Spirit first worked through the Word of God to call you to faith. Either way, faith in Christ means that you have been set apart from this wicked world; you are called out of this sinful and corrupt world and brought into the Kingdom of God. You are part of God's family. You belong in the **One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic CHURCH**.

And in this Church, there is a unity: we are ONE. Our faith unites us around the Lord Jesus Christ. We unite around the Word of God and the truth of Holy Scripture as we use our gifts to glorify God and serve our neighbor. The work of the Holy Christian Church is to confess Christ to the world; to take the Gospel to all nations, so that others may believe, and become part of the Church. The Holy Spirit works through the Church to call people out of the world and into the Kingdom of God.

The Church is HOLY! Your holiness is not self-made, nor does it come from yourself. Sin has destroyed any chance for us to ever become holy and righteous on our own. We are totally and thoroughly corrupt and dead in sin from conception and birth. Our lives are full of disobedience and rebellion against the commandments of God. There is no holiness to be found in us. The saying is true: *the Church is full of sinners!* **But at the same time**, the Church is holy because of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is holy. He is pure. He is righteous. His holiness and righteousness is a gift that's given to you through faith, and because of Christ, God considers you to be holy and righteous. As far as God is concerned, you are

² You may have heard of the terms “invisible Church” and “visible Church.” The “invisible Church” is the Church that is unseen, all believers of all times and of all places: all those who have faith in Christ. Only God knows the true number of His People. It’s “invisible” to us. The “visible Church” refers to local congregations at a specific location, where Christians gather, where you can see who is there and who is not. These terms help to clarify the double use of the word “Church” in the New Testament. For example, the invisible Church is referenced in Ephesians 5:25-27; and the visible Church is referenced in 1 Corinthians 1:2. The context dictates which use of the word “Church” is being used.

pure and undefiled, good and clean, obedient and faithful, holy and righteous because of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ³.

The Church is CHRISTIAN; that is, universal. In the original text, the word that's used is Catholic ... in the original Greek language, “catholic” means universal. This does not mean the Roman Catholic Church; the Nicene Creed was written 700 years before the Roman Catholic Church began⁴. Rather this word indicates that Christ died for the sins of all people; that His Church consists of all tribes, peoples, nations, and languages.

The Church is APOSTOLIC; it is based on the Prophets and the Apostles Who testify to, and teach us about, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God, both Old Testament and New Testament, is the foundation of the Church. The Word of God is the source and authority of all teachings and doctrines in the Church; and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central and most important teaching of the Church.

The **One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church** is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word and the Sacraments. That is how God has worked in your life. He has brought you to the waters of Holy Baptism, taught you the Word of God, and fed you the Body and Blood of Christ in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. The Holy Spirit *continually works through these things* in your life so that you abide in Christ and remain in the Church.

When you think about the **One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church**, there are several things to keep in mind.

⇒ **This is where you belong.** Faith in Christ will never make you a Lone Ranger. The Holy Spirit will never work in your life to keep you away from the Church. Only Satan will work to keep you away from meeting together with God's People.

³ This paragraph reflects the doctrine of the “Perfect Obedience of Christ.” Jesus perfectly obeyed God the Father in His life, perfectly obeying the 10 commandments; and that perfect life is credited to you through faith. AND Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father in His death, for it was God the Father's will that the Son would be punished for our sins and die in our place. Both Jesus' life, and His death, make you righteous, that is, “not guilty”, in God's eyes.

⁴ Remember that the church bodies that we now call “Roman Catholic” and “Eastern Orthodox” do not originate until 673 years after the Nicene Creed was written. The Creed was written in 325AD, and affirmed in 381AD and 451AD; the “Great Schism” occurred in 1054AD. In the Creed, the term “catholic” means universal, NOT “Romans Catholic.” “Since the 1500's, it has been necessary for Protestant tradition to clarify that ‘catholic’ does not mean the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore the word ‘Christian’ is substituted to indicate the ‘whole church as it confesses the wholeness of Christian doctrine.’” (LSB p.206)

- ⇒ **This is where God is found.** The Church is described as the “Body of Christ”; and Jesus promises to be wherever His people gather together, even if there's only two or three. This is where He has placed His Word, His Water, and His Meal. This is *the Kingdom of God among us*. This is where forgiveness, life and salvation are to be found. **There is something different about the Church than anything else in society and in the culture.** This is Holy Ground where God promises to be for you every single week of your life.
- ⇒ **This is where you serve the Lord.** You have been given gifts to build up the body of Christ; to help other people grow in faith, to comfort and encourage them, to help and assist them. You certainly are to love your neighbor in your vocations, and to proclaim the gospel to the people in your life; but *even more so* here at Church those things happen, within the fellowship of believers⁵.
- ⇒ **The goal of all mission work is to bring people into the Church.** Unlike the Evangelicals who understand evangelism as simply an invitation; we understand evangelism as the proclamation of the gospel that creates faith and brings people into the Holy Christian Church⁶. It is in the Church where the Holy Spirit works through the Means of Grace -- the Word and the Sacraments -- to create and nurture faith. It is important to hear God's Word, to receive His Sacraments, and to be with His People. The goal of all mission work is to bring people into the One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church.

God the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, has worked through the Gospel to bring you into the Church. He has given you faith in Christ the Savior and the recognition of the Love of God the Father for you. He has called you out of the darkness of this world and brought you into the marvelous light of His Kingdom. Never underestimate the significance of being part of the **One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church!** Amen!

⁵ Remember Galatians 6:9-10: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

⁶ Whenever you think about the Doctrine of the Church, it is important to keep this insightful quote in mind: “The Lutheran Church does not set itself up as the [One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church], but acknowledges that there are children of God also in those denominations in which, besides the doctrines of men, enough Gospel is still proclaimed to produce faith in Christ as the only Redeemer. On the other hand, the Lutheran Church claims to be the Church of the pure doctrine, i.e., it claims that its doctrine agrees in all points with Holy Scripture and should accordingly to God’s Will be believed and accepted by all.” [Christian Dogmatics](#).

God the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, we thank you for bringing us out of the darkness of this world and into the light of Your Kingdom. We thank You for faith in Jesus, that brings us into the One, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church. Work through Your Word and the Sacrament of Holy Communion to keep us faithful throughout our lives so that we may ever enjoy the gift of eternal life and our home in Heaven. Bless the work of our local congregation here at Trinity, so that we may confess the Gospel and that many will hear, believe and become members of the Holy Christian Church. We pray this to the glory of the Father and in the Name of our Savior, amen.

1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ . . . 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. . . . 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1 Corinthians 12:4-27

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. 12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Matthew 16:13-20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” 14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.