



The Holy Spirit

A SUMMER SERMON SERIES ON THE NICENE CREED

Psalms 139:1-18, 23-24

Acts 5:1-11 John 14:15-27

August 4, 2024

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The Nicene Creed was written to combat a false teacher named Arius who was teaching that Jesus was not fully God nor equal to the Father. In 325 AD, the Holy Christian Church condemned that false teaching, and confessed that Jesus truly is God of God, Light of light, Very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made.

It was hoped that that would take care of the heresy and people would avoid it like the plague. **But they did not.** It continued to spread and grow, and within 56 years the false teaching attacked the doctrine of the Holy Spirit¹. The same false teaching that claimed Jesus was not God was not being used against the Holy Spirit. They were teaching that the Holy Spirit was not fully God, nor was He equal to the Father². Those who taught this false teaching were given the name *Pneumatomachians*, which means “enemies of the Spirit.”

So the Christian Church convened again in 381 AD, in the city of Constantinople. It was called the *Council of Constantinople*, and it added the paragraph that we know about the Holy Spirit to the Nicene Creed.

¹ False doctrine always spreads and grows. It is never neutral. Jesus describes it as yeast that grows (Matt 16:11ff) and St. Paul describes it as gangrene, that spreads, grows, and kills (2 Timothy 2:16ff). That is why you have to be so very careful what you let influence you in the faith. What you watch, listen to, read; your music, podcasts, etc, etc. are NOT neutral. A little false teaching can grow and eventually lead you astray.

² There are many who teach similar things today. Rather than a Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is seen as simply the power, love, work, energy, or glory of God. The Nicene Creed emphasized that the Holy Spirit is not a “thing” but a Person of the Holy Trinity, equal to the Father and equal to the Son.

And I believe in THE HOLY SPIRIT,
the Lord and Giver of Life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son³
Who with the Father and the Son together
is worshiped and glorified,
Who spoke by the Prophets.

The goal of all these words is to teach that the Holy Spirit is the One, True, and Only God, equal with God the Father, and equal with God the Son. There is One God in Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit⁴.

The Holy Spirit is at work in *Sanctification*, that is , your coming to faith and remaining in the faith. The Holy Spirit works in your life through the three ways that He promised to work His grace and mercy: the **Holy Scriptures, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion**.

These are called the *Means of Grace*, because they are the three places that God has promised to work forgiveness in your life. They are the ways that God has chosen to create and nurture your faith throughout your life. **These are God's things**, these are the

³ These three words, "and the Son", are quite controversial in Church history. In Latin, these 3 English words are the one word "Filioque." It ultimately became the "final straw" that would separate the eastern "Orthodox" churches from the western "Catholic" churches. The Western churches arbitrarily added the Filioque to the Nicene Creed without consulting the Eastern churches. It became the final lightning rod after centuries of conflict between the two geographical groups. The event is known as the Great Schism of 1054 AD; and it is the beginning of what we know today as the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church.

⁴ The Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus) were the leaders of the Council of Constantinople. Linguistically, they connected the Holy Spirit to both the Father and the Son in the Nicene Creed. The word "Lord" is the same word that is used of the Son; and the word "Giver" is the same word that is used for the Father, but translated as "Maker of Heaven and Earth" in the section on the Father. In addition, they double emphasized the Name "Holy Spirit", by literally saying, "The Spirit, the Holy one." And finally, they confessed that He was the Creator and not a creature with the word "Life" (this is the Greek word from which we get the English word "zoo"). The Nicene Creed unequivocally confesses that the Holy Spirit is a Person of the Godhead, and not a "thing." It was out of this era in Church History that the Church developed its language of "One God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

tools the Holy Spirit uses to call you to faith, to grow your faith, and to strengthen your faith throughout your life. **That's why the Word of God, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion are so important to us as conservative Lutherans.** They are objective signs for us that God is working in our lives with His grace and mercy to forgive us our sins and to strengthen our faith⁵.

In addition, God the Holy Spirit lives within you. In a real -- yet *unexplainable* -- way, the Holy Spirit lives in you so much so that your body is called a “Temple” of the Holy Spirit⁶. With the Holy Spirit at work within you, your sanctification, your holy living, your good works, your good words, are all accomplished by the power of God at work within you. In daily Christian living, we are dependent on the Lord.

There are many synonyms for the work of the Holy Spirit within you:

Baptized by Spirit
Filled with the Spirit
Empowered by the Spirit
Sanctified by Spirit
Born Again by the Spirit
Renewed in the Spirit
Helped by the Spirit

Bear Fruit of the Spirit
Gifted by the Spirit
Sealed by the Spirit
Walk in the Spirit
Led by the Spirit
Live by the Spirit

⁵ Martin Luther writes, "So today the Word itself, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper are our morning stars to which we turn our eyes as certain indications of the Sun of grace. For we can definitely assert that where the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and the Word are found, Christ, the remission of sins, and life eternal are found. On the other hand, where these signs of grace are not found, or where they are despised by men, not only grace is lacking but also foul errors will follow. Then men will set up other forms of worship and other signs for themselves" [What Luther Says](#), Vol. II, page 914, #2862

⁶ This doctrine is called the “Mystical Union.” The word “mystical” captures the personal nature of this, but also the mystery of it. The Bible teaches that not only does the Holy Spirit live within you, but also the Father and the Son. All three persons of the Holy Trinity, God Himself, is at work in and through you to sanctify your Christian faith and life! Not to minimize the Father nor the Son, but our focus today is on the Holy Spirit, as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 6:19ff.

These all mean the same thing, they just have different nuances about each of them. The unifying idea is that the Holy Spirit lives within you, creating and nurturing your faith, and empowering you to live a holy and godly life.

- ➡ Because of the Holy Spirit you **love God** with all your heart with all of your soul and all of your strength
- ➡ because of the Holy Spirit, you **love your neighbor** as Christ has loved you
- ➡ because of the Holy Spirit, **godly character traits** will be seen in your life, like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control
- ➡ because of the Holy Spirit, you have certain **gifts** that you use in the work of His Kingdom, to serve His people, and to reach out to the lost

The Holy Spirit lives within you, creating and nurturing your faith, and empowering you to live a holy and godly life.

1,700 years ago, godly men and women stood firm on Holy Scripture and confessed the truth of the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed. We too stand firm on Holy Scripture, and confess the truth of the Holy Spirit in our day and age with the words of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in THE HOLY SPIRIT,
the Lord and Giver of Life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son
Who with the Father and the Son together
is worshiped and glorified,
Who spoke by the Prophets.
Amen!

God the Holy Spirit, we believe that you are equal to the Father and to the Son. Thank you for creating faith within us through your means of grace, and with those same means of grace, strengthen our faith and lead us to holy living. Grant us deep conviction of faith, an assurance of salvation, and a drive for holy living. Work in and through us so that we may glorify our Father in heaven, and love and serve our neighbor. We pray this in Jesus our savior's name, Amen

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Acts 5:1-11

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." 5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. 6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. 7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." 9 But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

John 14:15-27

[Jesus said,] “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. 25 “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.