
Graphics and Audio Notes

- There **will** be a sermon starter video.
- There **will** be notes and / or scripture to show on screen during the sermon.

Text highlighted in this way will have a slide prepared to be on screen.

Text highlighted in this way is a reminder for Andrew during delivery.



Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the Church. We review ways to understand the church and connect these understandings with the church today.

Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important as the church is essential to being a follower of Jesus, yet it may be looked upon negatively by believers and non-believers alike.

What is the good news?

The good news is that all are welcome to the church.

What are the next action steps?

You are invited to say, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'

What is the context of this sermon?

This sermon is part of a series focused on the Apostles' Creed. It is adapted from Alpha Talk 15 - What about the church? by Nicky Gumbel.

Metadata

Topics

- Change Lives

Sermon Books of the Bible

- 1 Corinthians
- 1 John
- 1 Peter

4th Sunday in Lent (Purple)

Believe - Exploring the Apostles' Creed - The Church

First United Methodist Church of El Dorado

March 26, 2017

1 Peter 2:9-10

Preaching Target Word Count: 2,197

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, Eldorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, Lent, 40Days, Believe, ApostlesCreed, church

Sermon Audio

9 a.m. Worship

11 a.m. Worship

Sermon Video



Introduction **5**

- 1 Peter 2:9-10, CEB
- 1 Peter 2:9-10, NRSV
- Response to Scripture
- Sermon Starter Video

What is Church? **6**

- Image of the Church
 - Key Quote – Abraham Lincoln
 - Staff
 - Birth
 - Building
- Essence of the Church
 - Example - Marriage
- Believe Worship Series
 - Today's Phrase of the Apostles' Creed

The People of God **7**

- Key Bible Passage – 1 Peter 2:9
 - Vertical and Horizontal Relationship
 - People of Israel
 - Profess the Name of Christ
- 'Catholic' Church
 - Etymology
 - Local Churches
- Local Church Gatherings
 - Wesley Small Groups
 - Authenticity
 - Depth of Care
- Serve Team or Fellowship Group
- Gathering for Worship

The Family of God **9**

Key Bible Passage - 1 John 5:1

These are Your Family

Divisions in Church History

Quote – Father Raniero Cantalamessa

Koinonia

Quote – John Wesley

Story – Fire and Coal

Transition

The Body of Christ

11

Key Bible Passage – 1 Corinthians 12:27

Key Quote – Lesslie Newbigin

Church Serves

Mutual Dependence

Transition

Conclusion

12

Good News

Call to Action

Invitation

The Apostles' Creed

Introduction

1 Peter 2:9-10, CEB

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light. ¹⁰Once you weren't a people, but now you are God's people. Once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:9-10, NRSV

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Response to Scripture

One: The word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.



What is Church?

Is it possible to be a Christian, to be a follower of Jesus, and not go to church?
Anyway, what does 'going to church' mean?
What is church?

Image of the Church

What comes to your mind when you hear the word church?
Many people, who hear the word 'church' think of worship
and all too often, I think, think of something that is dull and boring.

Key Quote – Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln once said:

.....
*'If all the people who fell asleep in church on Sunday morning were laid out end to end,
they would be a great deal more comfortable.'*
.....

Staff

The other thing, I think, people think about when they hear 'church' is of the
people who went into the church — that was their job.
People like me – preachers, priests and ministers.

Birth

And for others, 'church' is kind of something that you were born into, it was a kind
of denomination that you were born into. So if you were born to a family that went to a
Methodist church, then that makes you Methodist.

Building

And then the other association that people have, is church buildings.

Essence of the Church

Now, all of these things are the shell, just the outside, if you like, but they're not
the essence of what the church is about.

Example - Marriage

It's a bit like if you say, 'Well, what is marriage?' and you said,
'Well, marriage is a ring.
It's a marriage certificate.
It's a wedding service.
It's the marriage laws.'
Now, marriage may involve all of those things, but that's not the essence.
At the heart of marriage is something far more profound.
At the heart of the church is something amazing, wonderful, and beautiful.

.....
Pause
.....

Believe Worship Series

During this series we are taking a closer look at essential Christian beliefs and why they matter through the words of the Apostles' Creed. The Apostles' Creed is an ancient Christian statement of faith whose words or ideas come from the scriptures.

We are considering one topic each week and, along the way, trying to memorize the Apostles' Creed before Easter.

Today's Phrase of the Apostles' Creed

Today, we consider the words of the creed: I believe in the holy catholic church, and consider several images and metaphors which describe the church.

Pause

The People of God

The first way to understand the church is people.

The church is the people of God.

Key Bible Passage – 1 Peter 2:9

Hear again these words from 1 Peter 2:9:

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God’s own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light.”¹

Vertical and Horizontal Relationship

The Christian faith involves, a vertical relationship — our relationship with God.

It also involves a horizontal relationship — with other people.

People of Israel

We are part of a community which began with God’s call to Abraham.

The people of Israel prefigured the church.

Profess the Name of Christ

So the universal church consists of all those people – across the world, all the way back in time – who profess or have professed the name of Christ.

Pause

‘Catholic’ Church

One of the questions that people ask about the Apostles' Creed is about the word ‘catholic.’ You might say, “I thought this was a United Methodist Church. Why do we say that we believe in the catholic church?”

¹ 1 Peter 2:9, CEB.

Etymology

The word, 'catholic' with a small 'c' means universal.

catholic means universal

Latin - *catholicos*

Greek - *katholikos*

It comes from the Latin, *catholicos* and the Greek *katholikos* which is a combination of two words "about" and "whole" It began to be used to describe the Christian church in the early 2nd century to emphasize its universal scope.²

Local Churches

Of course, the universal church has local expressions.

This would be one local expression of the universal church.

And Paul, wherever he went, he planted churches: churches we read about in the New Testament in Asia, churches in Galatia. And these local churches themselves break down into smaller gatherings. And for practical purposes you could say that there are three different sizes.

Local Church Gatherings**Wesley Small Groups**

The first size is a small group, like our Wesley Small Groups

Usually that's a group of about twelve.

Jesus had a group of about twelve people he met with.

Authenticity

And one of the things that I find so amazing about Wesley Small Groups is that it's amazing how quickly people begin to drop their barriers and people start to talk openly about things that are real. There's this kind of authenticity — what's really going on in their lives.

Depth of Care

People talk about their issues, their doubts, their fears, their failures. And often in the world relationships can be quite superficial, but in a small group, even though we've only known each other for quite a short time, there's a depth of friendship that develops. And we can ask one another to pray for each other, we can encourage each other, support each other in difficult times. There's this confidentiality, there's respect for one another; where we listen and learn, we eat together, we learn together, pray together.

Serve Team or Fellowship Group

But what we need more than just a small group.

We need a slightly larger group, maybe about 25 or 30 people.

There you can get to know a wider group of people.

There you can develop gifts.

Our Guest Connections team, Serve teams inside the walls of the church.

² Wikipedia contributors. "Catholic (term)." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 26 Feb. 2017. Web. 24 Mar. 2017.

The friendships that developed are amazing.

Gathering for Worship

And then there's the bigger gathering: Sundays.

There you get a sense of worship, awe — dozens of people worshipping God together.

Sometimes we may be the only Christian in our office, at our job, in our family. We come to a gathering and we think, 'Ah, I'm not the only one.'

There's a sense of confidence, excitement, joy, to be with the people of God.

That's why I love the church: it's people.

There's nothing like the local church when it's working well.

The church is the people of God.

The Family of God

Another way to understand the church is a family — it's the family of God.

Key Bible Passage - 1 John 5:1

Let's take a look at 1 John, chapter 5, verse 1

St John writes this:

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born from God. Whoever loves someone who is a parent loves the child born to the parent."³

When you come into a relationship with God, you come into a family. Because there are other people who are in that same relationship with God — they're sons and daughters of God: that means they're your brothers and sisters.

These are Your Family

So, you can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family.

The people sitting around you — this is your family! Have a look.

Have a look at your brothers and your sisters.

Brothers and sisters can squabble, they can fall out, they can not see each other, but they remain brothers and sisters. Nothing can end that relationship. And as you know, the history of the church has been a sad one because it's been a story of disunity.

Divisions in Church History

As you look back in the history of the church there've been four major sort of breaks.

In the fourth and fifth century the lesser Eastern churches separated.

In the eleventh century you had the break between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

At the time of the Reformation you had the split between Catholics and Protestants.

³ 1 John 5:1, CEB.

In the nineteenth century you had the start of denominations — there were no denominations until the nineteenth century. But by 1900 there were 2,000 denominations; by 1980 there were 20,000 denominations; and by the year 2000 there were 34,000 denominations.

And the church has divided on just about every conceivable issue — in fact, on every inconceivable issue as well.

Quote – Father Raniero Cantalamessa

Father Raniero Cantalamessa, who was the preacher to the Papal Household, amazing man, said this:

'What unites us as Christians right across the denominations is infinitely greater than what divides us.'

Koinonia

And what the New Testament talks about is a word, a Greek word: koinōnia [κοινωνία], which means 'fellowship'. It's a kind of intimate relationship that we're meant to have with God and also with one another. And it cuts across race, color, education, background — every other cultural barrier. And it leads to a level of friendship which I had never experienced outside the context of the church.

And we need each other.

Quote – John Wesley

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said:

'the New Testament knows nothing of solitary religion.'

There are two things you can't do alone: you can't get married alone, and you can't be a Christian alone! So the writer of Hebrews said: 'Let's not give up the habit of meeting together, as some have done.' Because if we don't meet together we find it almost impossible to survive as a Christian.

Story – Fire and Coal

I heard about one young man who was really struggling. He had come to faith in Christ, but he just found himself drifting away, drifting in doubts and difficulties and losing his faith. And he went to see a wise older man, who lived in a small house, and there was a fire.

And as they were discussing — this young man told this older man about what was going on in his life — the older man didn't say anything. But he just went to the fire and he took a red-hot coal, with tongs, out of the fire, and he put it on the hearth. And as the young man talked, he just allowed that coal to go from red-hot to black, dark.

And then he got the tongs again and he put the coal back in the fire, and within a few minutes the coal was red-hot again. He didn't need to say anything. The young man left knowing exactly why his faith had gone dull.

Transition

That's the another way to understand the church: it's a family, it's the family of God.

The Body of Christ

Another way to understand the church The third reason I love the church is the church is the way in which people see Jesus today. It's the body of Christ.

Key Bible Passage – 1 Corinthians 12:27

Let's take a look at 1 Corinthians 12:27: St Paul says this:

"You are the body of Christ and parts of each other."⁴

Key Quote – Lesslie Newbigin

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin said this:

.....
'Jesus Christ never wrote a book; what he did was leave behind a community: the church.'

And what St Paul is saying here is: 'You are the church, and you are Christ to the world.' So each of you represents Jesus wherever you go — in your family, in your place of work, in your neighborhood, in your leisure activities. You're Christ.

Church Serves

Every time you feed the hungry, that's the church doing it.

Every time you visit the sick or visit someone in prison, that's the church.

Paul develops this analogy of the unity of the body of Christ, but also that unity does not involve uniformity. There is great diversity in the church. Each person is unique and beautifully made. And you have a unique contribution to make to the body of Christ.

So my encouragement to you would be to get involved.

Don't just be a kind of consumer; be a contributor.

Mutual Dependence

And then there's a kind of mutual dependence. He says: The eye can't say to the hand, 'Oh, well, I don't need you!' So what he's saying is the church needs you. And you need everybody else — you need the church. And together, if everybody's playing their part, then there's something really beautiful, like an orchestra where everybody is performing.

And I think this is true globally as well. Rather than saying about other parts of the church, 'Oh, well, they're not us! We're Methodists and they're whatever', so what's wrong with them; we can say, 'Ah, they're a different part of this body around the world. I wonder what we could learn from them? I wonder how we could be enriched by their tradition?'

⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:27, CEB.

Transition

The church is the body of Christ.

Conclusion

This is what we believe about the church.

Good News

The good news is that all are welcome to the church.

Call to Action

The moment we say, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'

God in God's love says:

'You are part of my people.

You are my family.

You are the body of Christ.

You are the church.

Invitation

Will you please stand, as you are able, and say the Apostles' Creed with me?

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in
God the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ
his only Son our Lord:
who was conceived
by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead,
and buried;

the third day he rose
from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,

and sitteth at the
right hand of
God the Father Almighty;

from thence he shall come
to judge the quick and
the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.