

We Believe - Jude 1:1-5
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

By the early 4th Century, Christianity had spread all over the Roman Empire, deeply impacting Roman culture. Until this point in Christian history those who believed in Jesus faced the very real threat of persecution and even martyrdom. Yet, in the second decade of the 4th Century, the Roman Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity as an official religion of the empire, granting a level of religious freedom for early church for the first time. At the same time, false teachings about Jesus arose, none more critical than a doctrine that became known as Arianism. Named after Arius, a bishop (read "pastor") from Alexandria, Egypt who spread his ideas, Arianism taught that Jesus was not fully God, he was a created being begotten by God, and that only the Father was truly God. Arianism taught that Jesus was a type of lesser god, yet also made clear that "There was a time when he (Jesus) was not." Arius had a noble purpose, he wanted to protect the monotheism clearly taught in the Bible, yet in doing so he denied an essential of our faith. And his ideas spread all over the Roman Empire, especially in the East. Many in the early church, including a man named Athanasius rebuked this teaching as nothing less than heresy. Constantine feared that the division within Christianity might splinter the faith, and impact his rule. So he called for a council at the city of Nicaea, a Greek City in Bitynia, now northern Turkey to address the differences and bring unity to the church. This first major church council after Acts was attended by over 300 bishops and church leaders at what we now call the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, 1700 years ago. As they gathered and searched the Scriptures, the Council of Nicaea resolutely condemned Arianism as a heresy, and subsequently wrote the Nicene Creed in order to bring clarity to Christian doctrine. This creed has stood the test of time representing the faith Jesus "once for all delivered to the saints," and is often still recited to this day by churches all over the world as an expression of the common faith held by all Christians.

Our text this week was written by one of Jesus' younger brothers, Jude. While we are not sure of the specific recipients, what we do know from his letter is that he had a relationship with the people to whom he wrote. He desired to write a letter of blessing about their common salvation. Instead he felt compelled to write this letter that has been preserved for us calling this church to "defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints." This little phrase is so important for us, and to fully understand it we need to unpack it. First, there is "the faith." In this case Jude is not just speaking of their belief, but is referring to the specific content of "the faith", establishing that the common salvation Christians experience is founded on a specific set of beliefs. And those beliefs were delivered to "the saints". Almost all scholars and interpreters understand this as a reference to a very specific group of people, specifically the Apostles and other key eyewitnesses. In other words it was delivered to the saints by Jesus Himself, and they are the Apostles and authors of the New Testament are the ones who passed the faith on to us. Therefore Jesus is the originator of the central beliefs of the faith, and the faith is apostolic, meaning it came from Him through them. Third, the call is to defend, a picture word imaging a wrestling match in ancient Greek games. Jude is telling them there are core beliefs that they must fight for. Furthermore, as this letter goes on, Jude is clear that those who reject them and teach a different Gospel are actually outside the faith and destined for destruction.

The challenge then is to discern the doctrines that define our Christian faith from those that are less important on various levels. Some beliefs (such as the deity of Christ and the Trinity) define the faith once for all delivered. To not believe and support these doctrines is to reject Jesus Himself. On the other hand, there are beliefs that are important for a local church, yet, when Christians disagree it does not mean they have rejected Jesus. Baptism is a good example. Every local church has to determine the meaning and mode of baptism. Yet, we should not reject as non-Christian those who hold a different view and we should work

together to proclaim Christ and love neighbor.. Then there are views, while also being important, we can even attend the same church while disagreeing. An example for Genesis are things like the age of the universe and views of the end times. If we disagree, lets grab a cup of coffee, debate, but leave arm in arm as brothers and sisters on mission. Finally, there are doctrinal beliefs that just really do not matter. An example of this is the translation of the Bible you prefer. Sadly, some churches exalt Bible translation (specifically the King James version) to a first-tier level, which is a significant error. Once we understand this we can be careful to defend the faith once for all delivered, while having charity for believers who disagree on second, third, and fourth tier issues. And this is where the Nicene Creed and church history helps us deeply. The ideas Arias promoted were first tier challenges to the faith, and the Council of Nicaea defended the faith once for all delivered by Jesus. In doing so they gave us one of the earliest and most important documents delineating the core, the first tier doctrines that are central to the faith. As a result, Christians all over the world and throughout Christian history have used and recited this creed as an expression of “the faith”.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Exodus 23	Exodus 24	Exodus 25	Exodus 26	Exodus 27	Exodus 28	Exodus 29

Reading from this past week’s sermon: Jude 1:1-5

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Exodus 34:1-9

Family Worship

Song - *Lovingkindness*

<https://youtu.be/xV-fNmt6ZAo?feature=shared>

Gospel Project

Unit: A Troubled Kingdom

Story: Israel's Evil Kings

Big Picture Question: How many gods are there?

Answer: There is one true God who alone deserves worship.

Scripture: 1 Kings 14-15

New City Catechism

Question 38: What is prayer?

Answer: Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God.

Verse: Psalm 62:8

Jude 1:1-5

- Did you grow up in a tradition that recited either the Apostle’s Creed or Nicene Creed? Did doing this shape you in any way?
- Read the creed together (or even make copies). What phrases are clear to you? What phrases in this creed are hard to understand?
- Why is it important to realize that “the faith” was once for all delivered by Jesus to the Apostles and eyewitness saints? How can knowing this help us stand firm in our faith?
- What are some steps we can use to make sure we defend the faith while also being charitable with Christians who disagree on second, third, and fourth tier issues?

Prayer

*Pray that this series on the Nicene Creed would help all of understand the core beliefs of our faith so that we would love God more and worship Him fully.

*Pray and ask God to lead our nation to repent for the division and violence in our country.