

PCJH STUDY GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

Apostle's Creed

I Believe In The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting

Week of November 1

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; 51-55; Revelation 21:1-5; John 11:21-27

Sermon Title: *Hope of Heaven*

Background

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living 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.

- This creed is called the Apostles' Creed not because it was produced by the apostles themselves but because it contains a brief summary of their teachings.
- It sets forth their doctrine "in sublime simplicity, in unsurpassable brevity, in beautiful order, and with liturgical solemnity." In its present form it is dated no later than the fourth century.
- More than any other Christian creed, it may justly be called an ecumenical symbol of faith. This creed had its origin as a profession or confession of faith by converts at their baptism.
- This is not how someone becomes a Christian but rather is a summary of the main points of faith.

Opening Questions (choose whichever one(s) you prefer):

1. What's your favorite depiction of the future from TV, books, or movies? Why?
2. What about the 21st century makes you the most hopeful? Most worried?
3. What image(s) first comes to mind when you think about heaven?

Discussion Questions:

1. When did it first hit you that we are all going to die, and that everyone we know and love is going to die?
2. Talk about how one usually describes death. Do you think most people are comfortable or uncomfortable about talking about death? Why?
3. In the child's nighttime prayer, we say, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Why does this not really fit with the Christian belief?
4. What do you imagine heaven is like? What do you imagine Death is like?
5. Put into your own words, "I believe in the resurrection of the body."
6. What is the most difficult to believe about the resurrection of the body?
7. What is the most hopeful about believing in the resurrection of the body?
8. How does the resurrection change how you face life and death? Read I Cor. 15:6,54; 2 Corinthians 5:1; John 11:25-26; John 14:16.
9. Do you think we should always be ready to meet Christ? In what ways might we do so? What kinds of spiritual practices do you regularly engage that might keep you in a state of readiness?
10. What can we infer about the resurrected body from Jesus' appearances to his disciples? What kind of body do you hope to have in the resurrection?
11. You've heard it said that we live in between the "already" (Christ has come) and the "not yet", (Christ's return). Living in this tension is both challenging and a blessing. What is challenging for you and what gives you joy?
12. The Apostles' Creed ends with "I believe in the life everlasting". What will be the best thing about the life everlasting? Is there something you still have questions about life everlasting?
13. How do you respond to the idea that we don't "have souls" but are "embodied souls"?
14. How does the hope of heaven motivate you in this life today?
15. How can we demonstrate the hope of heaven to others?
16. Read Revelation 21:1-5 and 21:22-22:6. What will change because "God's dwelling is...with humankind" in the world to come?
17. As you look back on these studies about the Creed, what new insights have you gained about it and the faith it expresses?
18. Where would you like to deepen your understanding of the beliefs expressed in the creed?
19. Amen = "so be it." How is the Creed like a prayer?