

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Last Lenten midweek season, you heard the first part of Christian doctrine: the Ten Commandments:

☞ You shall have no other gods.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.

You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

These Ten Commandments teach us all what God wants us to do and what He does not want us to do. We could very well begin and end all Christian doctrine with the Ten Commandments, *but only if they are kept by us*. But the issue is, our sinful nature does not want to keep any of these Commandments, especially the First Commandment. So, if we would end with the Ten Commandments in our sinful state, we would all be doomed to eternal death, for we all must answer God for our sins.

This evening, we begin a Lenten midweek series on the second part of Christian doctrine: the Creed. Tonight we begin with the First Article of the Creed: *“I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.”*

Let’s ponder this. God – *the maker of heaven and earth* – He has created everything that exists. Sit back and marvel at this. He created everything *ex nihilo*, meaning “out of nothing.” God created because He chose to create. He created as an act of love. From eternity, the Triune God – *the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit* – lived in mutual love with each other. Then at some point, the Holy Trinity made the mutual decision to share that love.

So, God created the universe. ***“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”*** (Genesis 1:1). And God makes room in His life for creation and all creatures. He creates sun and moon, planets and stars, mountains and oceans, butterflies and whales. This is the foundation of everything we believe, teach, and confess. Without creation, we would not be here tonight talking and hearing about Jesus; there would be no sin; there would be no redemption; and there would be no us.

So, God created the universe to be ***“very good”*** (Genesis 1:31) as this physical world and all creatures came out of God’s outpouring of love. Creation was beautiful. Everything functioned just as God intended. Everything functioned in harmony.

But notice, I didn’t say *“is”* there, I instead said *“was.”* Today, we no longer live in this perfect creation. We now live in a fallen world as sin has corrupted God’s creation. Today, creation groans as we face the dangers of the devil, the fallen world, and our own sinful flesh.

But what kind of a Creator is God? What does He do? How can we praise Him, so He may be known?

The First Article of the Creed answers these questions with respect to the First Commandment: *“You shall have no other gods.”* There is nothing else as the one true God. For there is no one else who could create heaven and earth.

But how does the fallen world react to the First Article of the Creed: *“I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth”*? Well, consider how few inside and outside orthodox Christianity truly believe it. Yes, we may say it with our mouths, but do you truly believe that God created everything?

Martin Luther puts it this way in his Large Catechism: *“For if we believed this teaching with the heart, we would also act according to it. We would not strut about proudly; act defiantly, and boast as though we had life, riches, power, honor, and such, of ourselves”* (LC 21).

So, our sinful nature never once thinks about God, or even wants to thank Him, or even acknowledge Him as Lord and Creator. Instead, we pat ourselves on the back. We often look to politicians and bureaucrats to fix the world’s ills. We would rather often listen to “so-called experts” than to God Himself as He reveals what we need to know in the Scriptures and His Sacraments.

But even though we live in a fallen world, God created this world, and He called it “*very good.*” So, this world, though fallen and corrupt, is valuable to Him. It’s so valuable to Him that He chose to redeem it, cleanse it, and restore it. Plus, the Creator of the universe took on a human body. God became man – *a human creature, like you and me yet without sin* – to affirm the goodness of creation. God could have destroyed His creation when it fell into sin and started over. Instead, He took it upon Himself.

The One through whom all things were made took upon Himself our flesh in order to make all things new. Jesus came to take on the task of renewing and re-creating His world. So, the beauty that we see today is but a sneak preview, a small glimpse, of the perfect world that is to come.

The suffering, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus opens the door to the paradise that was lost at the Fall.

Until the day of Christ’s return, we live between God’s first creation and His new creation. In the meantime, God does not stop creating. He did not stop creating after the sixth day. God keeps on creating to this very day. God is still “hands-on” and is deeply involved in His creation.

In spite of sin and death, God continues to create. New life is created every day. Babies are born. Plants sprout in the spring. The sun continues to shine and give light and energy. God creates for the sake of redemption. Even now that Jesus has accomplished our redemption, God keeps the world going for the sake of the Gospel and the restoration of all things.

Among the just and the unjust, God continues to provide. He constantly preserves body, soul, and life, senses, reason, and understanding. He gives everyone food and drink, clothing and support, wife and children, grain, produce, good government, peace, and security. He daily preserves and defends us from all evil and misfortune. He directs all sorts of danger and disaster away from us. All this that God does for us, we call “*our daily bread.*”

So, what does God ask of us? All He asks is thanks and praise. This is not because God needs it, but that we acknowledge our dependence on Him. Yes, we can go on without thanksgiving, but we always end up boasting in ourselves. But when we give thanks and praise to the One who is the actual Giver, we remind ourselves how we live on the receiving end of His gifts. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +