

(5 Minutes) Introduction: Good morning, Church.

This morning, we start a new series called I Believe. Our beliefs are extremely important because they impact every aspect of our lives. There are so many things that we believe in, even as kids we believe in things, although **sometimes they were silly**. I remember believing that if you swallowed gum that it took seven years to digest it, and for me that was a big deal because I swallowed a lot of gum.

I'm sure you remember believing some silly things as a kid as well, for example maybe you believed:

1. **That** if you ate a watermelon seed, a watermelon would grow in your stomach.
2. **Or maybe**, you believed that the moon was made of cheese.
3. **Perhaps**, you believed that white cows made milk, and brown cows made chocolate milk.
4. **Or maybe**, you believe that people in the pasts lived in black and white because old pictures and TV were only in black and white.

We all believed some silly weird things when we were a kid. Our parents tell us stories or facts, and for those of us who grew up before googling, we believed it. Though we have google now, maybe things haven't changed as much as we think. As adults, we still believe in some crazy things: for example.

Some adults believe:

1. **In flat** earth theory.
2. **Other adults**, believe that this is their sports teams' year.
3. **While others**, believe that one party or the other is superior and going to fix our society.

We all believe something, whether is something silly like these examples or important like these:

1. **Morals**, Ethics, Honor, Character, Truth, Respect.

The fact remains, we all believe something. For example, a couple things I personally believe are:

1. Pepsi is better than Coke.
2. Everyone should work retail or food service once in their life.
3. Experiencing cultures outside your own is the best way to grow in humility and empathy.

What do you believe? And how often do we think deeply about what we believe about as followers of Jesus, God, or spiritually? During this sermon series we are going to explore more deeply the beliefs we hold collectively as a universal church. We will see how these beliefs interact with our experiences, actions, and the results we see in our lives, families, communities, and world.

But before we do that lets pray.

Let's Pray:

(10 Minutes) Historical Context:

(Experience) All beliefs have a beginning, and that beginning is our **experiences**. (move foam pieces). The things we experience influence and create our beliefs, often in what we hear, see, smell, taste, or feel. For example, my first job was working in a taco food truck during festivals. These experiences opened me up to meet all kinds of people and the challenges of the service industry.

(Belief) **As I built the belief** that everyone should experience the service or food industry, that belief began to influence my emotions and thoughts. When I would go out to eat, I saw the server as a fellow human and understood the pressure they were under.

(Action) **My experience**, beliefs, emotions, and thoughts all led me to be more considerate, less judgmental, and quicker to leave positive reviews on receipts or with managers.

(Result) **While I may not see the end result** of my actions with each person, I know how the same actions impacted me when I was in the food industry, they made me feel human, seen, appreciated, and made me love the job.

Or perhaps, you eat Brussel sprouts as a kid and think they taste disgusting, you begin to create the belief that green things taste horrible, as a result when you see green food you think it must taste bad and you choose not to add any to your plate. Our action then creates a result, which in this instance means you get labeled a picky eater. Can you guess who I was talking about in this example (point to self). Thankfully, as I had new experiences, my beliefs changed, adapted, or grew as I learned broccoli is amazing and not all green things taste bad.

As you can see this concept builds a pyramid, and I love this pyramid imagine that helps us better understand how what we believe interacts with the rest of our lives. This morning, I want us to ponder the experiences, beliefs, actions, and results we see in our spiritual life.

One major way as Christians we have communicated what we believe about God, Jesus, the church, and salvation is through what we call the apostles creed. There are many creeds found throughout history, both Christian and non-Christian creeds, ultimately, a creed is just a statement of what one believes. When we look at the apostle's creed we see statements of beliefs, summarizing the core doctrines of scripture. **When Angel and I** were at grace bible college, we had an assignment to write our own belief creed, which started with identifying our core beliefs, convictions, opinions, and questions. I recommend all Christians to ponder what doctrines and beliefs would go into each circle. This circle and pyramid will be extremely helpful in this effort as we go through this series digging deep into each doctrine found in the apostle's creed.

Here at Saint John, we recite the apostle's creed every week at 8:30, and sometimes at the 10:30 service. So, let's **go ahead and read it together** so that its fresh in our minds as we discuss it together.

It's important for us to start together, let's answer a few questions about the apostle's creed:

What is the apostle's creed?

- A. The apostle's creed is a statement of what Christians believe. Contrary to the name, it was not written by the apostles but did come from the foundational teachings and beliefs of scripture and Jesus recorded and written by the apostles. So, this creed was created to express a set of uncompromisable core beliefs for Christians. This creed would be a public profession of belief, functioning like a filter, indicating what is and what is not "Christian."

When was the apostle's creed written?

- A. Its current form dates to the 8th century but its origins (the old roman creed) date closer to the 2nd century, or around 200 A.D when baptism creeds were popular. During this time the early church, was under constant persecution, heresies of false teachings, and division within church leadership. The early version of the apostle's creed was used often for new converts during baptism, hence the name baptism creeds. This would happen after a year of study by the new convert with an elder Christian, who would write or recite a creed of what they believe.

Why is the apostle's creed important?

- A. The reason the apostle's creed is important is because it provides one of the earliest and most universally accepted summaries of core Christian beliefs. The apostle's creed does not replace the bible, the bible is essential to our daily Christian walk and faith, but the apostle's creed does give us a succinct statement to summarize what the bible says and what we believe so that when someone ask, or we get the chance to share what we believe we can response with a complete and accurate answer. The apostle's creed answers four basic questions, who is God? Who is Jesus? Who is the church? And what is salvation?

Finally, how does the apostle creed impact me as a Christian in the 21st century?

A. The apostle creed impacts you, because knowing what you believe about God, Jesus, the church, and salvation will affect every aspect of your life. The apostle's creed forces us to go deeper into the theological doctrines of scripture, understanding what they are, where they come from, and what they entail. So that we can intelligently share what we believe and why and have a more full and accurate understanding of God's truth. The apostle's creed also reminds us that while there are many differences between protestant denominations (Methodist, Baptist, presbyterian, Lutheran, and many more) there is agreement, consensus, and unity surrounding the core doctrines found in the apostle's creed.

Amid a world so eager to pull Christians apart, it is critical that we as Christians not only know but understand what we believe, why we believe it, and how we live it out. In the coming weeks we will explore each of these core doctrines in the apostles' creed (why we believe them and how we put it into action). This morning, however, we will see how using the apostles' creed as a tool can help us see the big picture of how our experiences with God, create our beliefs, prompts us to live them out, and seeing the result of faithfulness.

So Let's start with John 17.

(12 Minutes) Main Lesson

READ: Scripture, John 17:20 -23 ²⁰“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

1. **Jesus** desires for us to become perfectly one.

We all experience Jesus. When we encounter or experience Jesus, our world gets turned upside down. We experience grace and forgiveness, love, and joy, hope and healing totally underserved. It's God's desire that we not only follow Jesus but become one with each other and God. During Jesus' final moments on earth, He prayed for the unity of believers, but he also prayed that because of this unity, the world would know God the father loves them and that He sent Jesus to save them. Even though this is not the reality we see in our world today, the experience of Jesus in our lives should draw us together not apart. As followers of Jesus, we must see Christ's desire for us to be in Christ, united, and perfectly one. While disagreements can at times be easier to see, heard, or expressed. Our core beliefs surrounding Jesus and scripture should pull us together more than our disagreements pull us apart. In what ways do we allow our disagreements to pull the church apart? And even more specifically pull Saint John apart? How do we cause disunity instead of unity?

The challenge is that unity doesn't just happen; it is something that comes from hard work, built over time, and is sacrificed for. Our experience with Jesus and scripture begins the process of building our beliefs as Christians, but the more we experience Jesus, dig into the word of God, and live out the teachings of scripture together the deeper and stronger our belief becomes, and the more unified we should be. We see this to be true in Acts 2.

READ: Scripture, Acts 2:42 – 47 ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

2) **Unity** comes through devotion to biblical teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer.

We all believe and find unity in the core Christian doctrines. Verse 44 says "All the believers were together and had everything in common." The unity in what we believe comes through being together in Christ. We need to be unified as believers, just like they were here in acts 2, not just in beliefs, but also physically. In our world today

you will hear, (especially from my generation and younger) I believe in Jesus, but I won't go to church. These are incompatible beliefs. The communion of Saints is a core doctrine. I am not saying there is only one way to do this, but whether that means meeting together in home, online, in small groups or here in worship, we need come together to do these things. I am not saying the church doesn't fail, mess up, hurt people, or struggle, because we all know and have experience that in the church. However, I am saying it is essential that we come together. Why? The answer is right there in acts 2, we see that when we are together, learning together, eating together, praying together, when we serve together, worship together, sing together, that is when we see God will add to number those who were being saved. There is power in being together in Christ, working through our disagreements together, and learning from one another together. We see scripture affirm our need to be together as a body of Christ. The apostle's creed helps us articulate the unity we have together in what we believe, why we believe it, and how we live it out.

As we see with the pyramid, our beliefs urge us into action, when we confess Jesus as Lord, this is the beginning not the end. Shawn Achor says it this way "beliefs are so powerful because they dictate our efforts and actions."

This is affirmed in Matthew 28.

READ: Matthew Scripture, 28:16-20 ¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

3) **Jesus** commands us to "Go."

All Christians are commanded to act based on their belief. Jesus says "Go, "go" take action, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded. Who were the disciples? They were no one special. Jesus picked normal people with families, lives, and jobs (fisherman, tax collector). God

is not calling only a select few, the rich, the powerful, or the most influential, God is calling you and me, God is calling all of us. He is calling us to “Go”, take action, and share the gospel, share what we believe, make disciples, and teach them to follow Jesus. Are you hearing me clearly?

This is not a command for preachers or pastors but all disciples of Jesus. If we know what we believe and why, then we are confident in sharing our faith with our family, friends, coworkers, school, jobs, and communities. When someone asks us what we believe or we have an opportunity to share what we believe, we don’t have time to recite the entire bible, but the apostle’s creed gives us a tool we can use to help us communicate succinctly what we believe and why.

Which leads us to our final point:

- 4) **Faith** comes through hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:14-17¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?^[a] And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” ¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The result of our actions is seeing God work through our obedience to transform lives. Let me be clear, there is nothing extra special that happens if you know or have memorized the apostle’s creed, if you say it every week in church or not, but being intentional in knowing and understanding the core Christian beliefs and being able to articulate and communicate them clearly is critically important. Christ says always have a response for the hope you have. The apostle’s creed stands as a symbol of Christ’s desire for us to experience God, respond in faith, be moved to action, and see the world transformed through the sharing of what God has done. If we are going to ask and pray for revival to happen here at Saint John, we better be prepared to do the work of know what we believe, why we believe it, and be obedient to share it with the people around us.

(2 Minutes) Call to Action:

I asked earlier, what do you believe? Throughout this series we are going to explore the core beliefs that we all share as followers of Jesus, what binds us together in unity, and calls us into action with one another, so that we get to experience God's transformative work in our lives and in the world. So, whether you are unsure what you believe, have questions regarding doctrines, feel confident in what you know, have been a Christian your whole life, or are brand new today, I encourage you to continue to come as we devote ourselves to listening, learning, sharing, worshipping, prayer, and growing together in unity. As believers, we need to be willing to deepen our understand of what we believe and if our beliefs align with God and Scripture.

At the end of this series, it is our hope that you will have experience God in a new way, know what you believe, be urged to put your faith into action by sharing what you believe with the people around you, and see the transformative work of God happen in your life and in the world.

Let's pray.

(1 minute) Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you for revealing yourself to us. Thank for you allowing us to experience who you are through scripture, believers, and creation. Thank you that you call us into relationship and restore what was broken. Thank you for the Apostles creed and all those who worked to put it together and the way it has brought Christians together throughout history, may it do the same for us as we work through it together during this series. Reveal to us where our beliefs need to shift or change. Allow your Holy Spirit to move within us during this series to enlighten and embolden us. We know that you desire for us to be perfectly one with Christ and one another. We confess our sin of disunity to you this morning and thank you that you are faithful to forgive us. As we partake communion may it bring us ever closer to one another and to you, our savior. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.