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Midweek Lent I  
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Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
*Praying the Faith: The Creed*

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

*“In the beginning, God...”* (Gen 1:1)

As we learn to pray the creed together, we must begin here:  
*in the beginning,  
with God.*

The text is clear.  
God made the heavens and the earth,  
light and the atmosphere,  
continents and oceans,  
planets and stars,  
trees and weeds and fruit,  
animals, roly pollies, and *you*.

God made *you*.

And it wasn't an accident.  
He knew what He was doing and all that came before was in preparation for *you*.  
He created man according to His image and in His likeness.  
That is, He made man to share in His holiness, in His righteousness, and in His goodness.  
Man was created for fellowship with God.

So we're not an evolutionary accident, or a result of the survival of the fittest.  
There's no long process of change over time, or progression or development.  
We haven't come from apes, but dust.  
*Remember, O man, you are dust and to dust you shall return.*

As creation unfolds, man is the high point of it all.  
You are His crowning pleasure, His great success—  
when God created man it wasn't just “*and it was good,*” but, “*very good.*”

*Very good* confesses the sanctity of what it means to be man and woman.  
*Very good* describes God's pleasure and delight in man—  
not as an object of His wrath or manipulation, but His love.

That *very good* is to be spoken over all mankind.  
No matter what race or ethnicity,  
gender or social status—  
it's meant for all of us.  
We're all meant for life together with God.

But God's *very good* wasn't good enough for us.  
It wasn't good enough that He made us, and provided for us,  
and promised to give us all we need to support this body and life.

We wanted more and took more and got more.  
 So we fell from *very good*, we got what we wanted.  
 We fell from life to death,  
     from joy to hate,  
         and from peace to constant struggle;  
         and then we were broken.

No longer could we praise or delight in God.  
 No longer could we pray or be heard or seek the good.  
 No longer could we decide to follow God or want what He wants or think what is right.

This side of the fall we're enemies—  
     not by God's choice or will, but ours.

And that's why we need the Second Article of the Creed.  
 If all we had was the first, we'd be left in despair.  
 We'd have a good and gracious God who created all for glory and beauty and fellowship—  
     but who has watched us walk away.  
 If all we had was the Father, we'd have a God who desires to give unimaginably good gifts,  
     but with no one to give them to anymore.

But the Son turns things around.  
 With the Son we hear a very different story about us.  
 In Christ, it's no longer me or you apart from God,  
     but God and man together.

In Christ God is well pleased;  
     and the second article of the creed locates you within Christ.  
     So, in Christ, God is well pleased with *you*.

With Christ, it's all *for you*.

Jesus does us no good if He's not for *us* as *our* Lord.  
 No matter whether He's a prophet or great teacher, or even the Son of God—  
     unless He's this *for us*, we're still lost and cut off from the gifts of the Father.

But how do you know that this Jesus is *for us*?  
 You can't go get this Jesus,  
     or choose Him,  
     or decide you'd like to follow Him.

Jesus says,  
     "*No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.*" (Jn 6:44)  
 And, "*You did not choose me, but I chose you.*" (Jn 15:16)

So how does the Father draw? How does He choose?

He draws and chooses *always* by His Spirit,  
 who attaches Himself *always* and *only* to the Word!

This is the third article of the creed.

God the Father sends His Spirit by way of the Word.  
 And that Word is always and only the Word of Jesus, the Son, the crucified *for you*.

This Spirit uses the Word to teach us who we are apart from God—  
 we call that the *Law*.

And then this same Spirit uses the Word to teach us who Christ is *for us*!  
 He proclaims Him to be *OUR* Lord, *our* salvation, *our* faith and hope and love.  
 He writes us into His story,  
 takes our sin and places it in His hands,  
 and lets our death die in this Son of God.

And when that's all said and done,  
 the Holy Spirit says,  
 "You are free, go in peace."

So the First Article of the Creed teaches us who God is and what He does,  
 and that everything is intended for us as gift.  
 The Second Article teaches us that this gift-giving-God is *for us* in Christ:  
 for us in His suffering, for us in His death, for us in His resurrection,  
 for us in His descent to hell and in His ascension to the right hand of the Father.  
 It's all God with His gifts for us in Christ.

And then it's only by the Third Article that we know any of it at all and receive it as gift.

We'd be utterly cut off from God and His gifts in His Son,  
 if it weren't for the Spirit who delivers and gives, enlightens and bestows—  
 all through this *holy Christian Church, the communion of saints*.

And now there's much to be thankful for.

So many gifts.

But the greatest of all, is that this *Blessed, Holy Trinity*, who created us for fellowship with God,  
 has now redeemed that fellowship and made Himself one with us.

*For all this it is our duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.  
 This is most certainly true!*

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*