

KNOW

Sermon 4: One Church



Introduction

10 minutes

The ancient **creeds developed in the first few hundred years of the Church** remind us of the faith that we share with Christians all over the world and throughout the centuries. From the earliest days of the Church, Christians have summarized the crucial understandings of the Christian faith into unified statements.

The Nicene Creed, written in **325 AD**, is **one such statement of belief that has unified the Church across the centuries**.

1,700 years ago, our forefathers decided we should have a creed that would help us **solidify our beliefs**.

The Nicene Creed is not Scripture, nor should it be held in as high regard as we hold or view Scripture. However, Scripture supports every word of the Nicene Creed.

The creed **contains** the **key spiritual truths** of the Bible condensed into a manageable format, **but** it has to be **unpacked** to be fully useful.

Most of us Christians agree with the Nicene Creed, but we in the Assemblies of God have our distinctives. We take the third stanza of the Nicene Creed and we reveal our Fundamental Truths 10-16.

Fundamental Truth #10:

The Church & its Mission

The church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfillment of her great commission. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

God's purpose concerning humanity is to seek and save the lost, to be worshiped by mankind, to build a body of believers conformed to the image of His Son, and to demonstrate His love and compassion to the entire world. Therefore, the primary reasons for the existence of the Assemblies of God, as part of the church, are:

- To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world.
- To be a corporate body in which people may worship God.
- To be a channel of God's purpose in building a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son.
- To be a people who demonstrate God's love and compassion to all the world.

The Assemblies of God exists specifically to give continuing emphasis to this reason for being, following the New Testament apostolic pattern, by teaching and encouraging believers to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. This experience:

- Enables them to evangelize in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs.
- Adds a vital dimension to their worshipful relationship with God.
- Enables them to fully respond to the working of the Holy Spirit in the expression of fruit, gifts, and ministries—just as in New Testament times—for the edifying of the body of Christ and the care of the poor and needy throughout the world.

Fundamental Truth #11:

The Ministry

A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the fourfold purpose of leading the Church in:

- Evangelization of the world.
- Worship of God.
- Building a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son.
- Meeting human need with ministries of love and compassion.

Fundamental Truth #12:

Divine Healing

Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers.

Fundamental Truth #13:

The Blessed Hope

The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the church.

Fundamental Truth #14:

The Millennial Reign of Christ

The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of the saints, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on earth for one thousand years. This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel, and the establishment of universal peace.

Fundamental Truth #15:

The Final Judgement

There will be a final judgment in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to their works. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be consigned to the everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Fundamental Truth #16:

The New Heaven and the New Earth

"We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Let's Review The Final Stanza Of The Nicene Creed: We Believe In One Holy Catholic And Apostolic Church. We Acknowledge One Baptism For The Forgiveness Of Sins. We Look For The Resurrection Of The Dead, And The Life Of The World To Come. Amen.

From this final stanza and the Bible here are four things about the Church:

1. The Church is a Place of Calling

The Church's calling is completely tied in with the doctrine of God in Trinity in several ways.

- **The Church is God the Father's agent to His creation.**

In a real sense, the Church is the continuation of the incarnation of Jesus, it has been called to carry on the work He began. This work is made possible in the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **We believe that the church is especially chosen by God to be His representative to the world.**

The Bible frequently calls the church the body of Christ. Christ came expressly to set captives free, but who doesn't wince at the history of His church that has at times been directly responsible for human bondage?

How can we deny that too often the church has been:

- Too wealthy
- Too inward focused
- Too inefficient
- Too corrupt

No wonder you find so many people today who say, "Jesus? Yes. The church? No thank you." The community that God calls to represent His presence on earth has always been a **pretty ambiguous witness**.

Many of the letters of the New Testament would never have been written if the churches that made up their target audience hadn't been destroying themselves from the inside out with rivalry, dissension, corrupt behavior, and even false teaching.

The church has never been a pure or perfect instrument. Yet God has determined that His church is to be a place of calling to reach those who need Him.

2. The Church is a Place of Purpose

Our goal should be a church that functions on the purpose God has for us. We want to be a healthy church that is marked by spiritual and numerical growth. The optimum word is for us to be a healthy church. Acts 2:42–46 provides five dimensions of a healthy church, which include:

- Engages and maintains loving relationships
- Develops and mobilizes the people
- Acts with clear direction and outward focus
- Reproduces and multiplies His mission in other people and places
- Pursues and obeys God passionately

As a church, our purpose is to:

- Live out the Great Commandment
- Be a **constant** to a community that needs **hope**

Whenever we get off mission and purpose of the church, there is a tendency to:

- Maneuver for position and power
- Not speak up for Christ's mission and purpose
- Quit serving
- Drift into missional confusion

Missional drift occurs when a church and a believer put their preferences above the mission, purpose, and activity of God.

If you are wondering what our purpose is, I will tell you that we should be living out **the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37–40)**.

Jesus' mission was to **connect us to God** in new and fresh ways, **connect us to each other**, so that we could go into the world and make more disciples for Him.

When things get off track and I feel like I'm not sure where I'm going, it helps if we can ask these simple questions:

- Am I connecting to God in new and fresh ways?
- Am I connecting to the body of Christ?
- Am I learning and growing in my gifts and calling?
- Am I releasing my gifts and calling into the world to reach people for Christ?

The challenge that we face as people and churches is **the tension between our desires and His purpose and mission**.

3. Church is a place of divine healing

God is our healer. The problem of sickness and disease is directly related to the problem of sin and death. This act of disobedience introduced suffering and sorrow into the world and affected the choices of every human being who has ever lived.

Divine healing is the act of God through the person of Jesus in response to one's own prayer and/or the prayers of other followers of Christ, wherein a person is healed physically and/or delivered from emotional, mental, or spiritual affliction.

Scripture reveals four ways that healing is in God's plan:

1. God declared it (Exodus 15:26).
2. It was part of Jesus' ministry (a few examples: Matthew 4:23–24; 8:14–16; 9:35; 15:28; Mark 1:32–34, 40–41; Luke 4:40; Acts 10:38).
3. Christ's atonement provided for it (Matthew 8:16–17; 1 Peter 2:24).

4. The church continued the ministry of healing.
 - a. Jesus authorized His disciples to heal the sick as they proclaimed the message of the kingdom (Luke 9:1–2, 6).
 - b. After Pentecost, the early church carried on this healing ministry as they proclaimed the gospel (Acts 3:1–10; 4:30; 5:16; 8:7; 9:34; 14:8–10; 19:11–12; 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30; James 5:14–16).

Healing is imparted three ways:

1. The laying on of hands (Mark 16:15–18; Acts 9:17).
2. Confession of known sin, followed by the anointing of the sick with oil and the prayer of faith (James 5:14–16).
3. Spiritual gifts of healing given to the church (1 Corinthians 12:9).

Note: God has given us common sense and wisdom. Just because you may want divine healing does not negate the validity of proper medical attention and care.

4. Church is a Place of Hope

My heart longs for the day that my soul will finally be home. To put it in Paul's words, "my heart groans in me" (Romans 8:22).

- Paul says the natural world is not our home
- The world around us reminds us that we were made for another world
- Our life has been balanced by a groaning for a return to home

It is a hope that has been placed within every person the very minute you make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life.

When Paul wrote to his young protégé Titus, I want you to notice what Paul called this hope of the Lord's return. Paul called it a "blessed hope" (**Titus 2:10–13**).

The life of a Jesus follower is defined by:

- the waiting
- the expecting
- the hoping

For the blessed hope of Jesus's return.

Paul calls this the blessed hope, **not** the blessed faith:

- Faith is a confident belief in a principle
- Hope is an anxious expectation
- Hope is the anticipation of an event or gathering
- Faith is the confidence to book the date

When people lose hope:

- Their spirit breaks
- The addict quits fighting for deliverance
- The discouraged wife stops believing for her marriage
- The struggling believer gives up ever walking in victory
- The enemies quit believing there can ever be any reconciliation

The future hope of Jesus' return empowers us in the present to face the darkness.\

Our hope is not tied to the happenings and the circumstances of this world, but your hope is anchored in the promise of His return (**1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**).

May the catastrophes that our world faces right now destroy our false trust, and turn our eyes toward Jesus and the glorious hope of His return (**Revelation 22:7, 12, 16, 20**).

May we look forward with great anticipation for the blessed hope, where that day:

- Will be Gabriel's "blow your **trumpet**" day
- Will be the dead in Christ "**getting up**" day
- Will be the living Christians "**flying away**" day
- Will be the departed Christians' **reunion** day
- For the blind, will be the "**I can see again**" day
- For the hurting, will be relief day
- For the devil, will be "you are torched" day
- For Jesus, will be the coronation day
- For God the Father, will be the "kids are coming home" day

May there be a holy anticipation that rises in your heart today as we fix it around our blessed hope.

Conclusion

The church should:

- Enable believers to evangelize in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs.
- Add a necessary dimension to worshipful relationship with God in the life of the believer.
- Enable believers to respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in expression of fruit, gifts, and ministries—as in New Testament times—for the edifying of the body of Christ and care for the poor and needy of the world.

The message of the church, the creed, and our fundamental truths is a message that:

- The church is a place of calling.
- The church is a place of purpose.
- The church is a place of divine healing.
- The church is a place of hope.