

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, [Jesus] has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.... (Acts 2:33)

The Easter season is seven weeks long. On the fiftieth day after Easter – seven Sundays after Easter, we celebrate Pentecost. Last year, I wrote about what Pentecost is and its importance as a primary feast day for us in the Church. The week after Pentecost, of course, is Trinity Sunday, when we remember one of the central teachings of the Bible – that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is the only celebration in the Church year chiefly dedicated to a doctrine and not an event or person. This month, though I want to focus on what ties these two days together – and, in fact, what ties us all together as Christians, namely our confession of faith.

This year marks 1,700 (!) years of the Church’s confession of faith found in the Nicene Creed, named after the city of Nicaea in modern-day Turkey. The Council of Nicaea was called in 325 AD by Emperor Constantine as the first so-called ‘ecumenical’ council in the history of the Church. (Technically, one could argue that the first council was the gathering of the believers at Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15). Theologians and bishops came together to address serious issues of faith and life in the Church. The primary issue was the divinity of Jesus. (Later, when the Creed became finalized at the next council at Constantinople in 381, one main issue regarded the divinity of the Holy Spirit). A man named Arius was teaching that Jesus was created by God at some point in history and thus subordinate to him in his very essence. Arianism – the sect of the Church that followed Arius and his teachings – became a threat to orthodox Christianity. The emperor, as well as many of the bishops of the Church, sought unity in faith and teaching.

But, how could they come to such unity? The faith of the Church, the faith which we confess, has, is, and always will be based on God’s Word. What we believe and confess is what Jesus himself tells us. So, those gathered at Nicea wrote this confession down after coming together as the Church and after much prayer and discussion, always keeping Jesus’ Word at the forefront. It’s only through the Word that we find life and salvation. It’s only the Holy Spirit, working through the Word, that gives saving faith.

May this be true for us as well! Whatever we believe, whatever we confess, however we live should come from Jesus’ Word and his Word alone. His Word has come to the Church, it’s kept by the Church, and it’s lived out with the Church. The Nicene Creed, then, is more than simply checklist of doctrines. It’s a confession of faith founded in the Word of God and centered in Christ. May we continue to confess this faithful Creed and keep Jesus’ Word, now and always!

-Pastor Squire

“Come, holy Light, guide divine, now cause the Word of life to shine. Teach us to know our God aright and call Him Father with delight. From every error keep us free; let none but Christ our master be, that we in living faith abide, in Him, our Lord, with all our might confide. Alleluia! Alleluia!”

(“Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord” *LSB* 497, v. 2)