

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Well, as you know, we started a new sermon series last week entitled The Confessional Church. We started big, Starting with God. God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, as we profess in the Apostles Creed.

But as we looked at that, we saw that God is indeed very big. More quite. God is all of the Omni's. He's omnipotent, all powerful, omnipresent, everywhere at once, omniscient, He knows everything. He's unchanging. He's just. He's righteous. He's faithful. He's merciful. He's gracious, He's loving. And we ended on a high note. He's holy, totally set apart for our salvation.

Today we're going to make a little bit of change. It is Communion Sunday and so on communion Sunday, we always use the Nicene Creed. And I like to call the Nicene Creed the "Tomahawk Cruise Missile" of all the creeds. Why? Because the cruise missile was really a quite amazing weapon. You can watch it from hundreds of thousands of miles away from a target and it is accurate to within a radius of three feet. It holds a very powerful weapon or bomb, 500 lbs. typically. It is launched to permanently take out a target, to take it out, to destroy it with little collateral damage to everything around it.

The Nicene Creed, the Tomahawk cruise missile of creeds, was written at the First Council of Nicea in AD 325. This council was convened or called for by Constantine, the Roman Emperor who was a recent convert to Christianity. Why did he call for it? To bring the church back together. At this point in time, the Church was, and I will quote, "fiercely divided." Fiercely and divided because of the teachings of one of the bishops. A guy named Arius and his teaching, which started seven years before the council in AD 318 was simply this I quote. "Jesus is not God at all." In fact, he referred to Jesus as a celestial servant, or certainly not, the Most High God. And when he uses that term, the Most High God, Jesus is not the Most High God. He was using a very serious term because this was the term that the God of the Bible had been known for, for millennia; The Most High God. He's the One that always won when you go through the Old Testament. Were the gods of Egypt greater than He?

No, He decimated them. What about the god who was up there on the mountain with Elijah on Mount Carmel? No not, baal, God, He's the Most High God because He's the only God.

And so, when he says that Jesus is not God at all, He's not the Most High God, this got people going. He pointed out using logic Jesus couldn't be the Most High God. Jesus showed emotion, He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, He's not emotional. He's always in control. By the way, when I was reading through some of these writings of Arias, and thinking of them, I thought seriously Buddy, take a look. I wonder what the people at the time of Noah would say about this? God is always in control, is not emotional. Or how about the people of Sodom and Gomorrah I think they might disagree with Arias there. But he also pointed out that Jesus we read in scripture, grew and learned. Well that can't be God if you're growing and learning because God's omniscient, He knows everything and He fills everything. He's omnipresent. How can he grow and learn? Oh, silly people. And that, of course, led to fighting within the church. Once you get fighting going, Satan has a foothold on it just starts to spread.

Pretty soon it was being pointed out that God doesn't change, so how could He become father? Because that would mean He changes to which people would say no, no, no, He's eternally the Father. And Jesus is the Son who, well if God's eternally the Father, then Jesus, the Son must always be eternally the Son too. Which, of course, well you can't always be the Father because you're not a father until you have a child. So, God can't be the eternal Father and Jesus can't be eternal Son because a father is only a father after a son is born.

Applying human logic and reason to God does not work very well. And so, the Council of Nicea came together and they used scripture as their guide. Their guide to right what was intended to be an ecumenical creed. Ecumenical means the whole body. So, this was a creed for the whole body of Christ the Church. And as Lutherans, we believe there are three ecumenical creeds, the Apostles Creed which we use last week, Nicene Creed, which we're using this week, and the Athanasian Creed,

which well, I don't think we're going to use it all that often. It's rather long.

The Nicene Creed is truly the Ecumenical creed. It is accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church, accepted by the Anglican Church, the Protestant Church, and I believe the Coptic Church as well. When we take a look at it, it had a primary role, a reason for its writing. Back to the cruise missile, they were going to launch the Creed and take out Arminianism and all the arguments, the fighting, and the heresies that were coming with it. In a nutshell, they were going to show Jesus, He's God, in the flesh, True God, True man.

And the groundwork is laid in the first article. What we talked about last week in the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed begins just a little bit different. There are a few extra words thrown in on purpose. We began, I believe in one God. But it also sets the foundation for the concept of the trinity. I believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And of all things visible and invisible. You've got to hand it to the Council of Nicea. They were very forward thinking. There was probably somebody there who said something like this, 'you know, our God is so big, He created the entire universe, and we have no idea how it is. We have no idea how much stuff is out there and what all that can't be seen. So, we'd better just say He made everything that's visible and everything that's invisible. Because someday, probably what we don't see now, they'll see later. What they would be saying today? Would you imagine somebody from 325 AD looking at the pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope? Or looking at a microscope and what was there? All I can say is well done, that was very forward thinking. But that's the end of the first article. God the Father.

Article 2. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ. One, taking us back to that first article, I believe in one God. One Lord. Lord, Master. We're going to define that Lord a little bit more as we go. Lord Jesus. Jesus, the name itself means he saves. The name given to Jesus when Gabriel announced the birth to Mary and Joseph in his dream. You are going to call Him

Jesus. He says, One, Lord, Jesus Christ, from the Greek word Christos means anointed or chosen one.

Now the Tomahawk. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only. Wow, only. Takes it back to one God. One Lord Jesus. The only begotten Son of God. We go through that, and we probably really don't think about it too much. The word begotten. It's loaded. It's a compound word. In the Greek, it is; Monogeneses. Mono means one. Literally, look at the Greek Dictionary on this. The definition for Mono is only, alone, without others, one. And then geneses, the Greek word is geneous. That's where we get our word gene. The definition is offspring or stock. Modern day: that which possesses the genetic code of another. The genetic code of another? What other? The only begotten Son of God. He's the only son. The one and only son, right? Be careful, because that is what some of the biblical translations say. He's the only Son. The one and only son, right? We emphasize that Jesus is the one and only. And yet, the minute that we do that, we open ourselves up to a criticism, and it's a legitimate criticism. Let me ask you a question. Are you a child of God? If you are, then you are a son of God or a daughter of God. Which means Jesus could have been just like us, right? But that's why they went with only begotten Son of God. He's got the genetics of God, the gene pool of God. When you think about that, this is written in AD 325, I found this to be pretty cool. These guys were smart. They were way ahead of their time. All I can say is well done, Council of Nicea, and probably should throw in there. Thank you, God the Father, your Holy Spirit was powerfully. But we will wait for the third article on that one. Yes, well done.

The power of the Holy Spirit? And yet, how did the Holy Spirit get them to be able to say that? Well, went back to what we said earlier. They open their Bibles. And they used what is written in the scriptures. Specifically, they used what the Apostle John wrote. And that's why in our scripture reading this morning, our gospel reading, we used the New King James Version, which is one of the most accurate literal word for word translations.

And so, John chapter 1, verse 14 reads like this. And the Word (that is Logo) and we will touch on that in the moment, and the Word became

flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Since he, Jesus, is the only one with Godly genetic composition, He is God and God the Father who last week we saw is full of grace and truth. Full, none missing. Jesus is God, the Begotten, Son of God. But now we have to go back to that phrase, the word, the logos became flesh. Why did John use the term the Logos, the word for Jesus? And we find the answer to that in our Epistle reading this morning, our New Testament reading this morning in the book of Acts.

We read in Acts 17 when Paul Goes to Athens. Now all the Athenians and foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. So, they would gather together at the Areopagus, and they would talk about, and listen to everything that was new. Was it chaos? Yes, it was rather chaotic, but there also was an overriding theme or question. They began the day with this question. "What is the Logos?" What is the word, the final word, the ultimate word, the final truth? The answer and explanation to everything, what is it? And if you can imagine then getting all these philosophers together with 'I believe, I believe, I believe...

John comes along, and he says, Here's the logos, the answer to everything! Jesus is the final word, the ultimate word, truth in the flesh. Or might I dare say, The only begotten Son of God. He is God, True God, True man, miracle of miracles, He comes to us here today. As we. His children come to His table to commune with Him. And He comes to us as the Logos, The final answer, giving us the answer to everything. Your sins are forgiven. You are my children. Here, take my white robe of righteousness. I went to the cross. I earned it for you. I fulfilled what my Just, Father needed. The payment of sin is death. I died for you. I am the begotten Son of God and death has no power over me. I rose, I ascended and I'm coming back. But until that time, I am coming to you right now as you celebrate my supper.

In our Savior's Name, Amen.