When I started this series of messages on the Apostles’ Creed, my goal was to show you how I was making my religion ***conversational***, thru the beliefs and understandings of the Creed. In the 60 minutes allotted for this, I was unable to cover a lot of very relevant points. But my hope and prayer is that by **sharing my religion thru the Creed**, it has opened your eyes as to how you may do the same. **Share** what **you KNOW**, with your neighbor, your book club, and your kids. And in that recognizing the value of the discussion, for it is in the hearing and listening, that discipleship happens. The answers will come. I know John and I have missed many an opportunity to do this very thing, but God willing, and Spirit led, more opportunities are on the horizon, and we will seize them to share the things we believe, **the things we know**, to be true about God, the Father, **Jesus Christ, his only son**, and the Holy Spirit. Lord, as I bring this message to your flock, I pray that the words of my mouth and meditations of my heart are pleasing to you.

 Many years ago, I was at a slumber party- a grown up sleep over, if you will. At one point during the evening one of the ladies was talking about work and a co-worker and how she just couldn’t understand how this church goer could be so ‘**the opposite’** of what she thought a Christian was. “Jan,” she said, “you know her. You go to church. What’s her deal?”

I didn’t know what “her deal” was. But I did respond. With a modern day parable, one of those **Chicken Soup for the Soul stories** that I had treasured for many years.

**There is a man riding the subway with his four kids** and the kids are all over the place. Loud, rambunctious, and this man appears to be oblivious to it all. When they get to their stop, he is kind of jarred back to reality. He starts herding the kids off the train. On the way out, he inadvertently makes eye contact with the woman who had been sitting across from him. Her body language screamed disapproval, while she feigned a curt smile. Clearly, she was disgusted. The man said to her, “Mam, I am sorry for my kids. We are just coming home from the hospital. Their mother just died, and I am at a loss as to handle them, or what to say”. Of course, she was mortified and offered an empathetic look and mumbled something along the lines of, “Oh, it’s okay.” This was my response to the question, “What’s her deal?” **I don’t know**. But I do is that **everyone has a story.** All too all too often we are quick to judge, without recognize something is happening in this person’s life. You know what I mean, that cashier avoiding eye contact, who is caring for an elderly parent with dementia; the waiter who can’t get your your order straight, only to learn he hasn’t slept because he has three jobs to pay for his sister’s treatments; the garbage man that’s having marital problems; the receptionist that is distracted because he is mentally trying to navigate the waters of his daughter’s addiction at home. We never know what someone’s story is – **unless we ask**.

To demonstrate my point in a slightly different way, I got this from a You Tube video the other day. (SPILL the CUP)

Just like the water from that cup, when YOU get bumped, what’s inside you spills out. Whether it is judgment, compassion, frustration, fear, anger … what’s inside you spills out.

What does all this have to do with the Apostle’s Creed? Two things really jumped out at me.

**First,** I really want hope creed offers, to spill **all over the place.** Whether it is in response to a question at a slumber party or when I find myself in a predicament – like cancer or being up on a ski slope with darkening skies and finding one of our party reaching their limit of energy and ability. It’s what **I needed to cling to** as I spent 30 days in the window seat at a nursing home while my Mom slowly slipped away, or the 30 days at Swedish Hospital where my sister **fought her way back** from life-support. **I believe…**

**Second,** how cool is it to know that the Holy Spirit is there – here - right now – wanting and patiently waiting **to spill out?**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, or I believe in the Holy Ghost;**

**The Holy catholic Church,**

**the Communion of Saints;**

**The Forgiveness of sins;**

**The Resurrection of the body,**

**And the Life everlasting. Amen.**

Accepting this belief, this creed, is a part of the essential tenets of our Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. A belief that we share with many other Christian denominations.

For those that may have never joined a church, or were baptized as an infant, trust me as I say it is nothing short of a power surge that comes over you when articulating this creed along with the church body as a new partner, **for the first time** and truly every time thereafter.

On June 5th of this year, we will celebrate Pentecost Sunday – the coming of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2 tells us,

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. **Then** they were all **amazed and marveled**,”

And I will leave it there because I don’t want to steal Ryan’s thunder in the coming weeks, but rest assured we will hear more of the Holy Spirit.

On to, **the Holy catholic church**. Saying that can make some protestants wince. And it shouldn’t. The people of the United Methodist Church explain it this way: The term "catholic" (with a lower case "c") does not refer to any specific denomination or group of Christians. The term comes from two Greek words that together mean "throughout the whole."  This single word, "catholic," means throughout all time and places and also points to **the essential unity or wholeness of the church in Christ**. No [single] English term captures that dual sense of this ancient Greek term quite as well as "catholic." So when the creed states, "I believe in the holy catholic church," it refers to the wholeness of **the whole church** in all times and places rather than to any specific branch of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church may discern this differently, but for the protestants, it is a fairly straightforward talking point.

Remember – my point here is to take the Apostle’s Creed and make it conversational. To encourage and enable each listener, to … through and by the work of the Holy Spirit, allow themselves to be led to and engaged in conversation with each other and non-believers alike. In order to do that though, we must **talk about** and **share** our beliefs.

John and I were in Florida, January 2013, having just attended the ECO conference. Before heading out to our cruise ship that Sunday, we wanted to go to church so I googled and found a Presbyterian Church just down the road a piece. Unbeknownst to me, the church I had found was part of the PCA Presbyterian Denomination. They do not view women’s roles the same as we do. And I would have been fine with that. I attend the Catholic Church with my girlfriend in Arizona whenever I was there. However, this particular week it was the 40th anniversary of Roe v Wade. And apparently, in their world view, getting pregnant was something a woman did on her own and the men had no role whatsoever. Or at least that was the message I got from what was supposed to be a sermon. We left there and I was hotter than a tick. I felt like I had been blindsided. How could anyone imply pregnancy was solely a woman’s issue when God created man **and woman** to make it happen. I was furious that we had left an offering for that church to carry on their single-sided viewpoint. Why do I bring this up? Because Roe v Wade is back in the news. It’s never really gone away, but sometimes out of sight is out of mind. Now I am not suggesting, nor am I asking Ryan to stand up here and spout the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians stand on abortion. I am however, advocating, that if you are uncomfortable talking about your viewpoint, ask yourself why. This issue reaches far beyond an inconvenient or unwanted pregnancy … and if we can’t talk about it, how can we participate in the society that is mired in **so much division** – abortion rights being one of countless others – think war, poverty, education, taxes, the list is endless.

Now, everyone can take a deep breath, as we move on to the **Communion of Saints;** Here, I turned to my Roman Catholic roots for an explanation for the communion of saints and found a telling quote by Father Benedict Groeschel, where he states, “Perhaps no words in the [Apostles] Creed mean less to the average Catholic (and I will even venture a guess, Christian) than ‘I believe in the Communion of Saints.” And not unlike last week, when I spoke very little about the Virgin Mary, my understanding and study are inadequate to address. However, I know when I say it, I believe it. How is that possible? I don’t know. But I do. I have to wonder if that of that steadfastness comes from the indwelling holy spirit.

**The Forgiveness of sins;** Trying to share the story of God’s love, Christ’s life, death and resurrection **all as a component of forgiveness and atonement** is hard. It’s a big story, with a deep rich history, that culminates in the fulfillment of scripture … and all of that was more than 2,000 years ago. The Gospel of John tells us, “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.” I think of the words in the Lord’s prayer, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Personally, I take that definition a bit further, and for myself, consider it sin when I choose me over him. Whether it is what I do or what I leave undone, when I do it knowingly in contrast with God’s will for my life, I think of it as sin. But if we want to look at basic lawlessness, I can share with you a contemporary story of forgiveness – that **I received**, not that I extended. I wrote the following letter, 3 years ago, this very week **Read 1st Letter**

It was a relief to get that off my chest. I had carried that guilt and shame for almost 40 years. Owning my shame freed me. I accepted Christ’s forgiveness, but it didn’t end there. A couple months later, I received a most unexpected reply back from the Sluys’. Read Letter #2

**Now who was crying … Marion died last June.** If the Holy Spirit had not convicted me it was time, on the heels of the Celebrate recovery teachings, there is a good chance I never would have. And as much as I needed to make that confession because of the weight I had been carrying for decades, I would have never known the blessing of that forgiveness. Unwarranted. Undeserved. Pure.

I ask you, if this man and wife, could offer that to me … imagine what God’s forgiveness through Christ’s sacrifice could offer you. **And if you do** have any comprehension of that feeling, **the relief** the love **the wow!!!** How can you possibly **not share that** with others?

**The resurrection of the body and life everlasting –** As the creed concludes with promise and hope, we step into an area of faith where I am not as conversational. But because of strength of conviction, I can turn to the scriptures for the words I lack.

**Philippians 3:21** “He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like **his own glorious body**, using that power **by which he is able to bring all things** under his rule.”

**John 5:24-28**

**24**“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word **and believes him** who sent me **has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life**. **25**Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God **and those who hear will live**. **26**For as the Father has life in himself, **so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself**. **27**And he has given him authority to judge **because he is the Son of Man**. **28**“**Do not** be amazed at this, for a time is coming **when all** who are in their graves **will hear his voice.”**

J Packer’s commentary summed it up better than I: “Ask God to show you how Jesus’ life, body and soul, **was the only fully human life that has ever been lived,** and keep looking at Jesus, as you meet him in the gospels, til **you can see it**. Then the prospect of being like him – that, and no less – will seem to you the noblest and most magnificent destiny possible – and by embracing it you will become a true disciple.

Hear in your head the words anonymously appended to Amazing Grace:

 When we’ve been there ten thousand years

 Bright shining as the sun

 We’ve no less days to sign God’s praise

 Than when we first begun

**The Apostle's Creed**
I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; **This is my religion**

and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; **And this is my religion**.

He ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. **This too is part of my religion**.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting**. And that life everlasting, that may be the best part of my religion. I’d love to tell you about it, if you are interested?**

Amen