

The Creed
May 9-15, 2010

“...the holy catholic church, the communion of saints...”

NOTE TO BECKY: Can we put each week’s section of the creed on the beginning of the devotional...or even at the top of each page? This will help people to reflect back on it as they relate the day’s message.

Sunday

Read: Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:21-24

Observations and Questions

- What is the common thread in these two verses? How does what they say line up with the first part of this week’s passage of the Apostles’ Creed?

Key Concept:

- While no person is without sin, God calls us to be holy, living lives committed to Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to continue perfecting us throughout our lives.

Questions to Ponder:

- Would you consider yourself a holy person? What are the things/thoughts that come to mind that keep you from feeling holy? Have you seen God at work in your life to help you overcome sinful thoughts and behaviors? Are you daily committing your heart and mind to God?

Pray

- Read Philippians 4:4-9. Let this be a guide to your prayer today. Pray for God to make verses 8 & 9 become a part of your heartfelt passion...to replace any thoughts that are not honoring to God and to help you make wise decisions regarding what you take into your mind (books, magazines, TV, movies, websites, etc.). Trust that the Holy Spirit will be at work to help you die to sin and live a more righteous life.

Monday

Read: Romans 12:2

Observations and Questions

- What does it mean to offer your body as a living sacrifice? How can you not be conformed to the pattern of this world?

Key Concept:

- When we submit ourselves to God, altering our worldly perspectives and lifestyles, the Spirit works within us...making us more like Jesus and helping us to know God's will.

Questions to Ponder:

- Do you want to know God's will? What are the reservations you have about learning what God desires for you? Are you prepared to fully give yourself to God (offering a living sacrifice) in order for Him to work in you and deepen your relationship with Him? What does that sacrifice mean for you in particular? What are the things that are under your control that you believe are separating you from God?

Pray

- Changing our lifestyles and thought patterns are not easily done in our own strength. With God's help, it can become a reality (see Matthew 19:26). Open your heart to God today and pour out to Him those things that you believe are separating you from Him (unconfessed sin, impure thoughts, etc.). Ask Him to cleanse you from these things, and to help you keep from returning to them. In the future when your mind wanders in that direction, quickly ask God to take these thoughts from you and redirect your mind elsewhere.

Tuesday

Read: Acts 10: 34-35; 1 Cor. 1: 1-3

Observations and Questions

- What aspects of these passages correlate with each other? In the Acts passage, who was being addressed? (You may need to read the broader context to learn this.) What was the significance of who Peter was speaking to here as it relates to “the catholic (universal) church”?

Key Concept:

- The Christian Church is open to all of humanity who profess Jesus as their savior.

Questions to Ponder:

- How do you think the early Jewish Christians felt when they heard that non-Jews were being baptized into the faith? Human nature tends to want to have groups “open by invitation only” such as with organizations or clubs. Are there any people or groups that you would want to have excluded from the Church? Why? Why has God left the door open to them as well?

Pray

- We are all sinners saved by God’s grace. In your prayer time today, praise God for His mercy that we have not been judged according to our sin or merit, but that Jesus’ sacrifice has removed our sin when we have placed our trust fully in Him. If you are struggling with the idea of a totally open Church, ask God to speak into your heart about this issue so that you can understand His perspective more fully on this matter.

Wednesday

Read: Ephesians 4: 4-6

Observations and Questions

- The term “catholic” in the Apostles’ Creed does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church, but rather to the idea that the church is a universal church...open to everyone. How does that concept show itself in this passage?

Key Concept:

- God has created one system by which people might have relationship with Him. We are called to a spirit of unity with other Christians regardless of race, nationality, economic status, denominational affiliation, or any other way in which people are categorized.

Questions to Ponder:

- How do you think of yourself in religious terms? (Baptist, former Catholic, Christ-follower, etc.)? Do you think that God is pleased with the number of divisions within His Church (see John 17: 20-23)? What are some of the things that separate people into different Christian denominations? Is there any value in overcoming our separateness and striving toward a greater sense of unity? What is that value? What are the challenges in overcoming these divisions? What can you do to help promote Christian unity?

Pray

- Use the John 17:20-23 passage as a basis for your prayer today. You may want to read the entire chapter, which is Jesus’ prayer before His arrest. Lift up His prayer for unity in the Church as your own, and ask God to help you discern if He would have you play a role in helping to make this a reality in our region.

Thursday

Read: Acts 9:32; 2 Corinthians 1:1

Observations and Questions

- Who is Luke writing about and Paul writing to?

Key Concept:

- Biblically speaking, a “saint” is a person consecrated or set apart. All baptized persons who are professing Christians are saints.

Questions to Ponder:

- If you have been baptized and call Jesus your Lord and Savior how does it feel to consider yourself a saint? Do you think you are living up to the title? What are the kinds of things that you think a saint believes and stands for? Do you believe and stand for them as well? Do you think a saint is perfect? Why, or why not?

Pray

- Don't shy away from the title of saint, for it is what God considers you to be. Rather, ask God how you can become more fully formed as a saint, honoring Him in all you think, say, and do. Ask God to reveal anything in yourself that is not of Him. Confess anything that God brings to your mind, and ask God to help to keep you from re-engaging in those thoughts or actions (repentance).

Friday

Read: Matthew 7:21-23

Observations and Questions

- Who is talking in this passage? What is the crux of what He is saying here?

Key Concept:

- A true saint is not one who merely proclaims their faith, but one who does the will of God.

Questions to Ponder:

- Are you one who merely talks the talk of Christianity...or do you walk the talk? How have you seen your faith journey develop over the years? Have you been putting your faith into action...following where God is calling you? If not, what is holding you back? If you have been, how have you been blessed by your obedient spirit?

Pray

- God's plan is to help Christians develop over time, from "drinking milk to eating solid food" (See Hebrews 5: 11-14). Where are you on that continuum? If you are not growing in your faith and challenging yourself to greater things, take this to prayer and ask God to strengthen your desire to move to the next level in your faith journey. Then, in the power of the Holy Spirit, move out where God is calling you, knowing that He will be with you.

Saturday

Read: Acts 2: 42-47

Observations and Questions

- Who is the “they” referred to in Acts 2:42? This is a picture of the early church. What are some of the key aspects of how this group of people functioned? What do you think was the level of commitment of these people to each other (see v. 45)?

Key Concept:

- The “communion of the saints” involves a deep relationship in one another’s lives as well as a deep commitment to serving the Lord.

Questions to Ponder:

- Do you sense that the church today overall embodies this part of the Apostle’s Creed? If not, why is that? If so, in what ways do you see it happening? More specifically, how does McLane Church foster this value? Do you think we are living into this value well? How might it be encouraged further or improved upon? (Note: if you have thoughts about this that our leadership might benefit from, feel free to send them to group@mcclanechurch.org).

Pray

- Ask God how He views “the communion of saints” as it relates to your life and your participation in the life of McLane Church. Ask Him to reveal what steps you might take to deepen your communion with others and with Him.