

I should mention it now because someone likely will later if I don't. Because of five Sundays this month we end up back to back Sundays with no communion. Yet if you looked through the entire service folder or just glanced at what comes after the sermon you'll see the Nicene Creed printed. Wait. That's only for communion Sundays someone will say. What gives? Well first let me say I chose it purposefully. Second let me reassure you there is no command from God regarding the Nicene Creed's usage or non-usage on any Sunday, communion or otherwise. Since I'm not even sure the history on how it happened that we use Nicene Creed on communion Sundays, it's enough for me to confidently say we're not breaking any of God's rules by confessing that creed today. So why are we?

The Nicene Creed dates to 325 AD. While it addressed a number of controversies of the time, it stressed the fact that Christ is fully God. Of course it mentions God the Holy Spirit too. Interesting to us today is the controversy that arose slowly regarding the Holy Spirit and how he "proceeded". Look at your service folders, third article of the Nicene Creed on the Holy Spirit, second line. *"Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son..."* Curious that wasn't in the original Nicene Creed. It wasn't added until 589 AD and not solidly held until 1028 AD. Some argued the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father through the Son. Thus Father and Son and Holy Spirit would not be equal as God. Others argued anyone who denied the Holy Spirit's proceeding from the Father and the Son violated the unity of the three in one God. Care to guess which we follow? Obviously we confess regarding the Holy Spirit he proceeds from the Father and the Son therefore keeping the Scriptural truth that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there are not three gods but one God.

Today is all about the Holy Spirit. I included the Nicene Creed specifically for that line. Part of the proof for the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son is found in the gospel this morning. But more important than his proceeding is what he proceeds from the Father and the Son to do. It's important to us and why we confess in the Nicene Creed...

**He proceeds from the Father and Son
Holy Spirit testifies
Holy Spirit enables us to testify**

We've gotten a lot of rain over the last month. I think rainfall has broken records for the month, maybe even in any month. Drought is all but gone. Lakes and reservoirs are filled up. Grass won't need watering by my sprinkler system for weeks. All truth, true statements. Just like the sky is blue, the grass is green, and school is over. But I'm capable of lies. Two plus two is ten. Turning right from the left lane is legal. Our lies as well as truth make us different from the Holy Spirit. **"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth..."** The Holy Spirit is characterized by the truth. His actions and words are all truth. He brings people to the truth. His testimony is truth.

Sometimes the work of the Holy Spirit confuses people. God the Father is well known as creator of the world, one to whom prayers are addressed. God the Son is Savior, sacrificed on the cross, dead, alive, ascended into heaven. But God the Holy Spirit is tucked away, hardly mentioned in prayers, almost an afterthought. Let's be clear, the Holy Spirit is no afterthought. He's the Spirit of truth that Jesus sent. His whole goal is to bring hearts to the truth. The truth of the gospel. The truth about salvation by grace. The truth about Jesus. No wonder we don't hear about the Holy Spirit too often. He's always pointing towards Jesus. He leads people out of doubt to say yes to what they hear from God's Word.

Are you forgetful? Sometimes my forgetfulness is terrible. Appointments missed, actions not taken because I didn't remember, numbers and even names gone. Are you forgetful? I already asked that. Please don't think I make light of forgetfulness. It's a difficulty many people face with much more serious consequences than a missed appointment or forgetting a name. Mixing up and forgetting the truth are easy. We jumble it in our minds. Time gets in the way. Suddenly we can't put our fingers on the truth so easily. Memory that isn't constantly informed is memory lost. Counting on ourselves to get everything just right won't save us.

We face real life situations where faith and confession must be put into practice. But the world pressures us to be exactly the opposite regarding the truth. Society wants cloudy truth. What's truth? Where can it be found? The world testifies there's no such thing as truth. Doubt creeps in regarding truth about sins and actions once easily recognized as truth. Homosexuality, divorce, gender, creation by God, cheating, lying, gossip. In the face of intense pressure we might remain silent. Satan loves it. He plays up the doubt we experience. Did we really have the truth at all? Who can tell what's truth? Maybe we're wrong and the world is right? Then Satan says because we don't remember we weren't really believers. Real believers remember and get everything right.

On Pentecost, centuries ago, the disciples may have thought they had to remember everything Jesus said and did. They knew that was impossible. What could they do? Jesus was gone, his visible presence in heaven. But the disciples were not alone. **"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me."** Did you hear it? The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, with purpose. The Holy Spirit recalls everything that's truth with perfect precision. He does it for you and applies it to you. Remember, he's the Counselor, a helper and advocate for you. God the Father and Jesus sent him to testify to the truth. So he highlights what Jesus did. The life Jesus lived. The death he died. The sacrifice he offered. How it was perfect, substantial, enough for you to have all your sins removed. The Holy Spirit tells the world and you the truth. Jesus loves you and forgives you and saves you.

God the Holy Spirit could have done that work alone. Every last person would have to hear it directly from the Holy Spirit. Direct and immediate intervention of the Holy Spirit might have been how God set it up. But he didn't. The Holy Spirit was sent, but not just on Pentecost. He proceeds from the Father and the Son in eternity. Sent to the world throughout all time. He makes believers by his power and grace. He enables you and me to testify.

In a trial one eyewitness is good. But juries are skeptical. Defense attorneys raise doubts, what did the eyewitness see? Why are they the only one? Maybe they got it wrong. More eyewitnesses are better. Jesus didn't have one eyewitness after his resurrection. He didn't have just the eleven disciples. He had hundreds of eyewitnesses. But their testimony meant nothing unless it was backed by the testimony of the more reliable and trustworthy one. The Holy Spirit testified and enabled the testimony of Jesus' followers. First were the disciples. ***“And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”*** Jesus called them and the Holy Spirit enabled them to testify to what they knew and what they'd seen. In their testimony about Jesus, God's Word, his promises, the Holy Spirit was working, bringing people from darkness to light, calling people from lostness to foundness in Christ.

I like my comfort zone. That's why it's called a comfort zone. Within my comfort zone I'm speaking to people I know, hanging out with people like me, and doing things I like. Sounds a lot like your comfort zone. In mine I'm full of excuses and reasons to not be an eyewitness or testify. Testifying to the truth about Jesus is outside that comfort zone. I worry constantly that if I don't say it right they won't get it and they won't believe. I get nervous. I back down from what needs saying. I say what's easy, not what's God's Word. I avoid it today and promise to get to it tomorrow. The devil loves it. He accuses me of not being worthy of testifying. How could I be, I ask myself. I'm sinful. It hurts too much. I can end up just stopping testifying about Christ.

The Holy Spirit comes into your comfort zone as your Counselor and helper. He supplies you the truth of God's Word so you can testify to God's Word. Be assured of your forgiveness through Jesus. The sins of your past are gone. That's truth. They're cast away forever by a God who was dead in a tomb but left it empty. The emptiness of that tomb is like the emptiness of your account, no sins left. That's the truth. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to bring you back through the Word and Sacraments. That baptism you witnessed today is a visual reminder and testimony to that truth. Just as little Ella's sins have been removed so have yours.

Hear the testimony of the disciples showing you Jesus. There's the power, truth, and gospel of the Holy Spirit working. That's the truth you believe. It enables you and empowers you to speak that truth to someone else, to testify. You may not perform miracles, speak in language you've never learned, or cure diseases. You may consider your testimony to a spouse, a child, a friend small and insignificant. God doesn't. It's huge! The truth you testify to about Jesus smashes sins and removes doubts. That powerful gospel of Jesus brings people to life eternal just like he promised. The Holy Spirit wins another heart for Christ. Then the process repeats.

The truth is that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Every time you confess that in the Nicene Creed or read about it in the Word of God think more about the work of the Holy Spirit. He testifies to the truth, the truth of Christ as the Savior. He brings you on board too, enabling you to testify to that same truth. Enables you to become a pipeline through which Jesus exercises his power and his reach into people's hearts. To God be the glory!