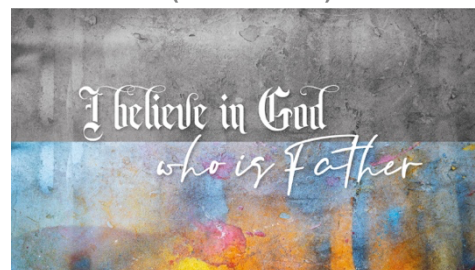


**ENTER** God's presence

- Ask someone to begin with Prayer
- What are you thankful for this week?
- Who is in need that you can pray for now?
- Pray, full of thanksgiving, and intercede for those in need.

Read Psalm 103*Of David.*

- ¹ Praise the LORD, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- ² Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits –
- ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- ⁶ The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.
- ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
- ⁸ the LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- ⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbour his anger for ever;
- ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
- ¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
- ¹³ *As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;*
- ¹⁴ *for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.*
- ¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass,
they flourish like a flower of the field;
- ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.
- ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children's children –
- ¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant
and remember to obey his precepts.
- ¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.

Worship series:
ANCIENT CREED: LIVING FAITH
(#1 in series)**VERSE** for the week

**As a father has compassion
on his children, so
the LORD has compassion on
those who fear him; for he
knows how we are formed, he
remembers that we are dust.**

Psalm 103:13,14**REMEMBER** this week

**From start to finish,
the heart and focus of the
creed is
relationship with a God
who always has desired
and always will desire
you to experience him
completely and fully.**

²⁰ Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.

²¹ Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

²² Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion.

Praise the LORD, my soul.

Almighty God, our Eternal Father, from the fullness of my soul we adore you.

We are deeply grateful that you have made us in your image and likeness, and that you hold us in your loving embrace. Move us to love you with all our heart, with all our soul, and with our whole mind. Direct us to love all your children as we are loved by you. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. *Where have you seen God's power at work in your life this last week?*
2. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *Share what you think about God as 'Father'.*
4. *Share how you feel about God as 'Father'?*
5. *What has your relationship with the Father been like over the years, and what is it like now? Close, distant, difficult, safe, challenging, other? (All are normal and OK. But not necessarily healthy)*
6. *What does it mean to your relationship with God that he is the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth? (You can refer to the overused word, 'awesome' if you like.)*



LISTEN attentively

Read Psalm 103: 13-19 again

7. *Have a go at sharing those verses with one another in your own words. Tell it as your own story.*
8. *If you were to share these verses with someone who doesn't know Jesus, how would you put a Gospel interpretation on verse 18?*

Martin Luther's Large Catechism: The Apostles' Creed, Article 1

[Note: The Lutheran Confessions (The Book of Concord) prefaces each paragraph with a number for easy reference.]

9 I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

10 This shows and sets forth most briefly what is God the Father's essence, will, activity, and work. The Ten Commandments have taught that we are to have not more than one God [Deuteronomy 6:4]. So it might be asked, "What kind of a person is God? What does He do? How can we praise, or show and describe Him, that He may be known?" Now, that is taught in this and in the following article. So the Creed is nothing other than the answer and confession of Christians arranged with respect to the First Commandment.

11 It is as if you were to ask a little child, "My dear, what sort of a God do you have? What do you know about Him?" The child could say, "This is my God: first, the Father, who has created heaven and earth. Besides this One only, I regard nothing else as God. For there is no one else who could create heaven and earth."

12 But for the learned and those who are somewhat advanced, these three articles may all be expanded and divided into as many parts as there are words. But now for young scholars let it suffice to make the most necessary points, as we have said, that this article refers to the Creation. We emphasize the words "Creator of heaven and earth."

13 But what is the force of this, or what do you mean by these words, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?" Answer: "This is what I mean and believe, believe, that I am God's creature [2 Corinthians 5:17]."

I mean that He has given and constantly preserves [Psalm 36:6] for me my body, soul, and life, my members great and small, all my senses, reason, and understanding, and so on. He gives me food and drink, clothing and support, wife and children, domestic servants, house and home, and more.

14 Besides, He causes all created things to serve for the uses and necessities of life. These include the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, day and night, air, fire, water, earth, and whatever it bears and produces. They include birds and fish, beasts, grain, and all kinds of produce [Psalm 104].

15 They also include whatever else there is for bodily and temporal goods, like good government, peace, and security.”

16 So we learn from this article that none of us owns for himself, nor can preserve, his life nor anything that is here listed or can be listed. This is true no matter how small and unimportant a thing it might be. For all is included in the word Creator.

17 Further, we also confess that God the Father has not only given us all that we have and see before our eyes, but He daily preserves and defends us against all evil and misfortune [Psalm 5:11]. He directs all sorts of danger and disaster away from us. We confess that He does all this out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a kind Father. He cares for us so that no evil falls upon us.

18 But to speak more about this belongs in the other two parts of this article, where we say, “Father Almighty.”

19 Now, all that we have, and whatever else is in heaven and upon the earth, is daily given, preserved, and kept for us by God. Therefore, it is clearly suggested and concluded that it is our duty to love, praise, and thank Him for these things without ceasing [1 Thessalonians 5:17–18]. In short, we should serve Him with all these things, as He demands and has taught in the Ten Commandments.

20 We could say much here, if we were to wander, about how few people believe this article. For we all pass over it, hear it, and say it. Yet we do not see or consider what the words teach us.

21 For if we believed this teaching with the heart, we would also act according to it [James 2:14]. We would not strut about proudly, act defiantly, and boast as though we had life, riches, power, honour, and such, of ourselves [James 4:13–16]. We would not act as though others must fear and serve us, as is the practice of the wretched, perverse world. The world is drowned in blindness and abuses all the good things and God’s gifts only for its own pride, greed, lust, and luxury. It never once thinks about God, so as to thank Him or acknowledge Him as Lord and Creator.

22 This article ought to humble and terrify us all, if we believed it. For we sin daily [Hebrews 3:12–13] with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and possessions, and with everything we have. This is especially true of those who fight against God’s Word. Yet Christians have this advantage: they acknowledge that they are duty bound to serve God for all these things and to be obedient to Him.

23 We ought, therefore, daily to recite this article. We ought to impress it upon our mind and remember it by all that meets our eyes and by all good that falls to us. Wherever we escape from disaster or danger, we ought to remember that it is God who gives and does all these things. In these escapes we sense and see His fatherly heart and His surpassing love toward us [Exodus 34:6]. In this way the heart would be warmed and kindled to be thankful, and to use all such good things to honour and praise God.

24 We have most briefly presented the meaning of this article. This is how much is necessary at first for the most simple to learn about what we have, what we receive from God, and what we owe in return. This is a most excellent knowledge but a far greater treasure. For here we see how the Father has given Himself to us, together with all creatures, and has most richly provided for us in this life. We see that He has overwhelmed us with unspeakable, eternal treasures by His Son and the Holy Spirit, as we shall hear [Colossians 2:2].

9. *What sort of God do we have? What does He do for us? (paragraphs 12–16)*

10. *Some say that God is like a watch maker that wound up the universe and left it to run as he departed for places unknown. This is called the Deus Absconditus or the absent or hidden God. How is our God unlike this? (paragraphs 17–18)*

11. *How would God have us respond to Him for all His blessings and Why? (paragraph 19)*

12. *How does knowing that God is our Creator change the way we view ourselves and life in general? (paragraphs 20–23)*



GROW deeper

Read Psalm 103:13,14 again.

*13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD (Yahweh) has compassion on those who fear him;
14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*

Note: remember that the Psalms are poetry, and like poetry everywhere employs all kinds of devices, like rhyme, metaphor, simile etc. Hebrew poetry also uses couplets as in these two verses. Sometimes the first phrase reinforces the second, and sometimes it makes a distinction. One distinction can be between 'then' and 'now'. Don't forget that it's poetry, there will be other possibilities also. Use your knowledge of grace to set you on the right course.

13. Verse 13 mentions 'fear'? What are the possibilities?

14. How does your interpretation of 'fear' impact on the Lutheran understanding of God's Grace and Generosity?

15. What's the connection between the first and second phrase of verse 14?

16. How would you answer someone who asked you to explain the hope you have in your Eternal Father and his promises?



LIVE purposefully

Remember: From start to finish, the heart and focus of the creed is relationship with a God who always has desired and always will desire you to experience him completely and fully.

Pastor Mark talked about unpacking new toys and technology and that the 'new' is exciting to modern people.

- **Take your time and unpack the 1st Article in your own words, as your own story.**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for the new freedoms that are unwrapping from COVID-19 lockdown and intercede for those who have lost loved ones to the disease and for those who are still ill with it. Ask that he would continue to guide us and our leaders through this difficult time.
- Ask God to protect those who show their love for others by putting their own health and safety on the line, our teachers, healthcare workers, emergency service workers and defence force personnel.
- Pray that we may bold disciples together for the sake of the Gospel and all those yet to hear it gently and clearly.
- Thank God for all his good gifts. Ask for thankful hearts and visionary courage as we plant the Good News in his Kingdom.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], God the Father loves you unconditionally. Amen.