

# There is one Body, one Church

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 July 2026

Preacher: Wilston Trin

[ 0 : 00 ] Let us now stand and today we're going to be able to say the Creed in full after being saying only sections of it for the last few weeks. One Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made.

Of the same essence as the Father, through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven.

He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made human. He was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered and was buried. And on the third day he rose again according to the scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. And his kingdom will never end. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.

[ 1 : 41 ] He spoke through the prophets. We believe in one holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen. Please be seated. Reverend Wilson will now bring us the word of God.

Well, good morning. Well, good morning. Grace and peace to all of you. Well, it's indeed a great privilege for me to be here once again to bring God's word to you.

Thanks again, Pastor Brian, for this invitation this time around. Now, as Pastor Brian has already told us earlier, we are currently in a sermon series on the Nicene Creed.

This is an ancient creedal statement of the Christian faith that Christians have been believing and reciting for about 1,700 years now.

[ 2 : 47 ] Now, this creedal statement is not something that came out of nowhere, but rather it summarizes what the Bible teaches, a fact that I'm sure you already know and aware of.

Now, so far in our sermon series, for the past few weeks, we've looked at God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

We've looked at Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God who died for us and for our salvation, reasoned and ascended and seated at the right hand of God.

And we've also looked at the Holy Spirit, the giver of life. And for today, I'm going to bring you to look at another phrase in the Nicene Creed that we have just recited earlier, that is, we believe in one holy, Catholic and apostolic church.

And as we look at this phrase and delve into what it means for the church to be one holy, Catholic and apostolic, I'm going to use Ephesians chapter 4, verse 1 to 6 as an anchor to my message today.

[ 4 : 07 ] So I think it would be helpful if you have your Bibles with you. Could you please open your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4, verse 1 to 6. But before we delve further, let me invite us as we pray together.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for gathering us together as your people today. As we hear your word, open our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit.

Teach us what it means to be your one holy, Catholic and apostolic church. And help us to live a manner worthy of the calling we have received.

May your words strengthen our faith, unite us in Christ and bring glory to your name. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Every Sunday, millions of Christians around the world confess we believe in one holy, Catholic and apostolic church.

[ 5 : 21 ] This is a line that we recite in the Nicene Creed. But I think for many evangelicals like us today, the phrase often raises many questions, isn't it?

What does the word Catholic mean? Is it referring to the Roman Catholic Church? In what sense is the church holy when Christians still sin?

What does apostolic mean? Does it mean modern apostles? And how can the church be one when there are so many denominations around today?

See, these are all valid questions for us to explore. And when you see, when the Nicene Creed confesses that we believe in one holy, Catholic and apostolic church, it did not invent these ideas. Rather, it summarizes what the scripture teaches. In Ephesians 4, verses 1-6, the Apostle Paul repeatedly uses the word one and calls Christians to preserve the unity that God has already created.

[ 6 : 40 ] While our passage this morning highlights the church's oneness, the rest of the New Testament also helps us to understand why that one church is also holy, Catholic and apostolic.

And so that's what I'm going to do today. I'm going to bring us through Ephesians 4, verses 1-6 to see the oneness of the church and looking at different passages from the New Testament to see the holiness, the Catholicity and the apostolicity of the church.

So, first, one church united in Christ. Ephesians 4, verses 1-6.

This is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus. If you read earlier, a few chapters earlier, in chapter 2 especially, Paul has already mentioned about the unity that has been achieved not by the Ephesian Christians but by Jesus through his death and resurrection.

Paul said, The Gentiles who were far away from God and therefore are without hope have now been brought near by the blood of Christ.

[ 8 : 12 ] And because of that, the dividing line between the Jews and Gentiles is now gone. And consequently, Gentiles are now fellow citizens of God's people and members of God's household.

And because of this peace that God created through his Son, it then has a lot of implications for us as Christians today, especially in the way we live our lives.

And one implication of that is that Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, have the responsibility to keep that peace and unity.

In other words, we are to keep that oneness that is a gift of God. And that is what Paul is emphasizing here in Ephesians 4, verse 1 to 6.

And when you read this passage, you will see that Paul's emphasis is unmistakable here. Seven times in this passage alone, Paul uses the word one as a quantifier.

[ 9 : 28 ] One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God.

And so Paul begins chapter 4 by urging the Ephesian Christians to live a life worthy of their calling that they have received. This is not the life that they have achieved, but rather the life that they have received.

And that includes the unity that they have between Jews and Gentiles by believing in the same gospel. And that's why Paul goes on in verse 3 of our passage this morning by saying, make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

This unity is for them as well as for us today, that is for us to keep, not to create the unity. In other words, this is God's work.

That's why Paul says it's the unity of the Spirit. It's a unity that belongs to the Spirit or from the Spirit. And so what then is the implication for us or for the Church of this oneness that Paul is emphasizing here?

[ 11 : 04 ] Well, one implication of it is that Christ has only one body. Christ has only one body. You know, in the New Testament, the word body is actually a metaphor that is often used to refer to the Church.

That is, a body of believers everywhere and at all times, in all ages, who believe Jesus as Lord and Savior and therefore have been redeemed by His blood.

God. These are the people who were brought out of the realm of darkness into light. These are the people who have been adopted into God's family and became His treasured possession.

And for this body of Christ, they have only one head, that is, Jesus Christ Himself. All who profess to believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior, regardless of their Church denominations, they are all

under that one head.

There is no such thing as a Baptist Christ. There is no such thing as a Presbyterian Christ. There is no such thing as an Anglican Christ or an SIB Christ.

[ 12 : 27 ] There is no such thing. There is only one Christ and He has only one body, the Church, believers everywhere in all ages.

The universal Church consists of all who truly belong to Christ. Now, of course, just because we believe in the universal body of Christ doesn't negate the fact that we have a local church in one particular place at one particular time.

But these local churches are the visible expressions of that one universal Church. These local expressions may differ from one local Church to another, yet we are still one in the body of Christ nonetheless.

Now, the second implication of that oneness for the Church is that we then have one God to believe and one Gospel to proclaim.

and this one God and one Gospel are actually tied together. The Church unity comes from the unity of our Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[ 13 : 47 ] In other words, our unity in the body of Christ is a reflection of the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

If there is no Triune God, then there is no Gospel for us to proclaim. It is that one Spirit that gathers us as God's people.

It is that one Lord who redeems us from our sins. And it is also that one Father who adopts us into His family.

So the Gospel is very much tied to the nature of our God. And because this unity that we have as Christians is a reflection of the unity of our Triune God, therefore Christians are united at a far deeper level than just organizational structures.

our first allegiance is to Christ and to His Gospel, not to our church organizations or denominations.

[ 14 : 59 ] Denominations may differ in church government, in our worship style, yes, in our secondary doctrines, yes, but all who truly trust in Christ and whole to the Apostolic Gospel belong to Christ's one church.

Therefore, our first identity as Christians is not denominational. It is our union with Christ. And so, since this unity is given to us in and through Christ, it is therefore right for us to pursue unity among the body of Christ.

and we do that by refusing gossip, division, or unnecessary quarrels in the body of Christ.

So, friends, that's the oneness part of the Nicene Creed. Now, what the Creed says next is that the church is holy.

The church is holy. When we hear that the church is holy, perhaps, a question that comes to many of our minds now here is this.

[ 16 : 21 ] How can the church be holy when it is filled with sinners? In what sense is the church holy?

Well, to answer that, the answer to that is that the holiness first describes our status before God and then our calling.

Let me repeat that. The holiness first describes our status before God then only our calling. And we shall look at these two senses of holiness each in turn.

First, we are holy because God has set us apart. Holy because God has set us apart. You know in the Bible, the holy or holiness word group, kadosh in Hebrew or hagios in Greek often refers to something or someone that has been set apart by God and for God.

in the Old Testament, for example, we see the nation of Israel who has been set apart by God as his own treasured possession.

[ 17 : 42 ] And then within that nation of Israel, we also see the tribe of Levi being set apart from all the other tribes within the nation of Israel to exclusively become priests and to take care of the tabernacle.

And in the Old Testament as well, not only people being set apart, but objects and places as well.

The Ark of Covenant, for example, the tabernacle structure and specific anointing oils were deemed holy, being set apart for specific use.

And so touching or using them for common everyday purposes was actually forbidden. forbidden.

And this is the primary idea of holiness in the Old Testament, being set apart.

In this sense, it has nothing to do with the holiness or the cleanness of the people or even the objects being set apart. It is entirely the work of God.

And this idea of being set apart by God and for God is then carried along in the New Testament as well. You see, just like in the Old Testament, God has chosen his people to belong to him.

[ 19 : 07 ] And these people consist of both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. In other words, those whom God has set apart to be holy are the church, the Christian believers, us today, you and I.

The church is holy because Christ has cleansed her through his blood. Our holiness then, as a church, first and foremost, is referring to our position and status before God, before it is our calling. And I think this is best seen in Paul's greetings in his first letter to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 2, Paul describes the church in Corinthians as this, quote, those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people.

Now, for those of you who are familiar with the book of 1 Corinthians, you know that the Corinthians Christians are far from holy, morally speaking. These are the people who had disunity in their church.

These are the people who committed sexual immorality. They sued each other in public lawsuits and many other things that we would not associate with the word holy.

[ 20 : 44 ] Yet, yet, Paul, at the beginning of his letter, still describes them as sanctified and holy, not referring to their actions or deeds, but their position and status before God.

And that is our status as Christians today as well, isn't it? we have been set apart by God and for God to belong to him and to be his treasured possession.

By the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we have all been sanctified. If we belong to Christ, then we are already holy.

Holiness is first God's gracious word, before it becomes our responsibility. The church is not holy because the members are morally perfect.

She is holy because she belongs to a holy God. So that's first. The second one is holy in our daily living.

[ 22 : 06 ] Just because our status before God is holy now, it doesn't stop there. Because we belong to a holy God, therefore we are now called to live differently.

Coming back to Ephesians chapter 4, notice again how Paul begins verse 1. He says, as a prisoner of the Lord, then I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Since we now have a new status, since we now have a new identity before God, namely we are holy people of God, then our conduct, our deed should match that new identity.

If you read in Ephesians chapter 4, especially from verse 17 onwards, Paul gives a lot of practical instructions for Ephesian Christians.

They are not to live like the Gentiles do. They are to put off falsehood and to speak truthfully to their neighbor, to get rid of all sexual immorality, and for wives to submit to their husbands, and the husbands to love their wives, and so on and so forth.

[ 23 : 22 ] These instructions are all part of living a life worthy of their calling to be holy. They are given these instructions to live a holy living precisely because they are now already holy.

That's the point. And I think this is our calling as well, isn't it? We too, we too are called to live a life worthy of our calling.

We too are called to be holy. We demonstrate holiness in our daily living by our humility, by our gentleness, by our passions, and bearing one another in love, as Paul says in verse 2.

We are to pursue holiness through repentance, through our obedience, and Christ-like character. And as Christians, these are not optional virtues.

They are evidence that God's holy people are being transformed. So a holy church is not a church without sinners.

[ 24 : 35 ] It is a church where sinners are continually being sanctified by God's word and by his spirit. And next in the creed is the Catholic church.

perhaps there is no word that is more misunderstood than the word Catholic with the small c. For many modern Christians today, when we hear the word Catholic, I suspect that we immediately have the Roman Catholic Church in our minds, isn't it?

However, the Nicene Creed cannot be referring to the Roman Catholic Church. since by the time the creed was written in 325 AD and then finalized in 381 AD, there was no Roman Catholic Church

as an institution, at least not yet.

So the Roman Catholic Church only became a formal institution in 1054 AD, and that is about 670 years after the Nicene Creed was written.

Catholic So, what does the creed mean when it uses the word Catholic? Well, the word simply means universal or according to the whole.

[ 26 : 08 ] That's what it is. But this then begs another question, isn't it? What does it mean for the Church to be universal? universal? Well, it means at least two things.

Number one, that the Church belongs to every nation. Church belong to every nation. This is another way of saying that Christ did not die only for one particular race or one culture only.

No. Christ's redemption is sufficient for all people. And because Christ's redemption is sufficient for all people, it is unsurprising then to see that His Church includes believers from every nation, every language, every tribe, and every generation.

So the Church is global and universal. It is not only tied to one particular race in one particular geographical area at one particular time.

No. John's revelation of heaven describes clearly what he sees about the Church.

[ 27 : 28 ] In Revelation chapter 7 verse 9, he says, After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

And that is a great picture of the diversity that we have in the universal Church of Christ, isn't it? In the new heaven and in the new earth, we will see our Chinese, our Iban, our Bidayu, our white, our brown, our yellow friends.

They are all there in heaven. Our local church, or maybe our denomination at the moment, are perhaps not as diverse, ethnically speaking, but the church is far larger than our local congregation or denomination because the church is universal.

And that also means that the church spans history. That means to say that the church is one big family across time.

the church is not tied to only one particular generation. But we worship with the same faith confessed by believers all throughout the 20th centuries.

[ 29 : 07 ] And that also means that we are not inventing Christianity. We are merely receiving it. Friends, how beautiful it is to know that we have family from all around the world, world, isn't it?

That's why this small sea Catholic enlarges our heart. It teaches us to rejoice when other faithful churches flourish.

It teaches us to pray for persecuted Christians all around the world. It teaches us to recognize gospel-believing Christians from different cultures as members of the same family.

And this also should encourage us to cultivate a Catholic vision by praying for gospel churches around the world and partnering with faithful believers across denominational lines where appropriate.

it. And not only that, this also should guard us from denominational pride.

[ 30 : 19 ] Recognizing that we are part of the universal church should make us realize that there are other faithful churches around as well as denominations.

fourth and lastly, the creed says that the church is apostolic.

Apostolic. Today, some might think that refers to having modern apostles, but nothing further from the truth. The New Testament gives us a different emphasis, actually.

the church is apostolic because it is founded upon the teaching of Christ's apostles. Earlier in the book of Ephesians, Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 20, that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.

And then in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11, Paul also says that the apostles and the prophets are among the gifts that Christ gave to the church.

[ 31 : 37 ] And so, the teaching of the apostles is the foundation of the church. And just like any other foundation, in any construction work, foundation is only laid once.

Nobody does construction, laying foundations after foundation after foundation, nobody does that. The foundation only laid once.

And it is apt that the apostles become the foundation on which the church stands because they were eyewitnesses of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

And they were specially commissioned by Christ himself. themselves. And today, their teaching is preserved for us in the Holy Scripture.

Therefore, an apostolic church is one that is faithfully preaches the Scripture, not human traditions, not human philosophies.

[ 32 : 45 ] An apostolic church is the one that preserves the apostolic gospel, not the distorted or truncated gospel. An apostolic church is the one that rejects false teaching, and the one that submits to Christ's authority through his word.

And this is precisely why the Nicene Creed was written. It defended apostolic truth against false doctrines. friends, being an apostolic church is not about having modern apostles proclaiming to us new revelations, but it is about faithfully proclaiming the old gospel once delivered to the saints. you see, our authority as a church is not found in personalities, even in our traditions, in contemporary trends, no.

But our authority lies in the apostolic scriptures. And that also means if we want to remain apostolic, we do it by submitting every belief and practice to scripture, testing all teachings against apostolic gospel, and refusing innovations that contradict God's word.

That's what it means to be an apostolic church. So friends, the Nicene Creed gives us four beautiful descriptions of Christ's church.

[ 34 : 35 ] The church is one because there is one Lord, one spirit, one faith, and one body. The church is holy because Christ has set his people apart and is making them holy.

The church is Catholic because Christ gathers one people from every nation and every age. And the church is apostolic because the church stands upon the apostles' gospel recorded in the holy scripture.

church belongs together. You see, friends, these four marks of the church belong together. If we lose unity, we deny Christ's body.

If we lose holiness, we fail to reflect Christ's character. If we lose Catholicity, we shrink Christ's global family to our own tribe.

and if we lose apostolicity, we lose the gospel itself. Therefore, brothers and sisters, let us strive to be a church that visibly reflects what Christ has already made his church to be.

[ 36 : 05 ] One holy Catholic and apostolic church. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for making us one people through your Son, Jesus Christ.

Thank you that we belong to your one holy Catholic and apostolic church. Help us to preserve the unity you have given us to live holy lives that honor you, to love your people throughout the world and to remain faithful to the teaching of your apostles as revealed in your word.

Father, we pray, may our church reflect the beauty of Christ so that others may see your grace and give glory to you. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.