

Non-Negotiables

2/18/2024 — 3/24/2024

Overview

In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas: In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.

That is a great sentiment. And it has been thrown around a lot lately in our denomination. However, it has one major flaw: it doesn't define what is essential and what is non-essential. The statement alone, detached from a tradition, is about as useful as a theology that says, "Other than God, meaning is all subjective." Both statements are true but not helpful in a vacuum.

This series, *Non-Negotiables*, will use the Lenten season to help us define some of the essential beliefs of our faith. Particularly, with the Apostle's Creed as our guide, we will define the non-negotiables about God. During the six weeks, we will focus on two aspects of each person of the Trinity. We will dive into the God that is almighty and creator, the Christ who is eternal and temporal, and the Holy Spirit who guides the church and provides assurance.

Each week we will incorporate the Apostle's Creed in worship. Some weeks, it can simply be a corporate affirmation of the creed. However, we should also look for creative and new uses.

Rev. Michael will teach a companion class to this series on Sunday evenings during Lent. The class will explore areas of religious belief where there is disagreement. The sermons in worship will cover our non-negotiables (essential beliefs), and the evening will be about the non-essentials where there is room for liberty.

Each sermon should accomplish these objectives:

- Articulate one unique character about the nature of God.
- Articulate the reason each section of the Apostle's Creed is a non-negotiable.
- Tie the nature of God to the ethos of the Lenten season.
- Inspire worshipers to learn more about their personal relationship with God.

Sermon Schedule

Sunday	Sermon Title	Scripture	Lead Writer	Supplemental Scriptures
2/18/24	God Almighty	Acts 17:22-31	Michael	Genesis 17:1-8, Exodus 6:2-4, 2 Corinthians 6:16-18
2/25/24	God Creator	Genesis 1:1-5, 2:4b-9	Woods	Isaiah 44:23-24, Romans 8:18-25
3/3/24	Jesus in Eternity	John 1:1-14	Michael	Hebrews 1:8-12
3/10/24	Jesus in History	John 3:14-21	Woods	Ephesians 2:1-10, Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
3/17/24	The Holy Spirit's Church	Acts 15:6-11	Michael	1 Corinthians 12:12-31
3/24/24	The Holy Spirit's Assurance (Palm Sunday)	Mark 11:1-11	Woods	Psalm 31:9-16, Romans 8:1-30

Week 1 | God Almighty

I believe in God, the Father almighty.

- "The Hebrew name, שׁדַּי, Shaddai, signifies also all-sufficient, or all-bountiful. See Gen. 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25. Of the omnipotence of God, we have a most ample revelation in the Scriptures, expressed in the most sublime language."
- "Ample, however, as are these views of the power of God, the subject is not exhausted. As, when the Scriptures speak of the eternity of God, they declare it so as to give us a mere glimpse of that fearful peculiarity of the divine nature, that God is the fountain of being to himself, and that he is eternal, because he

is the "I am;" so we are taught not to measure God's omnipotence by the actual displays of it which we see around us. These are the manifestations of the fact, but not the measure of the attribute; and should we resort to the discoveries of modern philosophy, which, by the help of instruments, has so greatly enlarged the known boundaries of the visible universe, and add to the stars which are visible to the naked eye, those new exhibitions of the divine power in the nebulous appearances of the heavens which are resolvable into myriads of distinct celestial luminaries, whose immense distances commingle their light before it reaches our eyes; we thus almost infinitely expand the circle of created existence, and enter upon a formerly unknown and overwhelming range of divine operation. But still we are only reminded, that his power is truly almighty and measureless—"Lo, all these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is known of him, and the thunder of his power who can understand?" It is a mighty conception that we form of a power from which all other power is derived, and to which it is subordinate; which nothing can oppose; which can beat down and annihilate all other power whatever; which operates in the most perfect manner, at once, in an instant, with the utmost ease; but the Scriptures lead us to the contemplation of greater and even unfathomable depths. The omnipotence of God is inconceivable and boundless. It arises from the infinite perfection of God, that his power can never be actually exhausted; and, in every imaginable instant in eternity, that inexhaustible power of God can, if it please him, be adding either more creatures to those in existence, or greater perfection to them; since "it belongs to self-existent being, to be always full and communicative, and, to the communicated contingent being, to be ever empty and craving."

- Richard Watson, "Almighty," A Biblical and Theological Dictionary (New York: Lane & Scott, 1851), 43.

Week 2 | God Creator

- Creator of heaven and earth,
- "From the annunciation by Moses of a divine existence who was "in the beginning," before all things, the very first step is to the display of his almighty power in the creation out of nothing, and the immediate arrangement in order

and perfection, of the "heaven and the earth;" by which is meant, not this globe only with its atmosphere, or even with its own celestial system, but the universe itself; for "he made the stars also." We are thus at once placed in the presence of an agent of unbounded power; for we must all feel that a being which could create such a world as this, must, beyond all comparison, possess a power greater than any which we experience in ourselves, than any which we observe in other visible agents, and to which we are not authorized by our observation or knowledge to assign any limits of space or duration.

- "Of these amazing views of the omnipotence of God, spread almost through every page of the Scriptures, the power lies in their truth. They are not eastern exaggerations, mistaken for sublimity. Every thing in nature answers to them, and renews from age to age the energy of the impression which they cannot but make on the reflecting mind. The order of the astral revolutions indicates the constant presence of an invisible but incomprehensible power. The seas hurl the weight of their billows upon the rising shores, but every where find a "bound fixed by a perpetual decree." The tides reach their height; if they flowed on for a few hours, the earth would change places with the bed of the sea; but, under an invisible control, they become refluent. The expression, "He toucheth the mountains and they smoke," is not mere imagery:—every volcano is a testimony of its truth; and earthquakes proclaim, that, before him, "the pillars of the world tremble." Men collected into armies, or populous nations, give us vast ideas of human power; but let an army be placed amidst the sand storms and burning winds of the desert, as, in the east; or, before "his frost," as in our own day in Russia, where one of the mightiest armaments was seen retreating before, or perishing under, an unexpected visitation of snow and storm; or let the utterly helpless state of a populous country which has been visited by famine, or by a resistless pestilential disease, be reflected upon; and we feel that it is scarcely a figure of speech to say, that "all nations before him are less than nothing and vanity."
- Richard Watson, "Almighty," *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1851), 42.

Week 3 | Jesus in Eternity

- Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,... and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
- "The self-existent being, says the learned Dr. Clarke, must of necessity be eternal. The ideas of eternity and self-existence are so closely connected, that because something must of necessity be eternal, independently and without any outward cause of its being, therefore it must necessarily be self-existent; and because it is impossible but something must be self-existent, therefore it is necessary that it must likewise be eternal. To be self-existent, is to exist by an absolute necessity in the nature of the thing itself. Now this necessity being absolute, and not depending upon any thing external, must be always unalterably the same; nothing being alterable but what is capable of being affected by somewhat without itself. That being therefore which has no other cause of its existence but the absolute necessity of its own nature, must of necessity have existed from everlasting, without beginning; and must of necessity exist to everlasting, without end.
On the eternal duration of the divine Being, many have held a metaphysical refinement. "The eternal existence of God," it is said, "is not to be considered as successive; the ideas we gain from time are not to be allowed in our conceptions of his duration. As he fills all space with his immensity, he fills all duration with his eternity; and with him eternity is nunc stans, a permanent now, incapable of the relations of past, present, and future."
- Richard Watson, "Eternity," A Biblical and Theological Dictionary (New York: Lane & Scott, 1851), 355.

Week 4 | Jesus in History

- Not
- (A). Attempts to Harmonize the Gospels
 - The compiling of the Christian canonical Gospels into a single account. This is presented as either a single, merged narrative, or an aligned format with one column for each Gospel. Early examples and editors of harmonies of Gospels include:
 - The Diatessaron (Tatian);
 - Ammonian Sections (Ammonius of Alexandria);
 - Harmony of the Gospels (Augustine).
 - John D. Barry et al., eds., "Harmony of Gospels," The Lexham Bible Dictionary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
- or
- (B.) Quests for the Historical Jesus
 - The scholarly endeavor of the "Quest" for Jesus is ultimately a quest for knowledge. As such, most scholars in pursuit of the historical Jesus are interested in exploring Jesus as He was, not what Jesus has become and what He means for contemporary faith.
 - The "historical Jesus" can be defined as a scholarly construct that incorporates but is not limited to the multiple biblical portraits of Jesus. Rather than attempting to harmonize the canonical Gospels or constructing Jesus based on the elements that cohere in these Gospels, most historians of Jesus' life and teachings construct a narrative based on historical, social-scientific, and religious study. In short, the "historical Jesus" is an ongoing reconstruction that attempts to "set the record straight."
 - Anthony Le Donne, "Jesus, Historical, Quest for," ed. John D. Barry et al., The Lexham Bible Dictionary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
- But rather that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven.

Week 5 | The Holy Spirit's Church

- I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
- In the era of the New Testament, Jesus' ministry was initially confined to Israel (with some minor exceptions) but then took on a universal scope after the resurrection. In Matthew 28, Christ commissioned the disciples to go to all nations and to baptize them in the triune name. Along with this, he promised his presence in their ministry. This harkens back to Christ's earlier statement in Matthew 18: that wherever people gather in his name he will be present in their midst. This suggests that God's people can be universally identified not with a particular ethnicity, nation, or set of institutional structures but with the preaching of Christ's word and his personal presence in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Therefore, instead of calling the people of God "Israel" (which refers to a specific ethnicity and nation), the New Testament documents call the people of God the "church" (ecclesia). Ecclesia literally means "called out." Read in this light, the church is the universal gathering of Jews and Gentiles who are defined by being "called out" by the word of God. Hence, the catholicity of the church would be inexorably tied up with the ministry of the word of God, which calls and preserves the people of God in each generation.
- In the New Testament, the term ecclesia is applied to individual gatherings of the people of God, such as the apostle Paul's application of the term to the Christian community at Corinth or Rome. In some of the later Pauline Epistles, Paul applies it to the universal people of God present among all peoples and nations. All in the church are members of God's household and are the body of Christ. It is the presence of the risen Christ in the power of the Spirit that universally binds the people of God at all times and places together into one body.
- Jack Kilcrease, "The Church As Universal," in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

Week 6 | The Holy Spirit's Assurance

- the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.
- In the OT Heb. 'āman means "support," hence "confide in, trust." Jesus repeatedly used this word "amen" to express the trustworthiness and abiding certainty of His sayings. Heb. 'emet is the most important OT word for "truth." In Jer. 14:13 it occurs with šālôm, "assured peace," NEB "lasting prosperity"—but this is the lie of false prophets.
- The NT terms are GK. pístis, "faith," plērōō, "fill," plērophoría, "bearing fullness," and hypóstasis, "firm conviction" or else "essential reality." This last word is difficult, because of the possible philosophical connotations. Perhaps the best suggestion is the RV mg, "the giving substance to." Faith makes the things hoped for real to the soul. Cf. He. 1:3.
- The confidence of faith is based not on "works of righteousness which we have done" (cf. Tit. 3:4f, AV) but on the high-priesthood and atoning sacrifice of Christ (He. 10:21f; cf. v 19, "boldness to enter ... by the blood of Jesus," AV). Assurance is the soul's apprehension of its complete emancipation from the power of evil and from consequent judgment, through the atoning grace of Christ. It is the exact opposite of self-confidence, being a joyous appropriation and experience of the fullness of Christ—a glad sense of security, freedom, and eternal life in Him.
- This doctrine is of immeasurable importance to the life of the Church and of the individual believer, as a life of spiritual doubt and uncertainty contradicts the ideal of liberty in Christ Jesus which is the natural and necessary fruit of "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit ... shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior." Paul unhesitatingly said, "I know" (2 Tim. 1:12)—a word which, oft-repeated in 1 John, furnishes the groundwork of glad assurance that runs through the entire Epistle. For the classic passage on "full assurance" see Col. 2:1–10.
- D. M. Pratt, "Assurance," ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 332.