

# The First Article of the Apostles' Creed

*The Creed and Luther's Small Catechism*

*Sunday, October 4, 2026*

*Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **The Open Hand**

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

We have said those words so many times that we can say them almost without thinking. Maker of heaven and earth. Those are enormous words. They take in everything from the farthest star to the ground beneath our feet. But the explanation brings them down to something personal: “I believe that God has made me and all creatures.” Not simply that God created the universe long ago. God made me.

That is quite a confession in our world. We live in a culture that tells us we make ourselves. Define yourself. Discover yourself. Reinvent yourself. Decide who you are. But the Christian confession begins somewhere else. Before I ever did anything or decided anything about myself, God made me. I am first of all a creature. My life is not an accident. Genesis says, “God created man in his own image.” The confession is clear: “I believe that God has made me.”

There is an old saying that has been attributed to Albert Einstein: “There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.” The First Article teaches us to live the second way. Not by pretending that everything is spectacular, but by opening our eyes to how much of what we call ordinary is actually gift.

God “has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.” Think about that one sentence. Our eyes opened this morning. Our lungs kept breathing all night while we were asleep. Our hearts kept beating. Our minds woke up and knew

who we were. Most mornings we do not marvel at any of it. We assume it will work again today because it worked yesterday.

But faith teaches us to look at ourselves differently. Our eyes are gifts. Our ears are gifts. Our minds are gifts. Our bodies are gifts. Our lives are gifts. Before we ever get to the things God has put around us, our very existence has been received from Him.

And God did not create us and walk away. “He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, family, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.” I especially like those two words: richly and daily. We tend to look for God in the extraordinary. Scripture teaches us to recognize His generosity in the ordinary.

Consider the food we eat. We open the refrigerator. We walk through a grocery store and put something in the cart. It does not seem miraculous. But think backward. Somebody stocked that shelf. Somebody drove the truck. Somebody packaged the food. Somebody harvested it. Somebody planted it. Somewhere there was soil and seed, rain and sunshine. There were farmers and factory workers and mechanics and truck drivers and store clerks. Thousands of things had to happen before that ordinary piece of food arrived in our hands.

We see the grocery store. Faith learns to see behind those ordinary means the open hand of God. That is how God normally provides. He does not usually drop dinner out of heaven. He provides through His creation and through the work of other people. The farmer serves people he will never meet. The truck driver serves people he will never meet. God hides His giving behind ordinary human hands.

Jesus teaches us to look at creation this way. “Look at the birds of the air,” He says. They do not sow or reap, “and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.” Then He points to the flowers: “Consider the lilies of the field.” They do not labor or spin, and yet God clothes them with beauty. If your Father feeds the birds and clothes the grass, will He not care for you?

That does not mean Christians never go hungry or struggle to pay the bills. Jesus Himself knew hunger. He knew what it was to have nowhere to lay His head. But He teaches us to receive what sustains our lives as coming finally from the Father's hand.

And that exposes something in us. We become so accustomed to the gifts that we forget the Giver. We complain about what we do not have while standing knee-deep in what God has already given. We say, "My house, my money, my body, my time," as though we had created any of them ourselves. The First Article teaches us to open our eyes. I am surrounded by gifts.

### **The Hand We Cannot See**

Then comes something harder to confess: "He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil."

And someone may reasonably ask, "Does He?"

Christians get cancer. Christians lose jobs. Christians get into accidents. Christians are betrayed. Christians bury husbands and wives and parents and sometimes even children. Christians suffer. Christians die. So those words cannot mean that faith puts an invisible fence around a Christian through which nothing painful can ever pass.

Part of God's protection is hidden from us. We know the dangers that reached us. We have no idea how many did not. We remember the accident that happened. We cannot count the ones that almost happened. We remember the disease we contracted. We do not know how many our bodies fought off without our ever knowing it. There may be a thousand ways God has protected us that we will never discover in this life.

And again, God usually protects through ordinary means. Parents protect children. Doctors treat disease. Medicines fight infection. Someone puts salt on an icy road. Someone reminds us to fasten a seat belt. We call these ordinary things. Faith recognizes God's providence working through them.

Sometimes the trouble that reaches us is of our own making. God has never promised to suspend cause and effect every time we do something foolish. Sin has consequences. But not every sorrow can be traced to someone's particular sin. We live in a fallen creation. Bodies fail. People suffer. Death remains. And still we confess, "He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil."

Paul says that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. That does not mean suffering is good. But God is able to work even through what hurts us. What evil intends to tear down, God can use to deepen faith and teach us to hope in Him.

### **The Empty Tomb**

But there is an even greater reason Christians can confess God's protection. Look at Jesus.

If suffering meant that God had abandoned someone, what would we say about the cross? Jesus suffered innocently. He was rejected, beaten, mocked, crucified, and killed. If anyone at the foot of the cross had judged God's faithfulness only by what could be seen at that moment, it would have looked as though evil had won.

Then came Easter morning. The Father raised His Son from the dead.

That changes what we mean when we say that God guards and protects us from evil. It does not mean evil can never hurt us. Evil can hurt terribly. It does not mean death cannot touch us. Unless Christ returns first, death will touch every one of us. It means evil cannot finally have us.

The God who made you has not surrendered you. That is why the Creed that begins with "Maker of heaven and earth" ends with "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." The Creator is going to reclaim His creation. The God who gave you this body will raise it from the dead.

So even when God's protection is difficult to see, we do not have to guess His heart. We look at Jesus. We look at the cross. We look at the empty tomb.

Why does God do all of this? Why did He make me? Why does He give, provide, preserve, and protect?

“All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”

There is the heart of the First Article. God does not look down from heaven every morning, check how well we behaved yesterday, and decide whether we deserve another day of His goodness. He does not give sunshine because we earned it. He does not make our hearts beat because we have been particularly faithful. He gives because He is good. He provides because He is merciful. He cares for His creatures because that is the Father’s heart.

And if you ever wonder whether that really is the Father’s heart toward you, look again at His Son. The Father who gives you food gave you Jesus. The Father who clothes you gave His Son to cover your sin. The Father who preserves your earthly life gave His Son so that even death cannot rob you of eternal life. The greatest gift of the Father is not something growing in a field or sitting in your refrigerator. The greatest gift of the Father is His Son, given into death for sinners and raised again for our salvation.

### **The Giver Still Giving**

Before you did anything for God this morning, God was already giving to you. Before you remembered to thank Him, He was already preserving you. Before you confessed your sins, He had already given His Son to atone for them. Even while we forget the Giver, the Giver keeps giving.

That is why the First Article is about much more than where the universe came from. It is a confession about the God in whose generosity you are living at this very moment.

“I believe that God has made me.” He has given me this body and soul. He richly and daily provides everything I need. He defends me, guards me, and protects me. And He does all of it “out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”

So what remains for us? “For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.” Notice the order. We do not serve God so that He will become generous. We do not obey Him so that He will decide to provide. We do not earn the Father’s goodness. He gives first.

The creature who has received everything turns toward the Creator in thanksgiving. We thank and praise Him with our lips. We serve Him by serving the people He has placed around us. We obey Him by receiving His Word and His will as good.

We are not accidents trying to invent a meaning for our lives. We are God’s creatures. We are His handiwork. Our lives are lived from His open hand. And when we cannot see that hand, we can still see His heart, because the Father has shown it to us in His Son.

So let us live the second way. Not as though nothing is a miracle, but as though everything is. Our eyes this morning, the food in our hands, the breath in our lungs: all of it gift. And the Giver is still giving.

“I believe that God has made me.”

“For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.”

“This is most certainly true.”

Amen.

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