



**Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue  
in the City of New York**

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[www.SaintThomasChurch.org](http://www.SaintThomasChurch.org)

**Sunday, February 13, 2011**  
*The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany*

*Choral Evensong  
at 4pm*

+  
A Sermon by  
The Reverend Michael D. Spurlock  
+

*THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH*  
*(Apostles' Creed Series, Sermon 3)*

*When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Psalm 27.8*

As a continuation of our series on the Apostle's Creed, it is my task tonight to take up the line, "The Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth" and to do so we must rouse our minds to the contemplation of God. So, for these few minutes set aside your cares and abandon yourself to repose on your maker.

God is indeed your maker. From the first verses of scripture to the last, this truth is confirmed again and again. After the account of the creation of heaven, earth, sea, dry land and their creatures, God muses a moment and says, "Let us make man in our image."<sup>i</sup> In the Second Book of Kings<sup>ii</sup> and from the prophets Isaiah<sup>iii</sup> and Jeremiah, we hear the assertion that God has made heaven and earth, "Ah Lord God! behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."<sup>iv</sup> And in the fourth chapter of Revelation: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."<sup>v</sup>

But some of us don't believe just any old thing the bible says. In order for truth to feel really true, we have to come to it by our own reasoning. We puzzle things out by asking questions like, "Do I exist?" If you have answered that question in the negative, you are excused from the rest of this sermon. If however, you believe, like me, that you do exist, we can extend our questioning to the how and why of our existence. Did we create ourselves, or did some thing or did some one make us? Reason tells us that creatures don't make themselves but are made by creators, in the way that babies don't make themselves, mummies and daddies make babies. (Not *exactly* the same in this instance.)

The next question we might ask then is, "Am I creator, or an I creature?" In the interest of time, I'll break it to you: you are creature; get over it. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."<sup>vi</sup>

Heaven, earth, you, me and everyone else. It seems you need a pretty mighty creator to bring all this into existence. You would probably need an Almighty maker and, again, that is what scripture affirms.

God said to Abraham and Israel, "I am God Almighty."<sup>vii</sup> This word, almighty, is very often thought to mean omnipotent, or all-powerful. And indeed we might think so. The angel Gabriel tells Mary, "For with God nothing shall be impossible."<sup>viii</sup> Jesus prays, "Abba, all things are possible with you."<sup>ix</sup> Consider the power that God exhibits in raising his son from the dead. So it would seem that God's almightiness has everything to do with his having the power to do anything. But it doesn't. God's almightiness has more to do with his *being* than with his power.

Before God created the world, he had a choice whether nor not to make it, or to not make it. Once God exercised the decision to be maker of heaven and earth, the option to not be maker of heaven and earth is closed off to him.

Can God tell lies? Can God pervert justice? Can he make what is true, untrue? No, God cannot do any of those things. His very nature, being the supreme good, prevents him from doing any of those things that are less than supremely good.

Anselm of Canterbury affirmed that we find God to be something which is highest of all and that nothing else can be thought of better than he is. In fact, he's so supremely good, that he's more than just the best thought, he is greater than can be thought.<sup>x</sup>

So, if God is greater than we can even think he is, we might resist the notion that God is somehow limited. But take comfort in that he is limited by his own nature. If God were somehow vulnerable to anything contrary to his own nature and being, he would then be subject to forces or powers outside himself. If that were the case, then we would have found something more mighty than God. It is God's almighty-ness that makes the distinction between is-God and not-God distinct.

Generations have pondered the questions of God's nature and our own beliefs. The prophet Isaiah said that "unless you believe, you shall not understand."<sup>xi</sup> Our belief is in *one* God, who is an Almighty maker of creatures above and below, we are some of those creatures. But as important as God's role as creator seems to us, and it seems especially important to those of us who are existing because of it, Creator is not God's most eternal or important nature. It's his Fatherhood that is preeminent.

As mentioned earlier, there was a moment when God had the option to not be creator, but there has never been a time when God has not been Father. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."<sup>xii</sup> In these opening verses of his gospel, John is talking about Jesus, the co-eternal son, begotten before all worlds were made. In the beginning, before God was maker of heaven and earth, he lived in eternity with his only Son, whom he loved and to whom he was Father. This, before he ever mused, "let us make man in our image."

Perhaps this is why in the Old Testament there are comparatively very few instances of God addressed as Father, but in the New Testament its usage is rampant and most especially championed by Jesus. It is through the incarnate son that God's fatherhood becomes so evident, important, and necessary. It is necessary to us, because it is through the incarnate Son that we become more than creatures of God, but are given the power to become children of God.<sup>xiii</sup> The eternal Father of the eternal son, becomes

*Our Father...*

One of the greatest minds to ever ponder these and many more questions related to the nature of God and the mysteries of our faith was Thomas Aquinas. It was said he could produce as much text in a day as five average men and could dictate four manuscripts to four different scribes at the same time.

In the last year of his life, during the celebration of Mass, Thomas fell into a deep ecstasy. Afterwards, he put down his pen and no one could induce him to pick it up again. Having spent a life seeking God's face, in that moment he must have seen it and this is how he summed up his theological work: I count everything that I have written as straw to be burned in the face of such glory as has been revealed to me.

When we stand and recite the words, I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, those words are *vain*, if we do not *know* the God about which we speak. Faith is never just a matter of intellectual assent; but rather the deep sighing and longing of our heart and soul for the loving, adoring, Father who himself loves, adores and sustains us.

*When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.*

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<sup>i</sup> Gn 1.26

<sup>ii</sup> 2 Ki 19.15

<sup>iii</sup> Isa 37.16

<sup>iv</sup> Jer 32.17

<sup>v</sup> Rev 4.11

<sup>vi</sup> Ps 53.1

<sup>vii</sup> Gn 17.1, 35.11; Nu 24.4

<sup>viii</sup> Lk 1.37

<sup>ix</sup> Mk 14.36

<sup>x</sup> Anselm. *Proslogion*, xiv, xv (Much of the theology herein is informed by Anselm.)

<sup>xi</sup> Isa 7.9 LXX

<sup>xii</sup> Jn 1.1

<sup>xiii</sup> Jn 1.12