

Confirmation Sunday 10

May 26, 2010

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Pentecost Sunday is the day we acknowledge the arrival of the promised Spirit.

Jesus as he prepared to leave this world last week told the apostles to wait for the arrival of another, an advocate the Spirit whom he would send to walk along side them, to guide and lead them in life. They waited yet little did they know when it arrived how it would affect their lives. When the Spirit arrived they knew it and so did everyone else around them.

Today we often do not find such visible signs of the arrival of the Spirit, but it still comes. When you received the gift of the Holy Spirit you will never again be alone and it will never leave you alone. The Spirit like a wind arrives and starts pushing and pushing and pushing. Often we try to resist, but it continues to push us and it is scary. Especially for many of us as Lutherans this is a truly scary thought. After all after the Spirit arrives, it means that we will be asked to do something or we might be encouraged to get involved or worse yet that you would be invited to talk to someone about what you believe.

At the second service today, you will hear (have heard these) young people get up and do just that. I know how hard it is to put your thoughts and feelings about what you believe into words. One reason is once you put it into words and put them down on paper, it is hard to take it back. While at the same time these statements of faith for our confirmation students are not the end of what they believe, but a beginning. They do not provide the one and certain answer but doors to many other questions. For these young people as well as for all of you, what you believe about God does not or should not stay stagnate nor should it remain unchanged. For faith is an ever growing and changing part of your life. It does not stop just because you have reach your

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confirmation or you have arrived at the end of the mandatory time of attending Sunday school but continues throughout your whole life.

During their time in confirmation I work to help them to understand a couple things. The first is why this book, these holy scriptures are important to us as Christians. Unlike the apostles, we have not had the privilege of interacting, of watching Jesus or learning from Jesus during his time on earth. We need the scriptures to teach us, to inform us and to set an example for us to follow. I work to get them into the scriptures. Each week we opened the Bible, read and talk about the passages. We explored the verses we use each week as we sing the liturgy or recite the creed and the Lord's Prayer. The scriptures inform and guide our community life together as we gather for worship.

Scripture informs not only our way of worship but our way of life. This is the second thing I try to engrain within them during confirmation. It is not the memorization of certain verses, or knowing Luther's explanation to specific pieces of our faith that make a difference in their lives. It is how they reflect upon and apply what they believe to the decisions they make every day. How does believing that God loves you no matter what make a difference to you? How do you understand stewardship in light of God entrusting us with the care of all he has created? Do you view others differently because Jesus commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves or to love our enemies as we love him?

I do not know how you might have answered these questions. But hopefully you can acknowledge that having Christ a part of your life has and does make a difference for you. Because if it doesn't why are you here? How do you make it through the difficult days in life? When the suffering comes what lifts you up and sustains you? To whom do you give praise and thanks for the blessings in life?

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In many ways today is not just confirmation for these 5 youth, but is and can be an affirmation of your own baptism and a reaffirming of your own commitment of fulfilling the promises you have made. A reminder that the Holy Spirit is alive and active in your life as well. Not only for your own way of life but for the support of the whole community of faith gathered here. For we gather here in the name of Jesus so we might build up the whole body of Christ in this place. In doing so we are then strengthened and encouraged to reach out and build up the whole Christian church on earth.

Paul in Romans is clear about what it means to live as the body of Christ or as our reading for today puts it. '*We who are lead by the Spirit of God are children of God.*' For when the Spirit was sent, we received the spirit of adoption into the family of God making us all brothers and sisters with Christ our Savior. These things are already done for us, already a part of us. So how does this new way of life we have received make a difference in the way we live life. Paul is clear, that the Spirit of God does not work on its own, but bears witness to our adoption with our own spirit. This is how others come to know you are part of the community, part of the extended family of God at one with Christ.

While most of us grew up and continue to be a part of a loving and supportive family. Homes where we were encouraged and told we could accomplish whatever we put our mind to. Also when we failed or had set backs we had others there to offer us a hand and to help us up, to assist in dusting us off and getting back on track. This idea of adoption is one that we struggle to understand because we are surrounded by our family. We have the relationships we need to survive.

But that is not the case for all people. There are many members and former members of this community, this congregation who have for various reasons

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opened the doors of their homes and adopted young people into their families. In the adoption process that child is named, loved, cared for and considered as much a part of their family as anyone else with no distinction. The same thing happened for us when we were given the gift of the Spirit, adopted into the family of God. There is no distinction between us. By the power of the Spirit we are made one with Christ and one with each other.

Understanding we have received this gift of the Spirit, the spirit of adoption into the community and the family of God. We now have been called to a new way of life. We are set free to live as God would have us live and not as slaves to the world. We no longer need to live in fear of scarcity because our father gives to us all we need with abundance. We no longer need to live in fear of death because in Jesus rising he defeated death. We no longer need to live in fear of being alone because the Holy Spirit is here to walk along side us.

As the body of Christ, part of the family of God things will not always go our way, but we will have our family here with us to lift us up, to love us and to put us back on track. For the Spirit has arrived. As these young people reminded us in their statement of faith, when things get scary remember you are loved by your family and by your God. That Jesus lived an example for us to follow and has sent the Holy Spirit to walk along side us.

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

Pastor Michael