

“Home”
+ 5 Easter A Confirmation Sunday +
Acts 7:55-60; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14
May 18, 2014

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it! The texts for this morning’s message are the lessons and Gospel for this day.

Today’s Gospel is a wonderful text for Confirmation Sunday. In essence Jesus has gathered his disciples for deep discussion, is imparting important instructions to them as they prepare to go out into the world to minister in His name where they will learn so much more about what it means to trust in God, to rely on God’s constant love and forgiveness, where they will recall all they can of what He said to them, remember every scrap of the Holy Scriptures and the truths therein for their own personal use and to witness to others so that all might come to know Jesus as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

So it is for our five confirmands – so much left for them to learn about God and how to live out their lives as Christians in our ever-changing and challenging world. How apt the words of Peter for all of us to hunger and thirst for nurture from God’s Word like newborn babes for pure Spiritual milk. Every year I think of all I might have underscored better, all the things I could have taught them better, but we have gone over the six chief parts of the Catechism. Chaziti and Chad had an incredible insights on Confession and Absolution – what it means to truly to forgive (they are almost done being freshmen and just that extra year or two shows in the depth of their comments and understanding). Delaree has memorized the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed. Her Bible Story book was her favorite as a child. I’m not sure if she can name all 10 commandments but I know she had questions and stories to add as we covered each one. (Having taught her brother, Douglas, I knew there would be questions – some of the best I’ve ever heard). Mosi was our “go to” girl for lots of general Bible knowledge. Autumn – she was so little when I came to Jehovah – in Pre-K. All those blessings on her forehead until she studied the Lord’s Supper for her First Communion. Like her brother, Brad, she is a most thoughtful listener and she wants to teach Sunday School (did you hear that Janet & Joni?)

The last of the Six Chief Parts, Baptism, is what we celebrate with them today as they affirm their Baptismal faith in front of this family of believers. The Gospel couldn’t tie in more appropriately as Baptism is where God, through the Holy Spirit, works faith in our hearts, washes away all of our sins and places us in the family of faith. Wherever God’s people gather around the Word – learn and grow in Bible Study and hear God’s Word proclaimed, wherever Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are celebrated you, my dear confirmands will ALWAYS have a home. Walk in, sit down, listen, pray, participate and know you belong! I don’t know where life will lead the five of you – oh the places you might go – but know that you can walk into any congregation like I’ve just described and you belong – you are “at home.”

We moved quite often when I was young compared to other families I knew in those golden years of the 1950’s & 60’s. My mother worked full-time and we left one house because it was too big – too much for her to handle and my father had been ill. In the last house we lived in I never made a single neighborhood friend just concentrating on friends from church and high

school. When my friend and I were unloading part of a double move where my parents had an apartment in the city and a retirement home I looked at my buddy and said, “Wherever Mom, Dad and the green chairs are I guess its home.”

I cannot complain, however. Our family was never refugees like Mary & Joseph and the baby Jesus were when he was a little child. I’ve never lived in an occupied country with my religion openly mocked, my life in constant subtle or outright danger. So many people in the world have never had the safety and security we enjoy in this country our “home” here on earth. In the last year 33.5 million people throughout the world have had to flee their homes, displaced, seeking refuge because of war. In the conflicts in Africa rape is one of the weapons of war and two out of three women will be violated in this way and one out of three men.

It is difficult for me to wrap my mind around that kind of reality but danger like that surrounded Jesus and the disciples He would soon be leaving to go to the cross, to suffer and die for their sins and yours, mine, our confirmands – the sins of all people of all time. Plots were already hatched for His murder. Jesus and his followers are having a deep discussion in the midst of great turmoil and what does He tell them?

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you.. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

The design on your confirmation stoles is a rendering of the painting that hangs over the altar in Drews Chapel. The cross is easy to see: Jesus – the Way, the Truth, the Life. The dove (Holy Spirit) is also evident – as I mentioned it is the Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts and who calls us back to faith throughout our life, nudges us back into God’s Word, into worship and prayer – who guides us on our path toward that place Jesus has gone to prepare for us! So, where is God the Father? Do you see the crown above the crossbar? That is the Crown of the Creator of all that was and is and ever shall be – God who gives you a place in God’s family, God who has named and claimed you. In many ways Confirmation is misunderstood. It isn’t about your pledge, your promise, your ability to keep that promise in the years to come – it’s about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. The reading from Acts with Stephen being stoned for his faith – dying in martyrdom it might seem to put the emphasis on his courage but what does he see, what is opened up before his eyes? Jesus, Lord and God seated at the right hand of the Father. It is always and only about knowing Jesus as Savior, by grace, knowing that you are saved – God’s eternal gift to you – God Father, Son & Holy Spirit. That is Who we come to celebrate each Sunday – that is who we go out to serve – to give witness to in our lives – in Word and Deed – seeking out those who are lost, lonely, displaced and oppressed physically and spiritually so that they might know that they, too, always have a home here and now and forever that God, in great love, has prepared for them. AMEN

Amen. Now may our gracious God whose beloved Son Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, give us grace to walk with Him, to love as He loves and to share His risen life with all companions and those wandering, as we are headed for our home.