

## Pentecost 12 “Confirmation, what is it?” August 23 2020

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing unto You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen!

Confirmation, what is it? It may be easier to say what it isn't. It isn't a Sacrament. It wasn't commanded by Jesus or made a means of grace. It has no physical element to which God's Word has been attached.

It is not a graduation. It does not in any way mean that, in the future there is no need for these young people to study God's word and the basics of our faith as laid out in Luther's Small Catechism. For two of them, it does not even mean that they are being admitted to the Lord's Table to commune with all the saints and receive forgiveness of sins through Jesus very body and blood. It is not a work that saves us. We are saved by faith alone in God's work **for** us.

It often means that we will see less of these young people as they feel free of the need to be in church, to serve as acolytes, to pay attention to sermons and to study God's word. But it **should** not. What a strange phenomenon that is, don't you think? It is sadly ironic that right after promising to renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways, after confessing belief in Jesus Christ as God and Savior, after pledging their intent to live according to God's Word in faith, word and deed even in the face of death and to continue in this faith and Church in the face of all suffering even unto death, that we would worry about seeing less of them in the future, don't you think???

We throw our words, our promises around so carelessly! You would think that this is an inconsequential thing. Each of us should consider what priority we put on fulfilling them. How much will it take to divert us from coming to hear God's word, study it together, and receive His Sacraments? Death? No, more likely hot weather, a cool golf course, an exciting ball game, or a soothing spa. It makes me ashamed to think that Christ died for me and that our forefathers in the faith suffered death rather than give these gifts up.

When did we begin thinking that **our** suffering was having to put up with taking so much time away from our precious week? Shouldn't our suffering instead be wrapped up in not having the opportunity to receive such gifts?

When we pray about receiving a clean heart and a right spirit, might it be that this mindset **is** what needs to be made clean and right?

Do we ever step back, after deploring the state of this fallen world, to think that maybe this idolatry of putting so many things ahead of receiving God's gifts is the **cause** of this world's brokenness? And yet God showed His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for **us**. That is the record of both the Old Testament and the New.

So, what is Confirmation? Well, it must be closely identified with Baptism by which we are saved. Even a casual comparison of the forms of the two ceremonies show us that. Confirmation repeats the very words that were spoken in our Baptisms, either **by** us or **for** us. It is a part of the fulfillment of the Great Commission, beginning with our own homes and children, to go to everybody we meet and make disciples of them by Baptizing them and teaching them to observe everything that was commanded of us.

The first thing we all need to know is that there **is** a God who is perfect and holy and who made all things. The second is that **we** were made in His image and given stewardship over all creation. The third is that we broke our relationship with our God by disobedience, and the penalty for that was death. All disease, disorder and death came as a consequence of that disobedience. But, fourth, rather than destroy the fouled creation, God in His great love, determined to personally enter His creation as a man and give His life as a ransom for all who believe in Him. Fifth, it is only by belief in this man-God Jesus Christ given to us as a gift of the Holy Spirit, not by anything that we do, that we are saved.

How are we saved? By the work of Jesus for us. By Baptism. By Holy Communion. By Confession and Absolution. By the all-powerful and efficacious Word of God. Take heart, fellow saints and sinners. God did it all because He **knew we** were too weak to save ourselves. Believe in Him. Your sins are forgiven! What is Confirmation? It is the strengthening of your faith that God in Jesus Christ has saved you from your sins. He is with you always and will never let you go. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus for you. Not even sin itself. Amen!

May the love of God and the work of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit keep you in faith to life everlasting. Amen!