

“Called to Confess”

Today, as our young sister in Christ confesses the Christian Faith before God and this congregation – how appropriate that the Church (in the Collect), prays that our Merciful Father would give us the Holy Spirit so that we may hear the voice of our Good Shepherd, Jesus, and follow where He leads.

Today is a very special day for Brooke – it’s her Confirmation Day. And yet, for her, and for all who are baptized into Christ – “every day is a confirmation day.” Every day is one in which we confess before the world what we have heard from our Good Shepherd – and show forth what we believe, by following Him.

In that sense, it was Confirmation Day for Peter and John in our reading from Acts. What they had learned from Jesus – they were confessing with their lips. They preached that through the blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the cross, all sin has been redeemed – and that Jesus who died, has been raised from the dead.

And that message was drawing quite the crowd. The Holy Spirit was at work through the Word of God – calling people to faith through the Gospel – leading them to believe what the Lord promised and had done. And many believed! But not everyone. Not their religious leaders. They were upset and annoyed, to say the least.

Peter and John were hauled before the High Priest to give an account. They had healed a man crippled from birth – and now there was to be a public examination. The ruling authorities wanted to know “By what power or by what name did you do this?”

Peter and John are following Jesus (who found Himself in a similar situation). They are called to confess the truth. It’s Confirmation Day – an opportunity to confess what they believe. And notice what they confess – because it is the same confession we are to give – not just on our Confirmation Day – but every day.

Standing before the crowd, Peter confesses both what MAN has done, and what GOD has done. It is “by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom YOU crucified, whom GOD raised from the dead – BY HIM this man is standing before you well.”

Can you imagine standing in Peter's shoes? Standing before the rulers and authorities, pointing the finger at them and says "you did it" – "you are the ones who killed Jesus" – "you crucified Him."

How do you suppose such words would be received? Not very well, right? But that is the very confession that God the Holy Spirit calls forth from all believers.

Through the Law of God, the Holy Spirit leads us to confess what MAN has done – what WE have done – that "we have sinned against [God] in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone." We have not loved God or our neighbor, as we should. It was for our sin that Jesus was crucified – and so, we "justly deserve [God's] present and eternal punishment."

That's a hard truth to confess. As sinners, we'd rather blame someone else for what has happened. We are quick to offer excuses and justifications. But it's not just our lips that struggle – we struggle to confess this truth with our lives.

We live before God and or fellow man as if we are without sin. We live as if God owes us something. We accuse God of being unfair – or – we treat Him as being unimportant. We live as if we can live without God – without His Word, His forgiveness.

And so, on Confirmation Day, and every day – hearing the voice of our Good Shepherd – we live as those who know our sin, and confess our sin. Or, as Luther was known to say – we confess that, "we are beggars, all."

Beggar Peter, beggar John, beggar Brooke – beggars, one and all – we not only confess what WE have done – but also what GOD has done. The God who raised Jesus from the dead is the One who has raised the crippled man from the ground. God has made him to be a new creation. He has given this man new life.

You confess that God has done the same for you. "Almighty God, in His mercy, has given His Son to die for you, and for His sake, forgives you all your sins." The Lord God Almighty has healed you from the mortality of your sin. He has delivered you from the bonds of death and the grave.

God has resurrected you, you are a new creation, He has given you a new life! Your sin has been blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ, and you are clothed with His righteousness.”

That is your confession. It is what you believe. It is what you confess with your lips and your life. You live as one who is forgiven, set free – not because you’ve earned it – but because God is gracious. You listen to the voice of your Good Shepherd, Jesus – and by faith, you follow Him, all the days of your life.

As you go back to school, back to work, back home – you will confess these truths before others – living as a beggar before God – but also rejoicing that He is gracious and merciful, that He freely gives you the treasures of His kingdom.

That is who you are Brooke. That is who all of you are who believe in Christ Jesus the Savior. We are beggars who rejoice in being the richest people in the world – for we are indeed rich in Christ Jesus.

With “repentant joy” we come to this altar – like sheep being fed by our Good Shepherd. “This is my Body, given for you ... This is my blood, shed for you ... for the forgiveness of all your sin.” And in faithful joy we confess – “Amen” – “this is true.”

Happy Confirmation Day to you Brooke, each and every one of them – and Happy Confirmation Days to you, one and all. Amen!

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.