

“These are Wonderful Days in the Life of the Church”

Mark 15:1-47

These are wonderful days in the life of the church: The joy of Palm Sunday; The celebration of Confirmation. We are reminded of our place in the kingdom of God: we are washed clean of sin and adopted into God’s family. For the confirmands, like many of us, because they couldn’t answer for themselves when they were baptized, their sponsors answered for them. Today/tomorrow, they answer for themselves and confirm the faith that was received in Baptism.

That is what these 6 people are doing today/tomorrow. They are going to stand before God and His church and publicly confirm that faith, and pledge their intent to let nothing ever separate them from Christ and His Church.

It is appropriate that we have Confirmation on Palm Sunday for several reasons. First, it gives these young Christians the opportunity to receive the Sacrament on Maundy Thursday and on Easter, which is a tremendous blessing and gift for all of us. Also, the happenings of Palm Sunday are a reminder to them and to all

of us that perseverance in the faith of our Baptism is what God desires; not just being caught up in a few moments of jubilation as the people were on Palm Sunday.

Every year around this time, I am reminded of something that a classmate said to me when we were in 8th grade. (I don't think I ever told you this story before.) But in the spring of my 8th grade year, a girl in my class who attended a different Lutheran church than mine announced to me and anyone who was listening, she said, "I can't wait for Confirmation to be over with, so that I don't have to go to church anymore."

And the sad thing is, is that she didn't go to church anymore. And what's even sadder is that her parents and her sponsors did very little if anything to keep her from following through on her plan to abandon Christ and His Church.

I feel very confident that none of the members of this class have any such intentions. They are going to make the same pledge of faith that I made and most of us made when we were their age. They are going to make the same pledge of faith that the sponsors, parents, and really the entire church made on behalf of them when they were baptized.

And after they have stated the words of the Apostle's Creed, reaffirming the faith created in them at their Baptism, I will ask them several questions.

I will ask them: “Do you intend to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord’s Supper faithfully? Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death? Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?” And they will answer each of these questions: “I do, by the grace of God.”

These were not questions that the people who sang praises to Jesus on Palm Sunday were prepared to answer. The people who sang: “Hosanna to the Son of David...Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord...Hosanna in the highest,” were many of the same people who yelled: “Crucify Him!” only a few days later.

It is a wonderful day in the life of the church as we see the young baptized children of God growing to the full stature that God intended, and making the public confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. But it is also a day to be reminded of the reason why Christ had to come. The Son of God had to come and be the sacrifice for your sin. The Son of God had to be lifted up on a cross because no one but Him could satisfy the demands of the Law.

I am excited for the members of this confirmation class, because today/tomorrow, for the first time, they are going to

receive the broken body and shed blood of Christ Himself. It is a mystery as to how this can happen, that we are blessed with the physical presence of God Himself. But as I said numerous times in our confirmation class, we get to participate in a miracle. This is a really big deal. There is a reason to be excited about receiving this for the first time. But there is a reason to be excited about receiving this every time. Every time, as you prepare to receive this means of grace; this means by which God gives you forgiveness, life, and salvation; I pray that the Holy Spirit leads you to understand what a blessing it is to be called a child of God.

God loved each of you so much that He sent His Son to take your place as the one who must suffer for sin. And He has called you a child whom He loves. He has given you a place at His Table. Even more, He has reserved for all of His faithful a place in His eternal kingdom. We are not like the people on Palm Sunday who celebrated the joy of one day, but then ignored the real reason for which Christ came into that city.

He entered that city for you. He was mocked, flogged, beaten, and crucified for you. The broken body and shed blood of Christ our Lord was given and shed for you. These are wonderful days in the life of the church because of all that God has done for you. Amen.