

May 4, 2008

Who Are You?

Confirmation day many of you probably remember that day. What did it mean to you? What are your memories? Some of you might say, "Fear I was scared to death I had to answer questions before the congregation." Some of you might say, "relief I finally finished I passed." Some of you might say, "apathy I really didn't care my biggest hope was to finish it off and get my parents off my back cause they are the ones that wanted me to be confirmed." But I hope today truly has been a confirmation day for each one of us. It is a tremendous reminder of what we, as Christians, truly believe and live.

It comes in the form questions that are broken into two categories. The first category deals with what I believe so I ask all of you know to carefully consider these questions. Do you believe in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Do you believe that God the Father is the Almighty Creator? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, that Jesus came into the world to seek and to save the lost, that Jesus dies on the cross to save us from our sins and that Jesus rose again from the dead to give us the sure hope of eternal life? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit God's continuing presence with us and do you accept that spirit as your personal comforter, equipper and guide? And if you can answer yes or I do to each one of those that's great but that's not the end of it. James tells us, "faith without works is dead." So as one person in our congregation likes to say, "Is there enough evidence to convict you?" How do people know what you believe? That's what the second type of questions with confirmation deals with.

The first one deals with that covenant where I ask the confirmands do you in the presence of God and this Christian congregation confirm the solemn covenant, which at your baptism your parents made with the triune God? And so do you confirm that solemn covenant with the triune God. It's the covenant that goes like this, God says, "I will be your God you will be my people." How are we God's people? Well the first question do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways? We might say very quickly oh yes I do but you really renounce his works and his ways? It's very simple to know what his works and his ways are. Just take what God's works and God's way is and do the exact opposite, for instance, Nick shared with us the ten commandments that's what God says our way is this is the way we are to live. We are to have no other God's before him; we

are not to bow down to anything else in place of him. We are to so love God and keep his name holy that we will never use his name in vain. Do you the Lord's name in vain? Today is the day that you renounce it because it is the work of Satan. He says, "remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." I'm glad to see you all here you're keeping a Sabbath day do you do it always? If you don't you know where that's coming from God didn't say when it's convenient remember the Sabbath day keep it holy. Do you honor your father and mother? That's not just for children that's for children who are older too when their parents are older. Maybe they're becoming senile, maybe they have Alzheimer's, maybe they have physical health problems we're still to honor them and care for them. We're not to kill and Jesus says that includes simply hating. I know one thing that has gotten some people a little riled up from time to time is the next commandment you should not commit adultery. Jesus tells us if you even think it if you even lust you've done it. How sad it is in this day and age where the vast majority of young people live together before they get married they are kind of trying it out see if this marriage is really going to work or it's just easier or more convenient or we don't want to wait. It's wrong. We are not to steal any of you cheat on your taxes its' stealing. Students copying somebody's answer, didn't do your homework and use someone else's; that's stealing. Do not bare false witness against our neighbor let's sum that up in one word; gossip. This is the way of Satan. We are not to be jealous and covet what our neighbor has but be happy with what God has given us so we renounce the opposite of the ten commandments and when we renounce it we are at the same time saying I will live it.

The next question is very simple will you continue to study and grow in God's word? Will you strive to nourish your heart and mind with it? Will you try to do Gods' will as it is revealed to you in the Holy Scriptures? This is coming down to that question what does the bible mean to you? We have examples given to us in the Bible of what the Bible should mean to us I think in particular of King David. He writes in Psalm 119, "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless who walk according to the law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. They do nothing wrong they walk in his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me. How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with

all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. This is the type of heart we are to have when it comes to God's word.

Today is not just confirmation day it's also ascension day its when we celebrate Christ's ascension into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. But it's also an ascension day for us. Through his death and resurrection he has raised us up to be children of God so who are you? It's a great question and it has a profound answer. I would like to share with you a short story. A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night's dinner. In their rush with tickets and briefcases one of the salesman inadvertently kicked over a table, which held a display of apples. The apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back they all managed to reach the plane in time for their nearly missed boarding; all but one. He paused took a breath got in touch with his feelings and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl who's apple stand had been over turned. He told his buddies to go on without him, waved good-bye, told one of them to call his wife when they arrived at their destination and explain his taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the floor. He was glad he returned. The sixteen-year-old girl was totally blind; she was softly crying tears running down her cheeks in frustration and at the same time helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about. No one was stopping and no one was there to care for her plight. The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them back on the table and helped organize her display. As he did this he noticed that many of them had become battered and bruised. These he set aside in another basket when he had finished he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl. "Here please take this \$40.00 for the damage we did are you okay?" She nodded through her tears he continued on with, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly." As the salesman started to walk away the bewildered blind girl called out to him, "Mr.!" He paused and looked back into those blind eyes and she asked, "Are you Jesus?" He stopped in mid-stride and he wondered then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul. Are you Jesus?

Do people mistake you for Jesus? That's our destiny is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love His life and His grace. If we claim to know him we should live, walk and act as he would. Knowing him is more than simply quoting scripture or even going to church it's actually living the word as life unfolds day to day. My message to the confirmands today and to the congregation today and I believe it is God's message not mine comes from 2 Corinthians 5:20, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us." We are ambassadors for Christ. We know what we believe and we know how we should live it's time to answer those confirmation questions, to renounce the devil, to make God's word the foundation of our life and to then live it.