

May 12, 2019 - Confirmation Sunday

You are about to stand on holy ground. Holy ground where God warns: “Don’t mess around.” Holy ground where God promises: “I’m here for you.” Holy ground where God calls: “Walk with me; work with me; win with me!” You are about to stand on holy ground.

This isn’t the first time you’ve come to God’s holy place. Some of you, right here [at this baptismal font] were brought to God. In baptism, he washed you clean, holy for God. In baptism, he put his name on you, made you alive as a child of God - to live holy with God today and forever.

Since then, your parents have brought you back. God has brought you back. Sometimes willing and eager, sometimes only pretending, sometimes kicking and screaming, sometimes angry and sullen, sometimes maybe afraid with a guilty conscience, but God has brought you back. Here we have learned what this [the sign of the cross] means for you - Jesus died for you. Here we have learned how amazing that picture [Good Shepherd holding his lamb] is. Even though we have kicked and screamed against God; even though we have disgusted God and hurt God, he calls us close to hold us close. Even though God’s justice demands “the wages of sin is death,” the cross reminds us that God loves you so much he would rather pay for you than make you pay. Even though God’s judgment demands “the soul that sins, it shall die,” the sign of the cross reminds us that God loves you so much he would rather die for you than damn you. Here we learn the love of God, why we get to have life with God.

So here your parents brought you, here your God brought you, even when it was too nice outside to be stuck inside, even when it was too awful out to go outside. Here your parents brought you, here your God brought you, even when the rest of your world thought it more important to sleep in, or to chase balls, or to take it easy. Here your parents brought you, here your God brought you, to train your hearts and minds to think like God, to train your hearts and minds to live like God, to train your hearts and minds - the things of God are more important than the things of this world.

So here you are today, about to stand on holy ground. Holy ground where God warns: “Don’t mess around.” Holy ground where God promises: “I’m here for you.” Holy ground where God calls: “Walk with me; work with me; win with me!” Here you are about to answer: “Yes, God! Thank you, God! Help me, God!” Here you are about to promise: “No matter what the rest of the world does, no matter how the rest of the world tries to distract me, I will walk with you, God. No matter how the rest of the world tries to stop me, I will work with you, God. No matter how the rest of the world spits on your holy ground, I will come back, and I will keep coming back until you take me to heaven ... so help me, God!”

And God will smile with love, the angels will cheer, and the devil will snicker. Why? The devil will snicker because he knows how many people have stood here and made promises on this holy ground and how now they can’t seem to find their way back. The devil will snicker because he gets a kick out of our excuses. The devil will snicker because he knows how easy it is to distract us - good weather, bad weather; chasing big balls, chasing small balls; chasing the good life, stuck on the couch. The devil will snicker because he sees more people following him than following God.

But what does he have to offer? Fun in the sun, fun with friends, a life pretending “It’s my life and I can do whatever I want.” That can sound so good, so tempting. But then what? The day is coming when we will have to stand before God and give answer. What have we done with our lives? What have we done with God’s life? What have we done with Jesus? I shudder to think how many people who have stood before God here won’t be ready to stand before God there on that day.

That’s why Jesus invites us to keep coming back to God’s holy ground - to stand with God. To stand and confess: “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” To stand and hear his promise: “Peace, your sins are forgiven you.” To hear his Word, and then to take a stand: “I believe ....” To hear his promise and to pray: “Our Father who art in heaven ....” Yes, again and again, Jesus invites us to come close, to stand here before God’s altar, to accept his invitation: “Take and eat; take and drink; my body and blood given and shed for you; my forgiveness for you; my life for you, my death for you;

my self for you.” Again and again, Jesus invites us close to stand before God and receive his blessing: “The LORD bless you and keep you ....”

Why? Why does Jesus keep on inviting us back? To grow in his grace and knowledge, to tune our hearts and minds to be more and more in tune with the heart and mind of God. Why does Jesus keep inviting us back? So we can be like those sheep up close with him, safe with him. Why does he invite us back? So we can be like those apostles [you see the apostles’ shields], strong with Jesus to share the life and the love of God. Today, you are about to stand before God on his holy ground. May God bless you to stand with him, walk with him, work with him, and win with him - forever. Amen.