

Today is a very special day! Five young people from Victory of the Lamb are being confirmed and welcomed into membership of this church! They will be able to take communion for the first time, as a demonstration that they believe what the Bible teaches, and that what Victory of the Lamb teaches is in line with what God’s Word says. They will be professing their faith and their beliefs right after the sermon, and you will be able to hear their faith in a really cool way in a video that Pastor and the confirmation teachers put together. What an amazing day! It’s truly a reason to celebrate!

But what is confirmation all about? What does today mean for these five young people? They’ve been studying Luther’s catechism for a good three years now, studying the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Supper and Baptism, the Ministry of the Keys, the Apostles’ Creed. So after all that studying, all those Sunday mornings spent in the birthday room out in the lobby, they’re done learning about the Bible right? This is like their graduation from God’s Word, isn’t it? Wrong! In fact, that couldn’t be further from the truth! This isn’t the end, not by a long shot! This is just one of many milestones in the lives of these young people. Confirmation actually means “strengthening.” This is only a strengthening of their faith.

So I want to raise this question to our confirmands this morning: What are you going to do now? What are you going to do with all the knowledge of God’s Word that you’ve gained over the last three years? What are you going to do with that faith that has been nurtured and strengthened through studying the Catechism and searching the Bible for answers to life’s questions? Will you keep growing in that faith? Will you keep learning about God’s grace in Jesus? Or will you forget about reading and studying God’s Word, and slowly let your young faith fade away? These are honest questions. I’m not trying to guilt you into coming to church or trying to scare you into reading the Bible. But there are dangerous roads ahead for each and every one of you. There are a lot of choices that are going to be made by all of you, and the decisions you make in the coming year can either be positives in your life or they can be negatives. Just ask your parents. They’ve made choices, some bad, and some good. If they’re like me, I’m sure they’ve made some choices that they’re not proud of, and choices they wish they could go back and change. But no matter what choices you make, no matter what decisions you face, I want you all to remember this: **Who you are determines what you do.** Did you get that? **Who you are... determines what you do.**

And just who are you? Well, you’ve learned who you are throughout the past three years in confirmation class. You’ve learned who God is and how he created all things, including you. You’ve learned how much God loves you, enough to send his own Son to die for all of your sins. You’ve learned about the wonderful gifts God has given us in his Word and Sacraments. You’ve learned what it means to be a baptized and redeemed child of God. ***That*** is what you are! You didn’t need to be confirmed before you knew that! You have been bought with the blood of Jesus and have become part of his family. And now today you are becoming an official member of the family of Victory of the Lamb Lutheran Church.

As the Apostle Peter says in our sermon text for this morning, you are being built into God’s house as living stones. 1 Peter 2:4-10 reads, **“*4* As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— *5* you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. *6* For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” *7* Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” *8* and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. *9* But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. *10* Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”**

Did you catch what Peter said about the living stones who put their trust in Jesus, the chief Cornerstone? **"The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."** There will be people in your lives who will make fun of you, who will say terrible things to you and about you, people who will mock you and make you question your faith in Jesus. Your so-called "friends" will leave you, your future co-workers will make jokes about you. But that all happened to Jesus, too. People rejected Jesus. The Pharisees and teachers of the law plotted to kill him and carried out that plot. People who should have known better did not believe in Jesus. He caused people to stumble and fall because they rejected him as their Savior. And God says that the same thing will happen to you five confirmands. You will be rejected because of your faith too.

This life of faith is not an easy one. Maybe you've already experienced some of that with your friends and family. Maybe you know what it feels like to be made fun of and rejected because of your faith. But remember, **"The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."** And just like Jesus was the chosen and precious Cornerstone, you five are chosen and precious living stones to God. You are entering a new chapter in your walk with God. You've finished one part of the race, but your race isn't over yet. You've already been built into God's house, but you still have a role to carry out and a job to do as part of God's house. As Peter says in verse 9 of our text for this morning, **"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."** God has made you that chosen people, that royal priesthood, that holy nation. You are God's special possession, and now he asks you to declare his praises for the rest of your life. He has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. And now you have the wonderful privilege of sharing that wonderful light with all the people in your life who are still in darkness. You will be light in this dark world, sharing your faith with everyone around you by the way you live, the choices you make, and the things you say.

And this isn't just for the five confirmands this morning either. I hope the rest of you, especially those who have already been confirmed and are living stones in God's house, have been reminded of your own confirmations and your own promises to remain faithful to God. I'm sure the road has been rougher for some of you than others, and I'm sure you all have stories about how your faith has been tested. God's house is built from all kinds of living stones. Some are cracked, some have holes in them, some have jagged edges. But by God's grace, he has chosen each and every one of you to be part of his house. Which is why, as a special little gift for the confirmands this morning, I wanted to give them each a stone. A real stone. Each one of these stones is special and unique, just like each of the young people getting confirmed this morning. On one side, there is a name. On the other side, is a verse reference. These are the confirmation verses for each of the students. As pastor goes through the rite of confirmation in a little bit, he will be reading off each students' confirmation verse, and then he will hand each confirmand a stone with their verse written on it. These are meant to be reminders that for the rest of their lives, these confirmands are living stones, built on the Cornerstone, members of God's house.

I want to close this morning with a few verses from Psalm 1. Some of you might recognize these verses, because they're fairly famous ones. And I know I'm mixing metaphors a little bit between living stones and trees, but I hope these verses will give comfort, hope, strength, and encouragement to all confirmands, past, present, and future. Listen to the words of Psalm 1: **"¹ Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, ² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. ³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers."**

God's richest blessings to you, confirmation class of 2014, and I hope and pray that your delight is in the law of the Lord, and that you meditate on it day and night. God promises to bless you and prosper whatever you do in the days, months, and years ahead. Remember who you are.

You are that tree planted by streams of water. You are that chosen people and that royal priesthood. You are living stones connected to the Cornerstone, Jesus Christ. God be with you all as you live connected to Jesus! Amen.