

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Wilton, WI  
October 18, 2020  
20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
**Inviting People to Journey with Christ's  
Family in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

*In today's first reading God uses the Gentile ruler Cyrus to accomplish divine purposes. When the Pharisees try to trap Jesus, he tells them to give the emperor what belongs to him and to God what belongs to God. To gather for worship reminds us that our ultimate allegiance is to God rather than to any earthly authority. Created in the image of God, we offer our entire selves in the service of God and for the sake of the world.*

**Gathering**

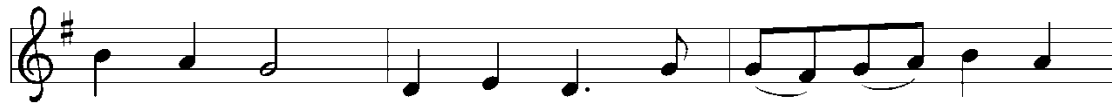
*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God\**

Hymn

**God of Grace and God of Glory**



1 God of grace and God of glo - ry, on your peo - ple  
2 Lo! The hosts of e - vil round us scorn the Christ, as -  
3 Cure your chil - dren's war - ring mad - ness; bend our pride to  
4 Save us from weak res - ig - na - tion to the e - vils



pour your pow'r; crown your an - cient chur - ch's sto - ry;  
sail his ways! From the fears that long have bound us  
your con - trol; shame our wan - ton, self - ish glad - ness,  
we de - plore; let the gift of your sal - va - tion



bring its bud to glo - rious flow'r. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age  
free our hearts to faith and praise. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age  
rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,  
be our glo - ry ev - er - more. Grant us wis - dom, grant us cour - age,



for the fac - ing of this hour, for the fac - ing of this hour.  
for the liv - ing of these days, for the liv - ing of these days.  
lest we miss your king - dom's goal, lest we miss your king - dom's goal.  
serv - ing you whom we a - dore, serv - ing you whom we a - dore.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Sovereign God, raise your throne in our hearts. Created by you, let us live in your image; created for you, let us act for your glory; redeemed by you, let us give you what is yours, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
Amen.

### Word

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.\**

## FIRST READING

*The prophet announces that Cyrus the Persian emperor is the one the LORD has anointed to end Israel's exile. The LORD makes this choice so that the whole world will recognize this LORD as the only God. Persia had a god of light and a god of darkness; the LORD claims sovereignty over both light and darkness.*

### Isaiah 45:1-7

<sup>1</sup>Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,  
whose right hand I have grasped  
to subdue nations before him  
and strip kings of their robes,  
to open doors before him—  
and the gates shall not be closed:  
<sup>2</sup>I will go before you  
and level the mountains,  
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze  
and cut through the bars of iron,  
<sup>3</sup>I will give you the treasures of darkness  
and riches hidden in secret places,  
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,  
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.  
<sup>4</sup>For the sake of my servant Jacob,  
and Israel my chosen,  
I call you by your name,  
I surname you, though you do not know me.  
<sup>5</sup>I am the LORD, and there is no other;  
besides me there is no god.  
I arm you, though you do not know me,  
<sup>6</sup>so that they may know, from the rising of the sun  
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;  
I am the LORD, and there is no other.  
<sup>7</sup>I form light and create darkness,  
I make weal and create woe;  
I the LORD do all these things.

P: The word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

## Psalm 96:1-9

- <sup>1</sup>Sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
- <sup>2</sup>Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD;  
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.
- <sup>3</sup>Declare God's glory among the nations  
and God's wonders among all peoples.
- <sup>4</sup>For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised,  
more to be feared than all gods.
- <sup>5</sup>As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;  
but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.
- <sup>6</sup>Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;  
power and splendor are in your sanctuary.
- <sup>7</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD honor and power.
- <sup>8</sup>Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name;  
bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.
- <sup>9</sup>Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness;  
tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

## SECOND READING

*Most likely this letter is the first written by Paul. Paul gives pastoral encouragement and reassurances to new Christians living in an antagonistic environment. Their commitment of faith, love, and hope makes them a model for other new Christian communities.*

## 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

- <sup>1</sup>Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,  
To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:  
Grace to you and peace.
- <sup>2</sup>We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers,  
constantly <sup>3</sup>remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and  
steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God,  
that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup>because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also  
in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we  
proved to be among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup>And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite  
of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup>so that you became an  
example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup>For the word of the Lord has sounded forth  
from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known,  
so that we have no need to speak about it. <sup>9</sup>For the people of those regions report about us what kind  
of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true  
God, <sup>10</sup>and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us  
from the wrath that is coming.

**P:** The word of the Lord. **C:** Thanks be to God.

## Gospel Acclamation

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

*After Jesus begins teaching in the temple, religious leaders try to trap him with questions. First they ask if God's people should pay taxes to an earthly tyrant like Caesar.*

### The gospel according to Matthew 22:15-22

#### Glory to you, O Lord.

<sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap [Jesus] in what he said. <sup>16</sup>So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. <sup>17</sup>Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" <sup>18</sup>But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? <sup>19</sup>Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. <sup>20</sup>Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" <sup>21</sup>They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." <sup>22</sup>When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

P: The gospel of the Lord. C: **Praise to You, O Christ.**

#### Sermon

Many years ago, I remember briefly talking to a man who was in his late 60's. He was lamenting the fact that he had to work beyond his full-retirement age of 65. He was further lamenting that he would need to continue to work for some time, due to a misjudgment that he made years ago. As a young man, he strongly believed that the government could not tell him what to do! He believed that we live in a free country, and he should be free to do whatever he wanted! As a result, he did not pay his taxes! When the IRS discovered this, he was heavily fined. That was the reason for his needing to work much longer than anticipated: he did not heed Jesus' lesson in our gospel passage for today.

Our pericope centers around a coin: a common object that we use every day. Coins are used in the United States and in most societies. They are minted by the government and are the means by which the government directs its citizens and visitors to pay their bills, taxes, and most other debts.

In today's gospel passage from the book of Matthew, Jesus uses a coin, a denarius, to communicate an important message. With this common object, Jesus teaches about the importance of paying one's taxes. But even moreso, Jesus teaches about earthly and spiritual realms and who has ultimate authority in heaven and on earth--the one, Triune God.

Many of the Israelite people in Jesus' day resisted using Roman coins. They were conflicted, because the Roman coins had an image of Tiberias Caesar on them, along with words describing him as "high priest," or one with divine status in the pagan Roman religion. To the Israelite people this was blasphemous! The emperor's image on the coin violates God's Second Commandment which states: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them." So, to even hold a coin that carries the image of the emperor, who has designated himself as a "high priest," goes against God and the Israelites' faith! Beyond this, most of the Israelite people "oppose[d] the tax" that Tiberias Caesar requires them to pay." (*Here We Stand Bible*, p. 1644) What are they to do?

The Herodians and disciples of the Pharisees are trying to trick Jesus into saying that people should not pay taxes to the emperor, so they can arrest and persecute Jesus. But Jesus knows what they are trying to do. Instead of answering directly, Jesus responds to their question with a new question and a statement: Whose image is on the coin? The emperor's. Jesus says, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

Many people have heard this passage and taken it to mean that Jesus is separating the earthly from the spiritual realm as if to say--the emperor is in charge of the earthly, and God is in charge of the spiritual. One could also surmise from this that secular governments are in charge of the earthly, and God is in charge of the heavenly. But that is now what Jesus is communicating. The message is that God has ultimate authority in heaven and on earth! God recognizes that civil laws have value to society, and honorable earthly leaders govern to provide safety and security for human beings. As such, societies need to have just leaders and just laws for the common good. But, these earthly leaders are not, and can never be, **divine**, nor should they be treated like gods. The one, Triune God has ultimate authority and all power in earthly and heavenly matters, and **God chooses** to allow earthly leaders to make decisions for the common good.

Beyond this, the coin in this passage has little value to God! Material possessions are not important to God. God does not show greater favor to those persons who have lots of money in comparison to those who have very little money. God does not show greater favor to those persons who have lots of possessions in comparison to those who have very few possessions. God does not show greater favor to those persons who have larger houses in comparison to those who have smaller houses. God does not show greater favor to those persons who attend church in a beautiful building, from those who attend church in someone's house, in a park, in a storefront, or at a drive-in worship service outside a church! These things are not important to God! When, Jesus says, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's..." he is saying, God is not concerned with materialistic things. The emperor created this coin, therefore, return his coin to him! God is concerned with what is truly important: faith in God, love of God, love for one's neighbor. These are seen and

experienced, when people have enough food to eat, appropriate shelter and clothes, and their basic needs are met.

Martin Luther's teachings on the two kingdoms provides insights that are helpful to our understanding of this passage. My Lutheran Confessions professor, Dr. Martin Lohrmann, described this as "two kinds of righteousness, squared" (Quotes here and below, are from Dr. Lohrmann's lectures). We address both law and gospel in our civil and spiritual lives. The law, "tells the truth about sin. The gospel, tells the truth about who God is." This gospel passage encourages us to consider both law and gospel from civil and spiritual perspectives. The Herodians and disciples of the Pharisees are speaking to Jesus about the judgment of the law. They are speaking of civil law that "punishes the wrong and protects the innocent." They are speaking about paying the poll tax, and about civil law, the law that serves society and the common good.

But we as Christians know of the other kind of judgment that is through God's commands. It is the "judgment of the gospel." This judgment "requires our repenting and believing." It is the judgment that "turns us around to the good." It is the judgment that "challenges us." It is the judgment for which we "daily die to sin, and rise to new live in Christ." Yet, the judgment of the law, and the judgment of the gospel, cannot save us!

Therefore, we must consider the righteousness of the law. This righteousness refers to "knowing and doing God's will." The Ten Commandments and other examples from the Bible speak of the righteousness of God's law. Through this, we are instructed to follow God's law for our well-being, and the well-being of our relationships with God, our fellow human beings, and all of God's creation. But "following God's laws, cannot save us." So, what does save us? What Jesus is teaching us in this passage-- the righteousness of the gospel. This is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, of faith. It is "pure grace and good news," which has come to us through Jesus' death on the cross and his glorious resurrection. It is "pure grace and good news," given freely to us as a gift from God. It is about salvation. It is about our faith in God and Jesus' righteousness, which saves us!

God is not concerned about how much money we have or about any of the materialistic possessions that we own. But, God is concerned that all human beings receive their daily bread, and just treatment, so they may live without fear of oppression, injustice, discrimination, and civil laws that go against God's desires for humanity. Civil laws are to be just laws. Civil leaders, are to be just leaders. We are to follow just laws and just leaders, to pay our taxes, and to be upstanding citizens in our communities. But when laws are unjust, or leaders are unjust, we are to speak-up, especially on behalf of those who are oppressed and discriminated against. We are to do God's will on earth! "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." We live on this earth, but we belong to God. It is through God's "pure grace and good news, that God saves us." Thanks be to God. Amen.

## **Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.**

**Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Gracious God, you call us by name and invite us to share your good news. Send your Holy Spirit among preachers, missionaries, and evangelists. We give thanks for the witness of your servant Luke, the evangelist, whom the church commemorates today. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

God of praise, the heavens and all creation declare your salvation. From the rising of the sun to its setting, to its rising again, may the whole universe show forth your goodness. Raise up devoted stewards of all that you have made. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

God of all, may your word of justice sound forth in every place. Restore divided nations, communities, and peoples with reconciling truth. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

God of light, we pray for those living with pain, illness, isolation, grief, anger, or doubt especially Katie, Carla, Ruth, Judy, Alrita, Dick, Lisa, Pam, Curt, Deb, Lois, Tessa, Doug, Chris, Karl, those affected by the Coronavirus, and those we name aloud and in our hearts. Join their voices in a new song, assuring them that you call them each by name. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

God of truth, you show no partiality. May your spirit guide the work of justices, magistrates, court officials, and all vocations of the law, that your promise of restoration may be known. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

O God, you so love the world that you sent Jesus, and our world so needs your love. With the whole Church we implore you to call forth pastors, deacons, and congregational leaders to lead us in bearing Christ to all the world so that the world may know your love. We pray especially for those in this faith community the Holy Spirit may be nudging to public ministry in the church and Christ-like service in the world. Lord, in your mercy.

**hear our prayer.**

Living God, as you raised Jesus from the dead, so raise up those who have died in you. We give thanks for their witness, confident of your rescuing welcome for all. Lord, in your mercy,  
**hear our prayer.**

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.\*

Blessing

Hymn

**Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing**



- 1 Oh, for a thou-sand tongues to sing my great Re-deem-er's praise,
- 2 My gra-cious Mas-ter and my God, as-sist me to pro-claim,
- 3 The name of Je-sus charms our fears and bids our sor-rows cease,
- 4 He speaks, and lis-t'ning to his voice, new life the dead re-ceive;



the glo-ries of my God and king, the tri-umphs of his grace!  
to spread through all the earth a-broad the hon-ors of your name.  
sings mu-sic in the sin-ner's ears, brings life and health and peace.  
the mourn-ful, bro-ken hearts re-joice, the hum-ble poor be-lieve.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 5 Look unto him, your Savior own,<br>O fallen human race!<br>Look and be saved through faith alone,<br>be justified by grace! | 6 To God all glory, praise, and love<br>be now and ever giv'n<br>by saints below and saints above,<br>the church in earth and heav'n. |
|---|---|

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–1788, alt.

Music: AZMON, Carl G. Gläser, 1784–1829; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

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**P:** Go in peace. Remember the poor.

**C:** **Thanks be to God.**



## **IN OUR PRAYERS**

Katie Wallace, Carla Von Haden, Ruth Johnson, Judy Bever, Alrita Ornes, Dick Krause, Lisa Rhodes, Pam Liefke, Curt Brueggen, Deb Paeth, Lois Reineke, Tessa Klipstein.

## **IN THE MILITARY**

Jacob Picha, Todd Nofsinger, Dylan Dougherty, Danelle Dougherty, Seth Tormoen, Robert Cale.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **CONFIRMATION**

Thank you to the confirmation students for sharing their Faith Statements with us this morning. Confirmation will be held next Sunday, October 25. Assistant to the Bishop Libby Howe will be assisting in the worship service and delivering the sermon.

### **PRAY FOR THE CHILDREN**

We urge you to remember the children of our church, as well as children throughout the world, in your prayers.

Lord, Jesus Christ, I bring to you:

Jada, Myles, & Conner Garske; Britain Hahn, Gracie & Kaden Brandau; Katie Pagel, Amara Brandau; Chase Brandau; Avery Brueggen; Riley Brueggen; Nolan & Logan Buchholz; Thadyn & Ayawyn Conner; Vanessa & Elliott Ornes; Lailah Eckes; Lena Ornes; Porter Sorenson; Kennedy & Josie Ornes; Brooklyn, Madelyn, Kaylin, Emma, Bryce, Marah, Bria, Ava, Katie, & Benjamin Gruen; Brady Zimmerman; Braylee Zimmerman; MaKenzie & Cooper Powell; Wesson Mayne; Vanessa, Mia, & Brek Anderson; Tyler & Jaden Bever; Carlee, Collin, & Camden Neidfeldt; Morgan Speicher; Avery & August Arndt; Krista & Sierra Cook; Tyler Brandau; Franklin & Douglas Wildes; Sophia, Derek & Deacon Erdman; Kody Tormoen; Angel Brueggen; Robert Cale; Callie Fleming; Miranda, Daphne & Linus Arndt; Natalie, Brodie & Fynlie Stanek; Emma Elder; Bryson Lamb; Alaina & Braxton Holthaus; Jada Leis; David, Sam & Zachary Ross; Gannon Tormoen; Jase & Margo Picha.

That your spirit will dwell with them according to your will. That they will grow in the knowledge of you and know that they are dearly loved by you. I pray that you will protect them from deception by the evil one and all his darts that would lead them astray. May they do well in school, learning and discerning what direction you have in mind for them. I also pray for all children everywhere, that you would keep them in your care.

In Jesus' name I pray.  
Amen

### **SAMARITAN'S PURSE OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD**

Shoebboxes are now available. Nalani will deliver them to you. Please contact her to arrange a drop-off time. Thanks.

### **CONGRATULATIONS**

To Ally and Adam Brueggen on the birth of their daughter, Aria Elizabeth, this past Thursday. Aria weighed in at 5 lbs. 12 oz. and is 18¾ long. Aria joins sister Riley in the Brueggen household. Rick and Lori Brueggen are the proud grandparents.

## **FRIENDS OF THE COMMUNITY 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER**

Due to Covid-19, the Friends of the Community 23<sup>rd</sup> Thanksgiving dinner will be held as a curbside pickup on Sunday, November 8, 2020, from 4:00 – 6:00 PM at the Norwalk Community Center. Reservations are necessary and must be made no later than November 1<sup>st</sup>. You will need to designate whether you will be stopping by for your meal, or if you wish it delivered by the Norwalk Fireman. Volunteers are being sought to help fill the carry outs. If you are looking for Community Service time, this would be a great way to get it!!

Do you have any uncooked squash you could donate? If so, they would like them by November 1<sup>st</sup>. They are also looking for donations of pumpkin pies and would like them delivered, the day of the dinner, to the Community Center by 3:00 PM.

For reservations, to volunteer, or to donate squash or pies please email Theresa Lehner at [talehner@yahoo.com](mailto:talehner@yahoo.com) or call 608-823-7942. You may also contact Barb Ornes at 608-823-7873 or [john663@centurytel.net](mailto:john663@centurytel.net).

## **CONTACTS DURING CORONAVIRUS CLOSURE**

In case of emergency, contact Pastor Cathleen, via text, 608-865-1074, Justin Arndt (608-435-6336) (414-587-6642) or Nalani Bever (608-387-2311).

To activate the prayer chain, please contact Nalani or Louise Buchholz (608-435-6435).

Additional Contact Information:

Pastor Cathleen: [cathleenmorris@go.mccormick.edu](mailto:cathleenmorris@go.mccormick.edu)

Justin Arndt: [arndt.now@gmail.com](mailto:arndt.now@gmail.com)

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\*The Sunday Assembly, Lorraine S. Brugh, Gordon W. Lathrop, Augsburg Fortress, 2008

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10/14/2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is good to be communicating with you again after being on vacation for part of last week and this week. My time away coincided with the peak, or near peak, of the fall colors. Last Saturday and Sunday, my aunt and I went for two drives. We saw many beautiful sights, but a few of them topped our lists! When I visited with Lois yesterday, she told me that she and Gordie had taken some trips to see the fall colors during the past week, too. I hope many of you did, as well. We live in such a beautiful area with so many colorful, tree-covered bluffs, that we do not need to travel far to see and enjoy God's creation.

Perhaps you, like I, have fond memories of viewing the fall colors in the past. One memory that often comes to my mind, is from my years at UW-La Crosse. I recall going to a football game at the stadium one Saturday afternoon. It was a beautiful, crisp, fall day. Upon entering the stadium, my friends and I headed to the student section. When we sat down, we could see Granddad's Bluff in the background. We commented on the many trees with their green, yellow, gold, red, and orange colors in various shades and hues. But there was more. Throughout the game, I remember occasionally looking up at the bluff and seeing a hang glider taking off from the top. The hang glider, with a sail of many colors, would slowly waft it's way through the air, and eventually land on the golf course below. This added even more color to my picturesque view! Even today, I still recall the sights, the sounds, my friends, the setting, and the beauty of that very special memory.

What are your favorite memories? Perhaps they are of times spent with family or friends. Perhaps they are of vacations or special occasions, such as birthdays or holidays. I actually keep a list of memories. When I am having a challenging day, sometimes I pause, and look at my list of happy memories. Doing so, often helps to brighten my day. Perhaps making a list of your favorite memories, and looking at it when you need a day brightener, could do the same for you!

During this time of the Coronavirus Pandemic, when we are unable to do many things, we can think about special memories and vicariously relive some of those happy times. We can think about the beauty of God's creation that we have been able to see and enjoy. We can think about all the people that God has given us to share in our lives. We can think of many happy memories of being children of God. Thanks be to God, for God's many gifts to us each and every day.

Peace,  
Pastor Cathy

10/18/2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, during our worship service, the Confirmands will be sharing their faith papers with us. Perhaps, you too recall preparing your "Faith Statement" or "Favorite Bible Passage" paper when you were their age. It was an opportunity for you to reflect, write, talk with the pastor, rewrite, think deeply about many questions, and eventually publicly state before the assembly what you believe.

Here are some of the questions that you may have considered at that time:

- \* What do I believe about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?
- \* Why is the Christian faith important to me?
- \* What makes my faith different from other beliefs that I hold?
- \* Who and/or what has helped me to grow in my faith?
- \* How will my faith make a difference in my life both now and in the future?

Of course, there are many other questions that one might consider, but asking the who, what, when, where, why and how questions provide a good starting point. They are questions that the Confirmands have considered, and they are questions that all of us may benefit from considering again and again throughout our lives.

When we recall our own Confirmation, and consider what we wrote when we were 13 or 14 years old, we may reflect on how our faith has changed. We may ask--Have I grown in my understanding of the one, Triune God? Has my faith been an important part of my life? Have I looked to others in this faith community as role models? Have I helped others--children, youth, adults--to grow in their faith? Have I in the past placed God first and foremost in my life? Do I intend in the future to place God first and foremost in my life?

God welcomes us with open arms to experience the richness of life as children of God. As we listen to the Confirmands' words today, may we too be reminded of the importance of our faith in the one, Triune God. Thanks be to God.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy