

Confirmation Sunday
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY

May 17, 2009

John 15:9-17
Pastor Paul Horn

Christ Jesus has loved you. Remain in his love.

9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

Dear members of Faith Lutheran Church; friends and family members of our confirmands; and especially you, Malin, Joshua and Emily, the confirmation class of 2009.

In 10-15 years you may find that special person.... whom you might decide to become married to. Eventually the Lord may bless you with children. One day will you be sitting in your living room, rocking your baby, cuddling your baby, looking at your child’s face and wishing that he or she would remain small, cute and cuddly. Because you know that in a short amount of time, you will be standing on the street corner waiting for the bus. In a few short years you will be carting your son or daughter off to band practice, soccer, baseball or football. Then they grow into an ogre during their teenager years, and you will reflect back on your teenage years and how much grief you caused your parents, and you will say to them, “Why couldn’t you have just stayed a baby?”

When you were a baby, you had a simple faith planted in you at your baptism – a faith that believed in Jesus as your Savior. Over the years in Sunday school, Bible study and in your homes you have learned much more. You’ve grown up. These past two years have wetted your appetite and given you a yearning to eat and drink more of God’s Word. This is just the beginning of your spiritual growth. This is a time when you parents look at you and say, “I’m glad you’re growing up. I’m glad you’re not a baby anymore.”

This morning, on your confirmation day, Jesus has special words of encouragement for you as you continue your spiritual growth. In John 15:9 he says, “Remain in my love.” Remain in my love. First of all we have to ask, “What is Christ’s love?” Jesus gives us a hint with the Greek word he uses for love: agape. Agape love is selfless, it is a love that

gives and does not seek anything in return, it is a love that is pure, agape love has unselfish motives. This is the kind of love Jesus has for you.

How did he demonstrate his love to you? I think you know the answer and Jesus gives it to us in vs13, "Greater (agape) love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." That's about the most unselfish, humble and generous thing you could do for your friends. But how many of you would take your friend's place in detention or the principal's office or sitting in their room grounded so they can go out and play? Probably not. But this is what Jesus did for you. He was punished as your substitute for your sins. He died in your place. He suffered hell for you. That's agape love!

Now he says to you, Emily, Joshua and Malin, "Remain in my love." What does that mean? It means that for your entire life, you will allow the love that Christ showed to you to show itself in the way you love others. You will always keep Christ's love in your thoughts, on your lips in all of your actions. To remain in that love, you will make the most of every opportunity to come into contact with Christ's love. You're doing that right now, by being in worship, by participating in the Lord's Supper, by attending Bible study after church, by studying the Bible in your home with your family. Sounds easy, right, to remain in Christ's love?

The problem is there are people out there who don't want you to remain in Christ's love or to show that love to others. Your number one enemy is Satan. He will tempt you with all sorts of "fun" activities to make sure that you no longer show the love of Christ in your life, to ensure that you stray from Christ's love. One of the ways he will try to accomplish this is through your friends or "friends" who really aren't your friends. Here's how it may go down... your boyfriend or girlfriend may try to convince you that since society says it's ok, having sex if you're not married is an acceptable thing to do. Your friends will encourage you to rebel against mom and dad's rules, because parents just don't understand. Your friends might try to convince you that it's ok to go against the rules of your government in regards to smoking or drinking, or partying with drugs. Your friends will convince you that staying up all Saturday night and sleeping in on Sunday morning is more important than being with God's people and God's Word. Your friends will convince you that spending more time with them and video games and music is more important than some quality time with God's Word and in prayer. Pretty soon you might find yourself no longer feeding on God's Word but starving yourself. Eventually you might forget who your true friend is and what he did for you 2000 years ago on a cross outside of Jerusalem.

Malin, Emily and Joshua, these are the temptations that will assault you. I know because I've been there. I've been in high school. I went away from home to go to college. I was assaulted by these same temptations. To remain one of Christ's friends will not be easy. And I think you have to admit, that even now, if you reflect on your actions, your thoughts and your words that you already have not shown Jesus' love to others. I think that you will have to admit that you have not always allowed Christ's love to feed your soul.

That's when God's law hits us like a sledgehammer. He ought no longer call us his friends, but enemies. For not following his commands he ought no longer make us members of his home in heaven but residents in hell for all eternity. The threat of God's wrath beats us down, it condemns us, it exposes our sinful behaviors. That's when you and I, in humble repentance, admit our sins, and turn to Jesus, and seek his forgiveness. And if you should ever wonder, "Does Jesus still love me? Does he still call me his friend?" He says to you, "I do love you. I have always loved you. Yes, you are my friend. Look! I'll prove it to you! I laid down my life for you."

Think about this. Would lay down your life for your friends? Let's say that the three of you walk across the street to the BP gas station after church and you see a car barreling down Wilson Road. Would you push your friends out of the way, or would you dive out of the way to save yourself? That's what Jesus did for you. An oncoming Mack truck was zooming down on you: God's wrath was coming, headed straight for you, to smash you to smithereens you for all eternity because of your sins of not following his commandments, for not showing his love in your life, for following the ways and ideas of this sinful world. But Jesus pushed you out of the way and let himself be punished by God's wrath, to be tortured, to experience the pains of hell for you, to die for you, to rescue you from God's wrath. That's agape love. And Jesus never asks you to pay him back – because you cannot. He does not set a condition on his love. He says, "Remain in my love."

He gives you a special gift to remain in his love: the Means of Grace; the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Maybe you know of a classmate in school who is failing math or social studies or science. The teacher assigns a tutor to help that student so she or he doesn't fail. Jesus knows you and I cannot stand up to Satan's temptations all by ourselves. He knows that we fail. So he offers us the Means of Grace to strengthen you. The Means of Grace: the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Through his Word, Jesus lifts you up with these words, "Cast all your anxiety on me, because I care for you." He says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you will honor me." He says, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The Gospel in Sacrament... Through baptism, Jesus reminds you over and over again that your sins have been washed away and that a new person has been created in you who wants to do God's will. In a few minutes you will, for the first time, have a taste of the heavenly banquet that Jesus is preparing for you. In this sacred meal, Jesus offers you to eat and drink his body and blood with this bread and wine, and through it offers you forgiveness, salvation from sins, death, devil, offers and grants eternal life. Jesus gives you the Gospel in Word and Sacrament to remain in his love.

So don't be a stranger. Be faithful with your participation in the Lord's Supper. Be faithful in your worship and Bible study attendance. Be faithful in your home and don't just read his Word, study it, meditate on it, pray about it. Because you know and I know that to remain in his love, the next 10-20 years, the next 60-70 years, will be difficult. Satan will try his hardest to drag you away. Remain faithful. Remember the words of your class hymn, "Fight the good fight with all your might, Christ is your strength and Christ your might." Recall your confirmation passage. Malin, "Fear not," (Is 43:1).

Joshua, “Remain in the vine,” (John 15:5). Emily, “Be faithful to the point of death,
“(Rev 2:10), and you will remain in Christ’s love, and Christ will remain in you. May the
Holy Spirit through his Word and Sacraments strengthen you to remain in Christ’s love
all the days of your life until eternity. Amen.