

Sunday Sermon
May 20, 2018
John 17:9-11
“A Charge and a Prayer”

Introduction

The message today is for the confirmands. The rest of you can listen if you want to. I figure you are reading the faith statements in the booklet. And really, they are our message for today.

For you confirmands, I have a charge and a prayer. The prayer comes from Jesus, our scripture lesson for today. Since it is a prayer, I am going to wait and share those words at the end.

The charge comes from your individual faith statements. Let's look at the parts that you shared with the Session as your favorites.

Charge

1. Wonhee, your statement is listed first in the booklet, and your favorite part you say is in your last paragraph, “I feel it is important for Christians to do what God said; teach people about God’s word, help people to understand God and the Bible.” Today you claim baptismal vows made 13 ½ years ago by a congregation in Seoul, South Korea. Now as you take another step in your journey, I charge you to delve deeply into God’s word as you journey so you are able to teach and share that Word with others in the love that you point out is important.
2. Madison, you say what you like best in your statement is your confession, “I believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.” I charge you to continue to cherish those relationships in your family, those around you, that you say were so important in realizing your love for God, and you will continue to grow in the Way of your Lord and the Truth and the Life that he brings.
3. John, in your statement you say, “I believe it is important to be truthful, faithful and forgiving.” I charge you to keep these great goals for your life, seek to be truthful to others, seek to be faithful to your Lord, and seek to be forgiving as you have been forgiven.
4. John Wesley, you say that what is important for Christians to do is “remember in their lives that God is always with them and loves them.” If you remember that God is always with you, then you will be able to love others as God has loved you.

5. Caitlyn, you picked the end of the paragraph at the top of your second page as your favorite part: “We gather to teach each other because we are imperfect people. Even though we are imperfect,” you say, “God calls us to be his workers.” As you answer that call, remember we are imperfect but we are created in the image of a loving God. So as you serve God through dance, and making music, and other ways, celebrate that image in yourself and in others in your life, such as your Nana Kay.
6. Tabitha, you wrote about how the Holy Trinity shows us our Creator as the “Perfect Parent,” and how “The Church is a perfectly imperfect place where we try to do our best and join together as one.” I charge you in this perfectly imperfect place to keep dancing toward the good in others as well as in yourself.
7. Owen, you wrote about how the persons of the Trinity reflect a Perfect Parent. I charge you to remember what you summarize in your statement, that God is not finished with you yet. And you will continue to grow, if as you say, you seek simply to be kind, considerate, faithful, and generous with others.
8. Dionte, you wrote, “What I believe about God is that he is our savior and our creator. God made the Earth and everything on it.” Dionte, I charge you to remember we have all been wonderfully made by this loving Creator, and God has great plans for your life on God’s earth.

Confirmands, there will be more paragraphs added to your faith statement as you journey. Because today is not a graduation but a commencement. “One step in a lifelong adventure of faith.” But on this journey there is a moment, a cataclysmic moment, when you say: “I want to turn from sin and claim those baptismal waters that say I am a child of God, saved by the grace of Jesus Christ.” That is what you do today.

You know when Jesus said, “repent,” the word he used literally meant to do a 180 degree U-turn, an about-face, to reorient yourself away from past sin and toward God’s future. And so today, when you are asked the questions for profession of faith, you will follow an ancient liturgical tradition. You will start facing west, the place of the day’s end, as you renounce evil and its power in the world. Then you will turn a 180 degree turn and face toward the east, the place of the dawning of a new day, as you profess trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Then you will turn and face your church family to make vows to be part of this community of faith.

Prayer

Now for your prayer. Turn with me to John, chapter 17, in the pew bible, page 136, in the New Testament section. It is a poetic and passionate prayer of our Lord that he prays on behalf of his disciples. What is striking in this prayer is Jesus’ unmistakable pride in his disciples. Jesus could have easily complained about their

mistakes and their acts of imperfection, but instead he speaks about the disciples as if they are treasures that the Father has placed into his hands.

That is how we feel about you. We know you are not perfect. We know that you make mistakes. But we also know you are treasures and through the Spirit's work in you, you will glorify God. You already are.

Look and listen as I read part of this prayer of our Lord, as his prayer to the Father on your behalf. John, chapter 17, starting with verse 6. Our Lord prays to the Father:

⁶“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.”

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Confirmands, today remember your baptism and claim its promises. Amen.