

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Confirmation Sunday  
"Hopes and Dreams"

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Can you believe it? Today is finally here!

You've been thinking about it for a while now.  
You've been together as a confirmation class for two years  
and now the day is finally here.

Your parents have been looking forward to this day too.  
They've been making plans, inviting relatives, getting food ready.  
It's a big day.

But, somewhere along the line you may have wondered,  
"what's the big deal anyway? "Why is this day so important?"

In our First Reading this morning, Solomon and the people of Israel were also celebrating an important day.

For years Solomon had been building a beautiful new temple in the center of Jerusalem.  
When it was finished, it was considered one of the 7 wonders of the world.  
Visitors to Jerusalem would have marveled at the architecture.  
They would have been impressed by its beauty.

But for Solomon, the dedication this temple was important for a different reason.

Solomon had bigger hopes and dreams for that temple.

Did you catch what they were?

If you would, let's turn together to this reading from 1 Kings, chapter 8.

In verse 22 we read,

"Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel,  
and spread out his hands to heaven."

Why did he spread out his hands out to heaven?

He was praying, right?

He was dedicating the temple with this prayer.

Now listen to this prayer, and see if you can hear a connection  
to what is happening here, on Confirmation Sunday.

Solomon prayed,

“O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart...”

What word jumped out at you, that connects with Confirmation Sunday?

How about Covenant?

On Confirmation Sunday, these young men and women are remembering the Covenant God made with them in Holy Baptism.

A covenant is a promise.

It's the promise that in Holy Baptism, each of you were made children of God and given the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God promised to love you, no matter what!

God promises to keep his Covenant promise with us, even when we have a hard time keeping our promises to God.

In the Bible, there's a word for that kind of unconditional love. Right here in verse 23, it's translated “steadfast love...”

It means God's love never fails!

God's love never ends.

God's love follows us wherever we go.

God's love seeks after us when we are wandering away or lost.

God's love sustains us in times of trouble.

God's love lifts us up and carries us.

And God's love is a forgiving love, a love that takes our sin, all the way to the cross where Jesus set us free and paid the price once and for all.

8<sup>th</sup> Graders, have you ever been tempted to doubt God's love for you?

If you ever feel that you have failed at something, or have failed God, do you know what I want you to do?

I want you to remember your baptism.

I want you to remember how God's promise to love you and forgive you is forever... and ever ... and ever.

That's why Martin Luther wanted us to remember that Baptism is much more than something that happened one day in your life, a long time ago. "Baptism," Martin Luther would say, "is a promise you walk in every day."

That's why we gathered around the Baptismal font before the service this morning, and I made the sign of the cross on the cross on your forehead.

Martin Luther would make the sign of the cross on his forehead every morning and say the words "I am baptized." He did that to remind himself of God's promise, God's promise of unconditional love and forgiveness.

And this morning you are doing the same thing. When you stand before this congregation, and affirm or say yes to the promises of your baptism.

You are saying, "Yes," to the faith you have been raised in. "Yes," to God's covenant keeping, steadfast love.

And parents, God's Word has a special message for you today as well.

That day in Jerusalem, when Solomon dedicated the temple, Solomon had hopes and dreams for the temple that went way beyond what most people imagined.

So parents, let me ask you:

What are your hopes and dreams for your son or daughter?  
 What do you hope for their future?  
 What do you want them to experience in life?

Your hopes and dreams might include visualizing the kind of person you'd like to see your child become:

- a good student
- a hard worker
- a person who wins the trust and respect of others

You might visualize seeing your son or daughter

- receiving a good education,
- finding a good job,
- and raising a loving family.

These are all good things.  
 These are very natural hopes and dreams for parents.

But, let's go even farther. Let's reach even higher... like Solomon.

When it comes to your son or daughter's faith in Jesus Christ?"  
what are your hopes and dreams?

Years ago a pastor friend of mine told me something I'll never forget.

He serves as a youth pastor and he sometimes hears parents say:

"Oh, if only my son or daughter

- graduates from high school without getting into drugs,
- or wrecking the car
- or becoming a teenage parent

then, I can breathe a sigh of relief.

But that's not dreaming very big is it?

We certainly want to pray, prayers of protection for our sons and daughters  
Jesus did that for his disciples.

But we need to remember that Jesus, didn't just pray for his disciples protection and stop there.  
In John 17, Jesus prayed, "Father, as you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."

He prayed for their protection  
and then he gave them a mission!

What my friend, the youth pastor, found so disappointing was how little those parents were  
willing to settle for. Instead of hoping and dreaming for the best,  
they only hoped that the worst would not happen.

Think about it this way:

What if more parents hoped and dreamed and prayed

that by the time their sons and daughters graduated from high school

they would be living out their faith in everything they did...

...that each day they would sense God's presence and pray for His guidance

...that they would experience the joy of knowing Christ's love and be so confident of their value  
in God's eyes,

that being popular at expense of being faithful, would not interest them

What if we as a congregation, hoped and dreamed and prayed

for each of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders, so that they would recognize their gifts.

like the gifts they are offering in worship this morning...

gifts in music, and serving, and hospitality, and technology.

What if we all hoped and dreamed and prayed that our 8<sup>th</sup> graders would not only recognize their God given talents but see them as a calling in life.  
and use those gifts to serve others and bring glory to God.

8<sup>th</sup> graders, do you remember what I shared in the Children's message?  
You are the church.  
You are the body of Christ in this world.

Today, just like on the day of your baptism we are going to pray for you  
We're going to pray that the Holy Spirit fills you with power:  
to trust God... and love God... and serve God.

I'm looking forward to these next four years with you, before you graduate.

I'm looking forward to seeing in worship on Sundays. I'm looking forward to seeing you participate in our High School youth group and continue to grow in your faith.

Just like the words of the hymn we're going to sing next,  
I'm looking forward to seeing you "Lift High the Cross... the love of Christ proclaim."

That's our mission.

And that's the hope and dream God has for each of you,

"Lift High the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim,  
til all the world adore His sacred name." Amen