

## Confirming Our Faith

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Crozet United Methodist Church

Pentecost Sunday - May 23, 2010

John 14:8-27

*Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.*

*Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.*

*"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*

*"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.*

*"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*

Since the Sunday after Valentine's Day, the group of eight (and sometimes more) young people who comprise our 2010 Confirmation Class and I have gathered here at church for Confirmation Class. When it finally got warm and the snow melted, we would gather on the church lawn to eat the leftover Communion bread and discuss the difference in

transubstantiation, consubstantiation, the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and what being a people to gather at the table of the Lord says about how we live all of the other hours of our lives. Other times, we gathered here in the sanctuary to discuss sacred space and what the layout of a church building and the symbols inside can teach us about God. Once, we pulled down the attic steps in the old sanctuary and looked at the original ceiling and the old lighting, all still there, and remembered the Communion of Saints by remembering that this is what the Confirmation Class of 1910 would have seen in worship on Sundays. We talked about the fruit of the Spirit, during which time the class ate the entire fruit bowl I had brought as a visual aid. We took a retreat to Camp Overlook in Keezletown and participated in a reenactment of the first Easter, peering around an enormous stone to look inside of a "tomb," only to see someone inside dressed as an angel in white, and suddenly having the wits scared out of us, and in doing so, learning quite a bit about how the first Easter must have felt.

I asked a lot of these young people over the course of the last quarter-year. During that time, I found myself wishing that this congregation could have the same experiences I was having. So, last Sunday, I asked them for one more thing: for them to write a one-page essay on their best answer to the question, "What becoming a Christian means to me." This morning's sermon, on this day when we remember and celebrate and witness youth and adults professing their Christian faith, is comprised of excerpts of those essays, and it is this year's class' gift to you:

**(Noelle)** Being a Christian means a lot of things to me. It means to do good for others and ask for nothing in return, it means to do random acts of kindness, but most of all, it means to commit your life you Jesus Christ. Being a Christian is very important to me and I'm glad that my parents introduced me to Jesus. My life has really changed now that I know Jesus Christ. I've learned to turn to Jesus when you need some help, I've learned that you can't turn to other things that make you happy to fill your life up, you have to turn to Jesus to fill it up.

**(Jake)** I have confidence in God, and believe that in whatever I do, God is with me, and watching over me. Ever since I became a faithful Christian, and started going to church, I have felt more confident and happier in my life. Being a Christian means following Jesus Christ, and proclaiming and learning about the word of God, and taking it out into the word into real life situations.

**(Lydia)** I am young, and now becoming a Christian, which means that I'm choosing Jesus as my savior, and I'm going to let him influence my life, and choices. I confess that I have done sins, but I know I am forgiven. When Jesus was crucified, he freed me of all of my sins, and the Lord forgives them. Being a Christian, I still have sins but I am trying to live my life in a way that glorifies god.

We all have hate, disloyalty inside of us, Though it may just be an ounce ,God cleanses us, making us a beautiful person inside and out. I confess that when I have had a bad day, I can blame some on god, and I am misled, thinking why would he do this to me? But no matter what,

he did it for a reason, it may not be a perfect day, but I learn from my mistakes and gain knowledge by it. I can stray from my path, and be lost, but I know that no matter what, god will bring me back, for he is forever patient of us, helping us home... When I am confirmed tomorrow I may think that my journey is done, that god will lead the rest of the way, but this is only the beginning!

**(Jonathan)** You just absolutely have to believe in Jesus! I don't see how you could call a fully fledged Christian without believing in Jesus. He is our savior, The sacrificial lamb, the holy messiah, the son of god! If I didn't believe in him I wouldn't be standing in this church right now talking to you because I want to be confirmed into this church!

I also believe that anyone can be a Christian. No matter what crime they have committed God would forgive them. So should you. Do not bristle with hatred at a foe who has turned the wrong way. Only feel sorrow for them and if possible help to turn them around back down the path of God. I feel that any Christian would do this knowing it is the right thing to do. Also if you do the wrong thing at a moment do not let yourself be lost because you worry of not being forgiven by God. He will judge you, but fairly and will always forgive, always give you a chance to turn back. This is what I think it means to be a Christian.

**(Tye)** Personally and to me being a Christian is as simple as following in Jesus's footsteps. In order to be a Christian and to follow is His footsteps, I need to live in the way of life that His disciples lived, faithfully doing good deeds and learning as they went. I am relatively new to this faith, so I also am learning as I go along. The Apostles did not know everything, and nor do I, but learning through following Him is a big part of the experience. Being a Christian means living like I do on Sunday every day of the week. Since I became a Christian, I have felt a lot better about my life. Christianity gives a person a purpose in the world, and I no longer am walking through my life without meaning. It means taking the word of God and spreading it, as missionaries do, into the world to those who need it. As Jesus said, it is not the healthy who need the doctor.

**(Aaron)** Why I think Jesus died on the cross was because he would rather die instead of the whole world living in sin. Imagine that a man that made miracles died for you! If he did not we would all probably in the hands of Satan. If we were who would save us now? Think of the whole world living in sin! Do you know how painful it would be to know that every minute of your life was being wasted from doing wrong?

In Genesis chapter 20 it talks about going into heaven. I always wanted to know what it would be like in heaven. To think that there is now danger or sin and everyone is perfect. Think of seeing and meeting the people who you once favored or loved. To me it would be a relief to see my Great Uncle Eugene. He died only two years ago. He believed in a higher god. He did many good deeds such as giving his will to shelters and charities!

To me Christianity is not just something you believe in, it is something you can live by and know that God is with you. I learned just last week that god is in everyone, so in order for you to help god you must help others.

**(Andrew)** I think the meaning of Christian is that you focus not on yourself, but on everyone. You would do what someone needs, without thinking about what you will get in return. You would be nice to people who are mean because you don't know what's happening in their lives. You would always be friendly to everyone, like if someone didn't have many friends, you would go out of your way to be nice to that person. Or if someone was being bullied, you should try to get people to stop, or at least don't go along with it. You would donate a lot to charities, not just so people will think you're a nice person, but to actually help the people who need whatever your donating.

**(Hannah)** To me, being a Christian means that you should try to do the right thing and be like Jesus. Being a Christian does not mean that you have to be perfect. It means that when you make a mistake you repent and ask God for forgiveness. That doesn't mean that you have to be really hard on yourself every time you make a mistake. It means that we should try to do the right thing. Jesus died to save us from our sins. He died so that we can move past our mistakes. He died so we can be part of His kingdom in Heaven.

Being a Christian means that you are God's light in the world. This means that you spread the message of the good news that Jesus died for us. There are many different ways of spreading the good news. Each way is different, but that does not mean that it is wrong. When you are a Christian, you are God's light in the world.

Being a Christian makes me feel protected, watched over. When I am unhappy, sad, or scared I feel comforted when I think of God watching over me. God watches over Christians. He cares about and loves every one of us. That is why He sent Jesus.

As Jesus was preparing his disciples for his imminent arrest and crucifixion, he gave them a final "lecture" that we know today as the farewell discourse. This morning's text is from that discourse. Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you."

And today is the day when we remember those disciples, the ones who so often got it wrong, huddled together in the upper room, waiting for what was to happen next, and they received the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who empowered them to create a community of love and grace the likes of which the world had never before seen. Today, these young people have joined that community, that movement, that alternative to what the world has to offer, a movement that was built on the dedication and love of the saints before us, many of whom are in this sanctuary with us today. Never betray the gift of the Holy Spirit that has been entrusted to you today. Love God and keep God's commandments, and bear God's light, so that the light of your life (and our

lives) may be a sign-act for this generation, and the generations yet unborn, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the church our Lord founded for us all.

Gloria In Excelsis Deo.