

Time after Pentecost - Lectionary 10
Confirmation Sunday
The Reverend John H. Brock

Sunday, June 6, 2010
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

1 Kings 17:17-24; Psalm 30;
Galatians 1:11-24; Luke 7:11-17

Grace and peace to you from God who was, who is, and who is to come. Amen.

I am guessing that there might be a few people in this room today who have been anticipating this specific day for several months now. Some of you with joy, some of you with thanksgiving, maybe some of you with dread. These 14 young men and women, and the 13 who are across the hall in the nave, plus the 3 who will be doing this next Thursday evening (that makes 30 all together), they are about to do something that is on the verge of being amazing. They are going to make a public confession of their faith.

When is the last time that any of us who are sitting here have done that? To stand up in front of a group of people and say, "Hey, look at me! I am a believer in Jesus Christ." Yes, I realize, most of us here are Christians in the Lutheran tradition, and as such are not known for such tactics. Still, these young people are taking a big step in their faith life and a big risk as well. Why, is it a big risk? Because while today is a (hopefully) wonderful day for all of you (I hope you are going out for a nice dinner—maybe have a cake and lots of cards), this is a great day to celebrate being a believer. However, there will be days that aren't so great being a believer. Days that will make you say, 'Why do I believe? God, what were you thinking? Why did this awful thing happen in my life?'

Being Confirmed, or being *Affirmed* in your baptism, taking on those promises that were made on your behalf, does NOT mean that the rest of your life will be fantastic, trouble free, piece of cake, because without a doubt there will be bad things that happen. Life as a believer will have its difficulties.

As an example, what we learned in our first lesson. Elijah is a prophet of the Lord God Almighty. He was told to go and predict a drought. He was told to go and tell the king of Israel specifically about this drought because the people of Israel, via his wife, had fallen away from the Lord. By telling the king there is about to be a drought because they have fallen away from the Lord he gets himself in trouble. The king doesn't want to hear these words that Elijah has to say. The king, Ahab is his name, doesn't like the news of a drought, and does not like that his queen's god was shown up. Queen Jezebels' god Ba'al was supposed to be the one in charge of rain. So Elijah hides out in the wilderness, where he is fed by birds bringing him food.

But then God tells Elijah to stop hiding and to go to Sidon (which is the home of Queen Jezebel). There he will find a widow. He is to live with that widow (live with her as in be a house mate, not *live with* her). (All of this is happening in the first nine verses of 1 Kings 17. These three chapters—17, 18, and 19— are, I think,

some of the most action filled and suspenseful in scripture. Get yourself a copy of the New Living Translation and read this—it's great stuff. Remember, the Bible is more than thee & thous, and "thou shalt nots.") We have to remember that in the Old Testament times, widows are among the lowest of the low. They have NO social standing. It is the middle of a drought and there is not enough food to go around. The widow has even less than not enough and along comes Elijah who says, "I want you to get me a glass of water, and make me something to eat." He said this to a nonbeliever, a non-believing widow, who is on the verge of starving herself. What is the Lord God thinking to ask someone to do that? What is more important, though, is that Elijah went, he does ask the widow. The widow, through faith, through hospitality - we don't know why - makes something for Elijah to eat. All the time that Elijah stays with the widow and her son, they never run out of flour or oil. So it turns out things are going o.k.

Then, tragedy strikes in the form of the death of her only child. It turns out that her son dies. She is overwhelmed with grief and takes it out on Elijah himself. Now, Elijah knows that he is not responsible for the death of this boy, but he asks, 'God what is going on here? You, God Almighty, killed the son of this woman with whom I have been staying, her only child, her only son.' Elijah is able, through God, to bring this boy back to life. He stays with them until the rains come. Through everything that happened, through the good times and the bad, God is there with Elijah.

Most of you guys were baptized when you were infants. Somebody, mom, dad, your grandparents, made some promises on your behalf. They promised specifically; let me read them to you:

As you bring your children to receive the gift of baptism, you are entrusted with responsibilities: to live with them among God's faithful people; bring them to the word of God and the holy supper; teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Commandments; place in their hands the holy scriptures; and nurture them in faith and prayer, so that your children may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.

Now, the fact that you are here today, means that they took those promises seriously. They took them to heart and made good on those promises. You were just asked, are you going to take those promises on yourself? Remember what I just asked you?

To live among God's faithful people. To hear the word of God, and to share the Lord's supper. To proclaim the good news of Christ through word and deed, to serve all people following the example of Jesus, and work for justice and peace.

Those are the promises that you guys, just made.

There will come times in your life that, hopefully like today, are good days, days to rejoice. Maybe when you graduate from high school, and if you go on to college. Maybe when you get your first job, or possibly when you get married. Or, when you

have children. But, there will also be days that will bring about sadness. The first time that someone you love stops loving you back. If you fail a class or lose a job. When someone you love and care for dies. In all of those times—the rejoicing time and the sadness—the Lord God is with you.

That is what this day is all about—remembering what those promises are. Remembering that we are all connected through faith and through baptism. Remembering that we are not alone and that we have each other. Remembering that you have all those folks behind you. Some who came here today from far away, just because of You. I am going to ask you fourteen to stand up and turn around. Now, you folks in the congregation who are here today specifically because of one of these young people, raise your hand. Keep holding it! Ok gang: you see all those people? Now, everybody else if you are not here specifically for a certain person, but are willing to support them in their continuing life with Christ, would you please raise your hand. Thank you. Hands may go down, and students, you may turn around and sit again.

Did you see all those people—that is close to 300 people all together—You are not alone. Just like Elijah was not alone. These people love and care for you, they are here to help you in this journey of faith, in life, and in all things. So, I’m asking all fourteen of you when you leave here today, remember to come back. Because one of things you just promised was to live out your faith by actually taking part in a faith community, actively in a faith community. I am also asking you to keep active in your faith. Volunteer, read scripture on your own, pray, go to worship regularly and frequently. Christmas and Easter are regular, but not frequent.

Most importantly, through, I am reminding you that when you leave here today, no matter where you go, whatever you do, God is always with you.

Amen.