

Following Jesus in a Wonderful and Weary World
Confirmation Homily based on 1 John 2:9-17
David Jahnke, 5/20/18

With today being Pentecost Sunday, I want to share what I think is the essential history of the church. A rabbi named Jesus started preaching and teaching and immediately attracted quite a following because he was very good at what he did. From the get-go, he also healed people and worked wonders in other ways. Some men were so amazed by what they saw and heard and felt that they decided to join his movement. And because he continued to do miracles and teach so well from the ancestors' traditions and innovate somewhat as well, this all confirmed their decisions to join him and eventually led them to believe that he was God's Messiah, sent to set the people free.

After a couple of years of working with him, they were horrified that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem did not see what they saw and how he thus ended up crucified. A short time later, those same disciples decided to keep on proclaiming that Jesus was the Messiah, even though they might have ended up crucified as well. And the heart and the proof of their proclamation and the reason for their fearlessness was that Jesus rose from the dead, and appeared to them and to many with final instructions about their mission.

Today you confirmands have publicly professed that what the disciples saw, heard, spoke and eventually wrote about is basically true. It may not be 100% factual, as Justin already alluded to, since human beings are prone to errors in recalling history and imaginative and theological when telling stories about God. But you decided today that Jesus and his followers were basically good Jews with great news and not charlatans or fools who decided to deceive their people with a false messiah.

And in proclaiming your faith in Jesus today, it means that you have a great life ahead of you. Because you committed to what makes life great-- Jesus and the wonderful things of his Kingdom. And while your commitment will have its ups and downs, a great life will always be with and near you because God will always be near and in you. Today the Spirit of God has been sealed upon your heart and mind.

John wrote about the temptations you all will face in the years ahead and tells you not to love them. He says "Do not love the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches." The world will barrage you with news that life is about money and sex and getting lots cool stuff. And you will fall prey to this from time to time. And you will feel blue at those time. And when you do, you can remember the basic Christian message that John wrote to the little children-- he wants to teach them over and over that their sins are forgiven and God loves them no matter what.

So never forget that. But starting today, you are no longer a little child. Today you have become young men and women, and John writes specifically to you, saying:

"I write to you, young people, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Now John could not have possibly known the spiritual place of every young person that he was writing to. But that did not change what he had to tell them. He knew they had been taught about Jesus since they were little and nurtured by worship. And that meant God had already overcome whatever evil might befall them.

I cannot tell you how blessed we parents are by what you have said and done today. I usually say to parents whose kids are being baptized that it is a great relief to know that your children belong to God before they belong to you. Because we know there will be a time when we will have to start letting them go. That reality is upon us and it means so much to hear that the Word of God will abide in you. And that you will seek God's guidance and plan for your life and you will keep coming to church to keep growing and hanging out with good kids.

And really there is no point in trying to run away from God. Because Love, and Peace and Truth and Goodness are going to surround you and bless you and burden you for the rest of your days. So trying to escape God is kind of like a fish in the middle of the Pacific Ocean trying to escape the water.

But you do have to swim! Out there the waves are big but you will do fine. In here it should be like the post-swim jacuzzi. Here is where our souls get the rest and the therapy they need. So get here regularly. I have much more to teach you. Today is a new beginning of your active spiritual lives.

I will save my other charges for later...For now, to the God of all grace who can do far more abundantly in you than all you can ask or imagine be all the power and the glory, now and forevermore...

Charge to confirmands

I charge you to take seriously what you said and did today. You are now young men and women, responsible for showing love and mercy and peace to everyone every day. This is really hard which is why you need to come to church every Wednesday and/or Sunday for the sake of learning, practicing, encouragement and building friendships. And remember that Jesus is with you through it all to the very end of your lives when you will finally see him face to face.

Charge to parents and godparents

John wrote this to the fathers and mothers of the young people in his community:

13 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.

9Whoever says, 'I am in the light', while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness.10Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.

There are so many causes for stumbling in today's world. So you all must continue to be a light to these young ones. And your love will be their guiding light. So please keep loving on our kids. Invite them to your homes; come to youth group or Sunday night lessons and games; look them in the eye on Sunday morning and force them to talk to you! Become a mentor starting next fall. Find ways to continue to be the light to a generation in great need of it.

Benediction...

No matter where you end up or what you do,

So you are now responsible for showing love and mercy and peace to everyone every day. You have said to the entire world that these are the things you live for now. And

Charge to parents and godparents

⁷ Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. ⁸ Yet I am

writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. **9**Whoever says, 'I am in the light', while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. **10**Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.

Those things are not bad in and of themselves. But they only are good when we use them to further God's ways of love, peace and mercy.

You will even go through periods in which you do not think about God particularly much. You may even go through times where you are not sure if you believe in him. But from this day forward, the Word and the promises of God will abide in you and strengthen you and watch over you and protect you.

I need to first qualify what I just read. When John says, "Do not love the world or the things of the world," he is referring to sin and the temptation to sin. Do not love

"God loves the world so much that he sent his son not to condemn the world but to save it."

Today you have become young men and women, called to your own ministries of love, justice and peace. So what can you do to further these things of God in your schools and neighborhoods and world? I have gotten to know you. And you al

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; 16 for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live for ever.

14. Does anyone know how "the world" is understood, generally speaking, in the gospel of John? Who is the prince of it?

15. Which "world" is the author referring to? The good world created by God? The fallen (and actually) unreal world of the enemy? How do we distinguish between them? Why do I say unreal?

18 Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us.

16. So who are the antichrists?

17. How does the author interpret this in terms of the "times"?

18. And if they do not belong to the church, the author presumes they belong to?

19. Which is better, to believe that the un-churched/ non-believer belong to God or to the devil? Who do they most essentially belong to? Who do we want to tell them they belong to?

20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and you know that no lie comes from the truth. 22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also.

20. What is critical truth and lie?

21. What does this suggest some of those who left were (not) believing?

4:29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him.

While the doing of right in this tradition probably refers to believing in Jesus, it does open the door to people who are committed to justice, righteousness, love, peace and mercy being born of Jesus.

22. What is the right approach and right balance-- what is the truth?-- in terms of affirming limited understandings and working together vs. challenging them and calling people to believe in Jesus as we do?

More specifics below, as we talked about last week.

4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.

23. Why is it important to believe that Jesus has come "in the flesh." How does the author understand flesh above in v. 16? So in order to redeem us from sin/ the flesh, Jesus needs to...?

24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he has promised us, eternal life.

26 I write these things to you concerning those who would deceive you. 27 As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who does right has been born of him.

In 168 B.C.E. or 169 B.C.E. Antiochus marched to Jerusalem, slew Jason (last of the Zadokite High Priests) and dedicated the Temple to Zeus, erecting an image of Zeus in his own likeness on the altar, and, according to some sources, sacrificed a pig in the Temple. This is known to Jews as the 'great desecration' or 'abomination of desecration' (from Daniel 11: 31 & 12: 11). The Temple's sacred treasures, including "the golden candlesticks, and the golden altar" were robbed (V2: 87)

³Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. ⁴He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. ⁵Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? ⁶And you know what is now

restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, ¹⁰and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, ¹²so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

2:1 As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, ²not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. ³Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. ⁴He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God. ⁵Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? ⁶And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. ⁷For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, ¹⁰and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.