

Message for April 13th

Palm Sunday and Confirmation

From Joshua 1:9 we hear these words, “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” And from Luke 1:37, we hear, “Nothing is impossible with God.”

These verses are the confirmation verses of our two young people today. I must say how impressed I was by their choices. It shows some good theological thinking for two young people. But I must also add I’m not surprised because I know how these two have been brought up but more on that later.

The scripture Connor chose comes after Moses has died and new leadership takes place under Joshua. This did not happen by chance. Joshua had been at Moses’ side for years learning and assisting in many ways. He had witnessed the Egyptian plagues and the exodus. He was prepared in many ways.

Yet what lay before him was a tremendous task. He was charged with leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. A land filled with formidable enemies who would do all in their power to stop what God had planned. It was only under Joshua’s leadership that the mission was accomplished.

While we are not facing what the Israelites faced, we do have our challenges. Much too often we choose to face them on our own or with the wisdom the times we are living through offers. We can easily become discouraged by what we see and hear about. Yet this scripture written so long ago also applies to our young people and us. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Many people do not watch any news these days because of all the bad news happening out there. I have visited with some who feel that way. They tell me how all that is happening in our country and the world scares them. Most of these folks are older and will say something like, “I’m glad I’m in my older years, I feel sorry for the younger generations.” I can relate to what they are saying to a point.

But then I'm reminded of what I've learned over the years from the many people I've known including my parents, my Sunday school teachers, my youth sponsors, different ministers, and regular lay people like are gathered here today. And I'm reminded what of the verse Emma chose and what the angel told Mary, "Nothing is impossible with God."

Yes, we live in an uncertain time. Yet our faith teaches us that God has always been and will continue to stay with us. We can face each and every challenge with these words of Joshua and not be discouraged or terrified because all things are possible with our Lord. Sometimes we close doors and the Lord opens another.

It has been said that God works in mysterious ways. Once there was a little boy who really liked to watch the squirrels play in his front yard. One day one of the squirrels got hit by a car and was killed. The boy was devastated. He told his mom what had happened and how sad he was. Mom, not knowing what else to say replied, "I'm sorry, Johnny, but you know God works in mysterious ways." Little Johnny thought for a minute and then replied, "What would God want with a dead squirrel."

During our time in confirmation I have tried to teach some life lessons what Emma and Connor probably will encounter. I have made it a point to mention them several times, so they are probably tired of hearing them but I would like to share them one more time. Sooner or later they will hear these questions and I hope they remember an appropriate response. The first they might hear is, "Have you found Jesus?" And while there has to be a personal commitment in a life of faith, I really believe a good beginning response is, "Jesus found me." And another question they might hear someday that perhaps some of us have heard is, "Are you saved?" "Yes, I am saved by the grace of God," is the perfect answer. It tells of one's belief and how they are trying to live their life.

In their class statement of faith we learn much of the belief these two have developed. One can see how direct and to the point it is. This was a good project for them. It is a good challenge for anyone no matter what their age. I would encourage you to write your own.

So this morning I say to our two young people who have been raised and influenced so well by family and friends and this church family may God continue to bless you as you pass this milestone in your faith journey.

And yes, it is a milestone; confirmation is not an end but a part of a life long journey. Perhaps all of us who have been confirmed can take a moment to think back to our own faith journeys and the things we have faced with the Lord by our side. Let us then look forward, undaunted to the tasks before us, knowing that no matter what, nothing is impossible with God and the Lord our God is with us wherever we go. Amen.