



So, Penelope, Andrew, and Ethan, it's over, you're done, congratulations...all that good stuff. And today concludes a rather...interesting Confirmation journey for you, because you were thrown a bit of a curveball this past year as we attempted different times and different formats for our gatherings and moving around the church building here and even to a different church altogether at Redeemer, just to make your lives more interesting. And somehow, you still showed up, for which Pastor Mark and myself are grateful, including to your family for making that all happen as well. Because we recognize your lives are busy, to put it mildly, and we also recognize that not only are you busy, but you have growing expectations to live up to with school and

extra-curricular activities and with family, and there is a fair share of change that gets thrown at you in the midst of all of that; nevertheless, you are expected to somehow not only to survive it but to thrive in spite of it, because your life is going to have its fair share of change-ups, to say the least, some of which you know are coming with school and extra-curricular activities and family, but some you have absolutely no idea will come and will still come in any way.

Now, one of the changes that has happened with Confirmation over the years is that today was, at one point, a crowning achievement of all the things you memorized and tests you passed and that, back in the good 'ole days of the church, you would even stand in front of all these people and be asked random questions about Scripture and Martin Luther and church operation that you would be expected to answer in spite of whatever nervousness and anxiety before you would be granted the almighty Confirmation passage in your journey of faith. So, I hope you can breathe in a collective sigh of relief that some things have indeed changed in the church, which we of the church have not always been the quickest to accept, but we can also recognize that God's goodness was present in those days and that God's goodness is also very much present, not just in this general time and space, but also that God's goodness is also very much in each of you.

And so I hope today is not so much about a crowning achievement of you coming to Sunday afternoon learning sessions and fulfilling some churchly tasks interspersed here and there, but today is about further reassuring to each of you, that this is your faith to take pride in, this is your journey with God to take more ownership of, and this is God, your family and friends, your Divinity siblings in Christ: this is all of us saying to you that we believe in you, that we see Jesus living in you, and that you have an impact to make on those of us in this room and countless others you have no idea exist right now. Today is about convincing you that we do not just say that because it's the right thing to say, but because we know, and God knows, that it is the Gospel truth.

Today is about starting to ignite hopes and dreams and visions in you about what you can possibly see how you can live out a trust that Christ not only rose from the dead long ago, but that Christ rises in you, even in the face of all the changes you have already faced. And that no matter what happens in your life, that nothing will ever separate you from God's love in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Now, yes, we hope that part of your life will include this place of Divinity. But we also realize that change happens. And so, we hope that these last two years will at some point leave a spiritual mark in you to leave you wanting more. Maybe it isn't right now. Maybe you've had your fair share of Scripture-diving into and theology and church history immersion. But someday, when you're ready, I hope you find the place and the people who don't just talk about it, or sing about it, or even just pray about it; but to find the place and the people who not only say the things because they're right thing to say. Find the place and the people who dramatically put God's completely nonsensical love and compassion and grace into

memorable action. Find the place and the people who make you feel as if you are part of something that you will never ever forget.

Now, I wonder if you already had a glimpse of that a couple months ago, when we drove you over to the nearby nursing home, standing in front of a group of older individuals dealing with various life challenges and change-ups they never hoped to endure, many of whom do not experience a world beyond the staff there and television screens. I'm sure it was a bit awkward to lead prayers and sing in front of them. But I hope that day sticks with you, nonetheless, because it doesn't make a whole lot of sense that junior highers would want to take time on a Sunday afternoon amidst all their other obligations to sing and pray and Commune with complete strangers in a nursing home. But there you did it, and along the way you brought God's completely nonsensical love and compassion and grace to people who are just as cherished by God as anyone else, but far too often, because of what has happened to them, they're not so sure it's true for them. And that one random Sunday afternoon, we were called to not just say it because it's the right thing to say, we insisted on helping them believe it again. So, as much as Confirmation is often tied to memorization and testing our biblical and theological knowledge. Today isn't so much about that. Today is God saying I still want to be a part of your life, and no matter what happens, I'm never going to leave you. Today is about hopefully inspiring each of you to find whatever way your heart desires to put your faith, your journey with God, into an impact that will shape memories of hope for those who desperately need it. Today is about the church believing in you, and that the Gospel of God's relentless love and joy is just as much for you as anyone else in all of history and for all that is to come. So, Penelope, Andrew, Ethan, congratulations! It's over, you're done, and yet it's only just beginning for each of you. So, for these three precious children of the Divine, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!