

Confirmation: a lifetime journey of joy.

Bible reference for sermon: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

²We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. ⁶And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy from the Holy Spirit, ⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. ⁸For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. ⁹For they report about us what kind of welcome we had among you and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God ¹⁰and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

Welcome to our Confirmees and thank you for your presentations to us today as you share the joy of your faith with us today. Welcome to your family and friends who celebrate with you.

Question: what do your family and friends have in common with the apostle Paul who writes to the congregation at Thessalonica in Greece?

I don't really know, but I think it may be this this: a BIG SMILEY FACE Let me unpack this briefly

I've been to Thessalonica. It was hot. Real hot! And so, it was for the missionary Paul a long time ago. It was the second place in Europe that Paul and his partner in mission called Silas brought the gospel to. And just as they were criticized and attacked by the Jews in that city because they brought the gospel, so were the people who became Christians in that city. After Paul left the city, he wondered what would become of these Christians who were under attack for their faith.



Would they confirm their faith and grow strong? Or would they give up and fall by the wayside because of the opposition?

Paul sent Timothy to find out and do you know what he found?

The people had stood firm. Even in the face of opposition, they publicly confirmed their faith by worshipping the Triune God who you confess as your God today as you confirm your faith. You share your faith with some famous people in the Bible from long ago and with your family and church family today.

We rejoice and celebrate you and God's Holy Spirit at work in your hearts and lives.

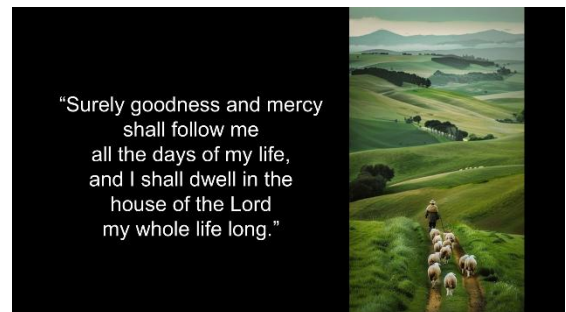
Just as the Holy Spirit worked faith in the hearts of Christians long ago in faraway Thessalonica, so the same Spirit works faith and grows faith in the hearts of all of us today. How? Well Paul says it's through the gospel



And it is through the same gospel, through the message of the love of God for you and for all people through the message of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus that the Holy Spirit works God's plan for you to grow in your faith and to be the holy people of faith he has created you to be.

Like the Christians who came to faith at Thessalonica long ago, God's plan for you too is not just a one-off year of study and one church service. It's a lifetime of growing in God's love for you through you to others.

Last Sunday Pastor Sue preached on psalm 23 and I know that you know this psalm. The psalmist confesses their faith in God by saying "surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life." The prayers of Pastor Sue and I, Marlene, your parents and god-parents and everyone here today is that you will know the joy of walking with your Good Shepherd for the whole of your life.



The Christians at Thessalonica stood firm in their faith despite others around ridiculing them, giving them a hard time for their faith in Jesus Christ. Will you? Do we stand firm today?

Confirming our faith in response to the gospel, in response to what God has first done for us is not just a one off. But it's a lifetime of receiving the love of God in the gospel. This past year we thank God for teachers, mentors, parents, fellow students who have dived deeper into the faith and who have shared this journey and who have encouraged you through and grown in faith with you as the Holy Spirit has worked in them as well as you.

This same Holy promises to continue a lifelong journey of revealing the fullness of God's love and grace for every one of us here. God is ready to go with you into the future. God already has you in his plans and in his heart for the journey ahead. So dear friends, don't let this confirmation be a one off. Don't let Satan fool you into complacency. But look forward to the amazing things God has in store for you in your whole life. Stay connected to Jesus through the gospel. Hear the Word in community together and encourage and be encouraged by others at home, in the youth group, in church. Receive the gift of forgiveness and grow through the precious meal of Holy Communion. Stay connected for life. For your life... For life is the promise.

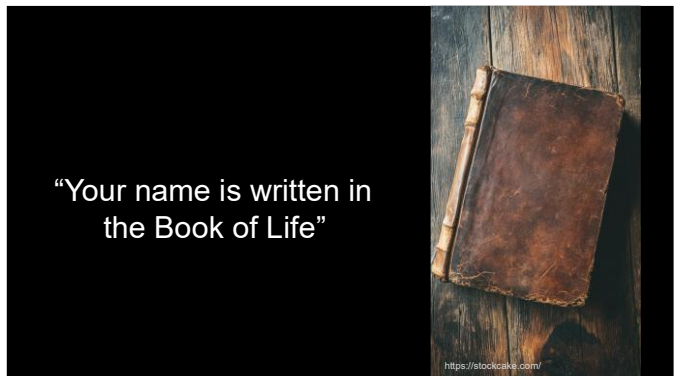
When you were baptized, God wrote your name in the book of life. Grow in that life for you.

God will always be faithful to you. He confirms his baptism commitment to you every day to be with you always and he invites you to walk with him every day.

Some at Thessalonica confirmed their faith but they had become lazy and showed signs of giving up. Some there thought that Jesus was about to walk through the door and they stopped growing in their faith. They'd done enough. They treated faith as a one off, not a life of growing in God's love. And sometimes all of us, whatever age we are, and whether we have confirmed our faith or not, can become lazy or be tempted to see our faith as a one-off thing and not as something dynamic and exciting to grow in. That's been my experience. I'm near the end of my life and as I look back, I see how God confirmed his faithfulness to the promise he made at my baptism to be with me always. And he called me back to him again and again and eventually called me to be a pastor which I love. God has a plan for each one of you.

I encourage all of us to be encouragers of our Confirmees and Confirmees I ask you to keep encouraging all of us as you grow in your faith. The believers at Thessalonica had become an example for others new to the faith and we can be too. In chapter 5 of this letter Paul writes:

⁶So, then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober, ⁷for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober and put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation.



⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Encourage and build one another up. That's what you do for us today Confirmees. Thank you for this gift. Faith is a very special gift from God not just to be confirmed once and then forgotten about.



But faith is a dynamic gift to grow in and to encourage others by our examples. God rejoices over you today and promises you a lifetime of his love and life for you. Look forward to all he has in store as you live a lifetime of growing to be who God has planned for you to be in his world. Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>