

## 10.25.20 Ref Day God's Grace is Bigger than WE are

- Today is your confirmation
  - This is a BIG day, and you will remember this day for the rest of your lives
  - And make no mistake, your confirmation IS important
    - But as we have been telling you for over three years, you are NOT graduating, as if the last three years have been some kind of school that you pass or fail
    - And you are NOT joining the church – you were brought into the church, the people of God, when you were baptized, and God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit on that day welcomed you and declared that you are a beloved daughter
    - But today you WILL affirm your faith – a faith that may be strong one day and weak the next, a faith that has times of doubt, and a faith that surely doesn't understand everything yet and frankly never will – you will soon affirm this faith that God has planted within you, and you will promise to continue to live out this faith in your life
  - So your confirmation is an important day in your life, but I have to tell you that this day is much bigger than you are
- Today is also Reformation Day, and hopefully not only you, but everyone here today remembers something about Martin Luther and the reforms that began to shake up and renew the church 503 years ago
  - The Reformation started when Martin Luther posted 95 statements for debate in the University where he was a professor
  - This reformation challenged several practices of the church, including the teaching that we are saved and can only get into heaven by accumulating good works – but instead the Reformation declared the biblical message that salvation, forgiveness, and God's love is not earned, but rather that loving forgiveness and life is God's amazing gift of grace

- And so really, there is something even bigger than Martin Luther and Reformation Day – the grace of God that is given, not earned
- So the BIG thing, the IMPORTANT thing that we celebrate today, is the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which stands at the heart of the church, the people of God
  - Bigger than you, bigger than me or any of us here, bigger than even Martin Luther, are the two truths that we hear in today's scripture
    - The first truth is that we have all sinned – that is we have done things that are sins, we have left things undone that by our inaction are also sins, and at the very heart and core of sin is the truth that in Saint Paul's words, we “fall short of the glory of God.”
    - The second truth is that *despite* what we have done and have not done, and *despite* falling short of the glory of God, God sent Jesus Christ to forgive us.
    - As a modern paraphrase of the Bible says, “God did it for us. Out of sheer generosity he put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we're in and restored us to where he always wanted us to be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ. [Rom. 3:24, The Message]”
- You see that is the really BIG story today. That is the big message that the Reformation lifted up front and center, and in fact that is the big story every time we gather for worship.
  - And that is the BIG GOOD NEWS that you will affirm today in your confirmation – that you could and will not be able to be good enough to earn or deserve God's love, but thanks be to God, in Jesus Christ God has reached out to give you life and forgiveness, and God in Jesus Christ has made you a precious and beloved daughter
  - THAT is the faith what you will affirm, and THAT is what we all celebrate and give thanks for today and every Sunday, as a teeny tiny part of the whole church, the people of God

- You see, not only is the Good News of Jesus Christ bigger than we are, the church, the people of God is also way bigger than we are
- In your baptisms, you have been brought into a vast family of Christians that stretches both around the world and throughout time
  - Over the centuries, most of the names of your sisters and brothers in Christ have only been known by their families, friends and congregations, and then have been forgotten by history
  - But a few – a few people have been remarkable women and men who although they were forgiven sinners just like us, are still remembered for their remarkable witness
  - In the Reformation Day prayer during which communion will be consecrated, a few of these witnesses are named
  - Their names, and a very brief description of their witness is on the back of your bulletins, and these witnesses include not only pastors, but teachers, an artist, a musician, a servant to the poor, and a politician – take a moment and read over them when you can
- They are ordinary people like you – people who have been claimed by God in Holy Baptism, people who have been grasped by the BIG gift of Christ's love, people who have been a teeny tiny part of the much BIGGER part of the people of God, and yet, they have done things that made them memorable witnesses to the forgiveness and life given through Jesus Christ
- On this day of your confirmation, you will affirm that Jesus Christ loves you, and that you will love and serve God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – and maybe you will be remembered in history as a great witness, or more likely not, but you have been called into faith and into God's people – and in ways you may never even know, your witness will not only change the lives of others, your witness will also make God smile