

May 1, 2011 (Confirmation)  
Ephesians 2:19-22

St Phillip/St. James A  
A Citizen of Heaven

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

*To Anne, Olivia, Devon, Lacey, and Taria, Family, friends, and other congregation members: Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and From our Risen and Victorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

The day is here that you've put long hours and several years of study into. Your graduation day's wait. No it's not, let me start over. The day is here that you put time and hopefully some effort into. Where you studied God's Word both with your peers and family, with your pastors and teacher. It's your confirmation day. Confirmation is not your graduation day. Confirmation is not the day to bring your whole family to church to see you dressed the nicest in the year, to hear you make your statements of faith. Confirmation is not the day where you'll go home from here have a party and receive gifts and possibly a cake. Confirmation is the day where you make a promise, you make an oath not to me, not to your family and friends, not to each other, not to the congregation's but to the Lord God himself. The one who is risen from the dead.

As I've said throughout the year's Confirmation is NOT GRADUATION. Confirmation is not a day to say's +You've made it!+ When it comes to your faith's that day comes when you meet your Lord face to face.

These last two years you have gone through classes to be taught the faith in more detail than those years of Sunday School. These last two years you have asked questions, you have received answers, and you are continuing to move through life. You are moving through life in which you were once foreigners and aliens. That's what St. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2. It's a fact, not just the five of you's but everyone sitting here today was once an alien and foreigner. But what do I mean? What does Paul mean? Paul writes with the Holy Spirit guiding his hands and giving him the words to write. Paul is writing that without faith the people of Ephesus wouldn't even be considered citizens of Israel. Earlier in Ephesians 2, Paul writes, "*Remember, that you were at time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*" It's far more serious for us's without faith's we are not citizens of heaven.

Today is a day where you take a leap of faith. Today is a day where you make an oath and a promise to God to stand firm in the faith even in the face of death.

May 3, 1998, I stood with twenty some other young people and pledged my faithfulness to God to stand firm in the faith and to face death rather than fall away from it. As I answered the questions along with my other friends, peers, and classmates, sadly as I looked around I knew the statistics, and right now there are only a handful of us that are left active in the church at large.

I am asking you and pleading with your parents; do not let them become a statistic.

Over the next few years you are going to go through some life changing experiences. High School is a time to continue to learn, grow, and mature. Not just academically, mentally, physically, but also spiritually. It's a time to continue to grow in your faith. You will face opposition to your faith. You will come to a time when you have to ask yourself what is more important? Do I participate in this school activity that will prohibit me from attending worship and receiving the Lord's Supper or Do I say, "I can't participate, church and my faith are more important?" One of the questions you will be answering in just a few moments applies... "Do you intend to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord's Supper faithfully?" Does that mean once or twice a year? Absolutely not.

Over the next years you will face temptations that will be hard to overcome. If you fall into those temptations it might make you feel good or even increase your popularity. Maybe you are partying and then whoever you are with brings at the beer and liquor. What are you going to do? How are you going to respond? Maybe you are alone with your boyfriend or girlfriend and things are moving rapidly. Where do you draw the line? Or maybe you are standing with a group of friends in the commons at school and they are telling stories about one of your other friends and you join right in, with your friend walking by. I am going to ask you in just a few moments this question: "Do you intend to live according to the Word of God, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death?" Those preceding situations speak to this question.

Over the next year you will face times where you are going to have to take a stand on your faith. You might have suffer it most likely won't be death, but it could be. Maybe you suffer not being one of the popular kids or maybe you might be benched for a game, because you have put your faith in front of everything else. I am going to ask you in a few moments: "Do you intend to continue steadfast in the confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?"

These are serious questions. These are life altering questions. I as well the rest of you know, we can't keep each one of those promises faithfully by ourselves. It's just not something we can do which is why I answered those questions 13 years ago in the same way that you will in a few moments, "I do, by the grace of God."

"By the grace of God!" By the grace of God is the only way we can do many things and it is by the grace of God that we have faith. It is by the grace of God but we are citizens and members of the same family, where God is our Father. It is by the grace of God that you are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The foundation that you have been taught the Holy Scriptures. It is by the grace of God that you are not only built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, but you have the cornerstone, who is the Risen Christ himself. He is the one whom holds everything together. The whole building is joined together by our Risen Lord and Savior. You are joined in this family, in this church by the cornerstone, our Cornerstone,

Jesus Christ. Each of you is being fitted into your niche, where you will excel in the church.

Since your heavenly Father is the Master Craftsman of this building, he continues to add to the building, he continues to shape the pieces of the building. He continues to shape you for the calling that he has for each of you.

Each person who has faith, every believer, is given a job to do. Each job is different, but goes for the same purpose— building up God's temple, the place where he dwells, the Church of God. The Church of God, being you and me— His people.

By the grace of God+you have been brought here on this day to make public confession of your faith as the traditions of the church have brought us to. By the grace of God+you all have been born in the Water and Word. By the grace of God+you have been taught the Scriptures and the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as it is drawn from the Scriptures and given to us in the Small Catechism. By the grace of God+you have been rescued from your sin, death, and the powers of the evil one through the whipping, mocking, spitting, scourging, beating, nailing, sweating, bleeding, crucifying, burying— and ultimately through the rising from the tomb by our Savior Jesus.

Today the five of you make public confession of your faith— and it is only done by God's grace. It is only done because he has already chosen you as one of the citizens of heaven, because he has given each of you faith.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Risen Lord and Savior. Amen.*