

Reformation/Confirmation Sermon 2020

You know how it is when you meet someone there are things that attract you to that person, but later on you become attracted to different qualities that you somehow missed at the start of the relationship....well, this is NOT how I feel about the Lutheran Church. It has been almost 25 years since I became a Lutheran. Much has changed since I was a teenager. The world is not the same place as it was back then. Yet, despite the steady progress of time, the very same reasons that once caused me to join the Lutheran Church are the same reasons why I am still a Lutheran today. So on this day when we celebrate our Lutheran heritage, I would like to offer up a few of the things I love the most about her.

I love the history of the Lutheran Church. I love how she traces her roots not to the 16th century, but all the way back to the apostles and prophets, to the martyrs and to all those faithful men and women who gave their lifeblood to ensure that God's Church never perished from this earth. What set the Reformation of the 16th century in motion was a heartfelt desire to remain true to the Church of the 1st century. The events of the Reformation were not about forward thinking, but rather backward gazing. Looking back to Christ and learning from Him how the Church should be shaped and governed. Learning from Christ the message that is to sound from every pulpit, every Sunday, and in every land. The message of grace and forgiveness, the message of the cross, and how God turned the world upside down by sending His only begotten Son to live and die in our place. I love our distinctly Lutheran history. How through one obstinate monk, God brought His Church back into alignment with His Word. I love how Martin Luther never backed down, how he embodied the courage only God can give, how he stood against tyranny and corruption; which sought to ruin his reputation and end his life. He embraced the life that God had prepared for him rather than the life of ease he could have secured for himself by his own brilliant mind and strong work ethic.

I love the continuity of the Lutheran Church. I love how if I were to take my son back in time to worship with me as a young man in my home congregation he would immediately recognize it as the way we worship every Sunday here at Epiphany. And if we were to go back farther still, to a time before that, back to the age of our grandparents and great-grandparents we would all experience the same phenomenon. Sure, the hymnal has changed over time. The language used in worship has changed over time. But the structure of the service, the

order of the liturgy, and the content of the hymnody these things have not changed at all. I accept that I will change, you will change, and the world will change. But the Church never changes. For she will always be filled with God's eternal presence, who is the same yesterday, today, tomorrow even forevermore.

I love the peace of the Lutheran Church. I love how when we come into this sacred space we can be ourselves. We don't have to pretend to be something that we are not. The world causes us to wear all kinds of masks to hide our true identities. But when we come into God's presence we can let our guards down. We don't have to come in here and act like hypocrites trying to be all pious about how good we are and how bad everybody else is. We don't come here in fear scared of God's wrath and wondering if we have done enough to save our souls. No, we come into God's church in peace. We come here in humility; we turn our lives over to God who raises us up from the dust to walk with Him all the days of our life.

Finally, I love the future of the Lutheran Church, which brings me to the five of you. Today is a special day in your life. Today before this congregation you will take an oath to serve Christ and no other. You will publically confirm your faith and pledge to remain faithful to His Word all the days of your life. That's a tall order considering all that's going on around us. These are strange times we live in. Just think of all that has changed in the past few months! The world as we knew it is hardly recognizable. Everything feels uneasy, unstable, on edge. Our lives have been turned upside down, yours in particular. You are coming of age in a very unique period of history. An age marked by great challenges, but also by great opportunities. The world is crying out for certainty, for stability, for something real and meaningful and lasting. How will you answer that call? It is my prayer that you will meet these new challenges in the same way faithful Christians have always met hard times- with the power of God's Word. It is my prayer that as the mantle of responsibility passes to you and your generation that you take up your cross and follow Christ; that you listen to His Word, defend His Church, and safeguard His message for future generations to come. You will inherit this Lutheran Church; a Church so rich with meaning and tradition. Your love for her will shape her future. Let me end by saying that if you 5 are representatives of the kind of minds that will lead the Church, I am confident of a bright future for the Lutheran Church. You all have worked so hard for me and have waited so long for this day come. I am proud of each one of you for what you have done and I look forward to seeing what the Lord has in store for each of you. Amen.