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Mark 14:27-31

Confirmation
"Remain Faithful"

What a fantastic sight this is, to stand here and look out at all of you today! For a pastor who cares about kids – for a pastor who loves to see Christians growing in their faith – this is a fabulous sight to see! Today sixteen young Christians, from ___ Christian families, proudly, eagerly standing up for all the world to see, ready to say out loud and clear, "Yes, I believe in God the Father! Yes, I believe in God the Son! Yes, I believe in the God the Holy Spirit! And I promise to keep on believing!"

Are you ready to say that? To proclaim your faith as a Christian?

As your pastors, and as your DCE's, this is a happy, happy day. Right, Pastor Lew? DCE's? This is an awesome sight for us to see. You've spent two years in Confirmation classes. You've done all your memory work, and sermon summaries. You've talked in large group sessions, and small group sessions, about the Bible, and about your faith.

And in just a few minutes, you're going to stand up proudly and tell us what you believe. You're going to make some important, sacred promises to God, and we can't wait to see that happen. Your parents and family members can't wait to see you make those promises. And God can't wait, either, to see that happen.

What I can't see, as a pastor, is what's going to happen between you and God down the road. Will you all keep those promises? Or will you struggle to remain faithful to Christ? Will the Bible and the church and the great Triune God be big parts of your life, over the next ten years? Or will your faith slip and fade?

None of us, up front here, can see your future. None of your parents can tell for sure what's going to happen to your faith down the road. None of you can guarantee it, either. We make our promises today. We tell God that, yes, we intend to remain faithful. That's what we feel in our hearts. But is that what we'll actually do?

Remaining faithful isn't easy. Any one of us up here, and any one of your parents out there, can tell you. The world we live in does not make it easy to remain faithful to Christ. The world challenges our faith as Christians. The world is really good at pulling us in all different directions, keeping us super-busy, and making God seem less and less important.

But, through it all, our loving, caring God calls you and me to remain faithful. To hang on to what the Bible says. To trust in God's voice above every other voice. To put our beliefs and faith into action. God wants you to live as a faithful Christian believer every day, for the rest of your lives.

And only God knows if that's what's actually going to happen. Only God can see the future. God alone knows what's going to happen down the road with your faith, and with your faith, and with your faith, and with mine.

There's a story in the Bible about a man who made some important, sacred promises to Jesus. We read earlier from Mark 14 about a man named Peter. He was one of Jesus' twelve disciples, and Peter was there with the Lord on Maundy Thursday – the night before Jesus was crucified. Jesus knew that he was going to be arrested that very night, put on trial, and sentenced to death. Jesus knew that it was going to be a very scary, dangerous time for Peter and the other disciples.

So Jesus warned them, “You are all going to fall away. You’re all going to have a hard time remaining faithful to me, when my enemies come to get me. But, fear not, after I’ve risen from the dead on Easter Sunday, I’ll see you again.”

Peter got upset. “No way, Lord!” he exclaimed. “That will never happen in my life.” Peter promised Jesus, “Even if all the other disciples fall away from you, I will not.”

Do you think Peter meant what he said? Of course he did! Peter never imagined that he could turn his back on Jesus, even for a second. He meant every word of his promise to Jesus.

But Jesus, the Son of God, could see down the road, and he knew that Peter, along with the others, would fail him. Peter’s faith would slip and fade, and he would actually run away when Jesus was arrested. Peter would even end up denying three times that he even knew Jesus that very night. Jesus knew how hard faith would be for his friend Peter.

What does Jesus see, when he looks down the road in your life? He can already see you standing up, making your promises and pledges today. And he’ll be smiling when you say those words, especially if you’re speaking from your heart.

But Jesus knows what will happen a year from now, in your life. He already knows how strong your connection with him will be in your high school years, and when you’re in college. Jesus can see today what we cannot: the challenges, the tests, the temptations that will come your way in your faith life. Will you keep those promises you make to him today? Will you remain faithful?

Here's the really good news for you today. Jesus is making some promises to you today. He promises to stand by your side, whatever comes next. Jesus promises to watch over you, to love you, to remain faithful to you. He promises to listen to all your problems, petitions, and prayers. He promises to speak to your heart, when you read his words in the Bible. He promises to give you spiritual strength, healing, and forgiveness, when he comes to you in the Sacrament of Communion. He promises to give you help, when faith is a struggle. He promises that his strength is greater than your weakness, his forgiveness is more powerful than your failures. Jesus promises to help you to remain faithful, and to never stop helping you. And that makes all the difference in the world.

It sure did for Peter. You know, he did fall away from Jesus that night. He did break his promises. But Jesus died on the cross for Peter the next day. He rose from the grave for Peter. He never stopped being Peter's friend, and Peter's Savior. When Peter's faith failed, Jesus helped him to be faithful again and again. And he'll do the same for you.

Let's pray, and ask Jesus for his help, even before making those special promises today.