

Confirmation Sermon 2019

John 8:31-32

* The lines in bold are quotes from our confirmation student's essays.

LU: That which is in accordance with fact or reality we refer to as a truth. That which isn't, is an untruth. So when I say that our confirmation students have learned a lot about their Christian faith over the past two years, is this a truth or an untruth? A truth! When I say that some of the over 300 sermon summaries they turned in this year were better than others, is this a truth or an untruth? A truth! And when I say our children and youth, including all of those in our confirmation class of 2019, are a vital part of the present and future of the church, is this a truth or an untruth? It's definitely a truth!

But they can't do it alone. They need dedicated pastors and DCE's to help them along. They need all of you to help lead them and listen to them. Most of all, they need parents and grandparents who are willing to stand up for the truth. And this is a tremendous challenge in the world today—I know that. People seem so skeptical and guarded when it comes to claiming anything or anyone as truth. Sometimes it seems like we have all been convinced that we shouldn't be convinced of anything. Truth, it seems, is out.

But it's not! Not because I say so, but because Christ, our Lord, says so.

WP: "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free," Jesus says in our Gospel reading today. Have you ever thought about what he is really saying here? This "truth" he speaks of isn't some abstract thought that might be real for some, but not for others. This truth leads sinners to eternal life, which means this truth is Jesus! And if he sets you free, you will be free indeed.

LU: And isn't freedom from the life-controlling sin we experience each and every day what all of us need? That's why it's so important for parents and

grandparents like us to tell our children and grandchildren, **despite what the crowd says, “I will always believe what the bible says”** (Eli Ames). To tell them, **“I will always trust and believe in God no matter what is going on”**(Ava Marchetta). To remind them that in your own life, **“You know that God will always provide what you need. It may not always be what you want, but it will be what you need** (Tyler Watt). And to stress to them that **anyone can be happy in good times, but God gave you something more. You can have joy in him no matter what** (Aaron Bailey). They need to be assured that you believe that **being a child of God is a big thing, because he will guide you in the right direction in life like any other parent would do for their child** (Ryan Gipner). They need to hear you say things like **“at night I talk to God reciting Jesus’ words in the Lord’s Prayer** (Kayla Guzman) and I would like to do the same with you.” They need to know that you are putting Jesus where he belongs, showing them that you believe that **no matter what’s happened, happening, or may happen, Jesus will be your strength, your guidance, and your voice through it all** (Alice Piacenti). Why? Because **Jesus Christ is the Savior** (Hayden Williams)!

WP: And this means he is more than just another good teacher or moral example to follow, because **Jesus was not merely a human chosen by God, such as the prophets before him, but divine from the beginning** (Alicia Bennett). **Jesus is fully God and fully human** (Ella Cagle). And **he came to reveal to us what being human is really about from God’s perspective, because our human nature has been clouded by weakness and sin** (Matilda Scherrer). But sin and the devil is not the end for us. **Jesus came to defeat the devil so we could have eternal life** (Anthony Vecellio). **That is why we love God so much and worship him because right now, we could be dead and in hell** (Samuel Smith).

LU: But it wasn't easy. In fact, it was full of pain, suffering, darkness and finally death as Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world, which includes all of yours and all of mine. **But God works through the bad for good** (Bennett Wagner). **Jesus died on the cross because he loves us and cares about us**

(John Pizzola). And now through faith, **Jesus is the light to our darkness** (Claire O'Neill). **Jesus didn't have to die, but he did it because he loved us** (Matthew Isaacson). **How wonderful it is that Christ has become a living bridge between us and God because his death takes away our sins and brings eternal life to all who believe** (Riley Moss). **No one would ever love us enough to sacrifice themselves, only God would do that** (Katherine Stevens). But that's just what he did. **I know I am unworthy of forgiveness, but this forgiveness is something I am so thankful for** (Rylee Rosonke) because it proves that **God helps me even when I don't deserve it** (Riley Webb). **Jesus gave his life to show his love for me** (Emma Kirkendoll), and the same is true for you.

WP: But crucifixion wasn't the end, because when **Jesus rose from the dead, he beat death** (Heidi Howard)! I mean think about this. **The resurrection of Jesus sets Christianity apart from all other religions because it is the only one that has a founder who rose from the dead** (Norah Johnson). And this should give all Christians the greatest confidence in the world. It sure did for the disciples. They saw him die and then, they saw him again—alive! Peter, John, Matthew—all of them, including Thomas— saw him walking, talking, and eating. How could they not have thought that **the resurrection proved to every doubter that Jesus is God** (Kaden Gentry)? I certainly believe it, and I pray that you do too, because now through faith, **nothing can ever separate us from God because of his unfailing love** (Addison Faris). **For with the glory of Jesus as our Savior, we are eternally blessed** (Blake Burns) and **his strength gives us the power to stay strong even in life's hardest times** (Zachary Bilyi).

LU: And we are promised that those hard times will one day end because as we read about in Revelation, **our heavenly Father, who saves us from sin, will bring all disciples home** (Brooke Miller) when he comes again to restore his creation. And it will be perfect, because **he is the creator, the gardener, and is an amazing caretaker** (Christopher Zwickis). There will be no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain, and no more death! Those things will have passed

and we will live side by side with our Lord. But until that day, we still live as those who know the truth. And what does the truth do? He sets us free.

WP: And he does it with his Word. “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,” Jesus says. While we should read the Scriptures on our own every chance we get, we are called to read and hear them together. That’s why we gather here each weekend. We know that **Jesus came to save us from our sins, even if we, as followers, do not deserve it** (Elena Bruck). But the longer we stay away from the place he promises to be present through his word and sacraments, the more we tend to forget. But here, in his Church, **the Lord hears us when we confess our sins and gives us forgiveness** (Parker Coyne). Here, we are assured that our prayers are heard, because **praying is a connection and communication with God.** (Emerson Cular). It is here that we hear the promises of **Jesus who never uses his power for his own sake, but the sake of other people** (Chase Matala) and **who is described through the Bible as eternal, unchangeable, almighty, all-knowing, and present everywhere** (Jillian Turner). It is here that **the Holy Spirit keeps us going when times get tough and when the world seems to be against us** (Nicholas Horsely) by strengthening our faith. And it is here in Church **where we receive the message of God’s grace that we can apply to our daily lives during the week.** (Samantha Bennett).

LU: Gathering together around God’s Word and Sacrament is vitally important because it’s where disciples are made and set free by the truth. But it’s not the only place. As free people of the truth, we go. **God wants us to share his love and word with the world** (Addison Stuart) because **it’s important for the world to know that Jesus sacrificed himself for our forgiveness** (Ryan Einzig). So many people don’t know the truth, but **because God gave us a second chance, we can spread his word and give others his promise** (Treven Mercadante). Because something we can never forget is that **people can’t magically get to heaven if they don't know about the Gospel** (Jake Phetteplace). So we go.

WP: After all, **we are all commanded by Christ to love and serve our neighbor** (Trevor Friend). And **as a follower of Jesus, we need to practice being compassionate and treat others kindly as we ease them with God's Word** (Laura Rom). It's not easy, but **God changes the world by using his people to show Jesus to others** (Jazmyn Tew).

LU: And one way to do that is by being honest. Maybe starting a conversation with someone who wants to more about Jesus with something like **"I am an utterly broken person touched by the most holy being ever** (Noah Weitzel) and the same truth is for you. **Jesus died for us so that we wouldn't have to die for our sins. I know from the Bible that all of this is most certainly true** (Camden Langer). With God's help, this little introduction to the truth just might be the beginning of more conversations to come.

And I sure hope so, because all of this is true, my friends. But most importantly, it's the truth. And thank the Lord Jesus Christ for it because his truth sets you, me, and all people with faith in him free. **Amen.**