

## CONFIRMATION – THE 3 L's

**TODAY IS YOUR DAY YOUNG PEOPLE.** SOON YOU WILL BE CONFIRMED AND A PROFESSING MEMBER OF CENTENNIAL UMC WITH ALL ITS PRIVILEGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. **EVEN THOUGH “CONFIRMATION” IS NOT A SACRAMENT IN THE METHODIST TRADITION** AS IT DOES NOT MEET THE THREE ELEMENTS OF A SACRAMENT – “COMMANDED BY JESUS, JESUS' PRESENCE AND USING EARTHLY SYMBOLS LIKE WATER OR BREAD AND WINE”.

THERE ARE TWO PARTS OR ACTIONS INVOLVED, ONE OF WHICH IS YOU **CONFIRMING YOUR BAPTISMAL VOWS** YOUR PARENTS SAID FOR YOU AND TWO **THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ACTION OF STRENGTHENING AND EMPOWERING YOUR LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP.**

**THE YOUTH TOOK THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST IN CLASS.** I WAS DEEPLY IMPRESSED WITH THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF OUR YOUTH. EACH ONE WAS GIFTED WITH FAITH, AND MANY ARE GIFTED WITH DISCERNMENT, TEACHING, SERVING, AND LEADERSHIP. IT IS WITHIN EACH OF YOU TO BE A VALUABLE ASSET TO YOUR CHURCH AND EACH OTHER. **REMEMBER THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL GUIDE YOU IN THE AREAS YOU ARE GIFTED WITH, IF YOU LISTEN FOR HIS GUIDANCE AND THE VOICE WITHIN YOU.**

**YOU WILL, AS WE DISCUSSED IN CLASS, PROMISE AS A MEMBER OF CENTENNIAL TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH WITH YOUR PRAYERS, YOUR PRESENCE, YOUR GIFTS, YOUR SERVICE AND YOUR WITNESS.** THIS IS A PROMISE WE TOO AS LONG TIME CONFIRMANDS AND MEMBERS MADE AND NEED TO REMIND OURSELVES OF FROM TIME TO TIME. WE NEED EACH ONE OF YOU TO SERVE IN THE CHURCH NOT JUST “FADE INTO THE WOODWORK”.

**THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF THINGS THAT COULD TAKE UP YOUR TIME** WITH THE RESULT THAT YOU FIND NO TIME TO ATTEND CHURCH, STUDY THE BIBLE, TAKE TIME TO PRAY, GIVE OF YOUR TIME, TALENT OR TREASURE OR USE THOSE UNIQUE GIFTS YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN BY GOD. THERE IS A VERSE SHORT AND SIMPLE I TRY TO REMEMBER EACH DAY – JAMES 4:8 *“come close to god and he will come close to you”.*

**THERE WILL BE MANY TIMES YOU WILL HEAR A SMALL VOICE WITHIN, THE HOLY SPIRIT, GUIDING YOU IN YOUR DAILY LIFE. WILL YOU LISTEN TO THAT VOICE EVERY TIME? PROBABLY NOT, BUT THAT IS ONE WAY YOU WILL LEARN AS ALL OF US HAVE THAT GOD IS LOOKING OUT FOR YOU AND DOES NOT JUST WANT WHAT IS GOOD FOR YOU, BUT HE DESIRES THE BEST FOR YOU!!!**

HERE ARE THREE WAYS AS YOU GO ON FROM CONFIRMATION TO GROW IN YOUR FAITH.

**THE FIRST WAY TO GROW IN FAITH IS LIVING A LIFE** THAT MAY NOT BE PERFECT, BUT HAVING A DESIRE TO WALK WITH THE LORD. GALATIANS 5:13 SAY IT WELL - *“It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows.”*

**YOU ARE HERE TODAY BECAUSE A LONG TIME AGO AND FOR SOME NOT SO LONG AGO YOU WERE BAPTIZED WITH WATER AND THE WORDS WERE SPOKEN “I BAPTIZE YOU IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”. ON THAT DAY GOD MADE A COMMITMENT TO LOVE YOU, FORGIVE YOU, WALK WITH YOU AND GIVE YOU THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GUIDE YOU IN YOUR LIFE.**

**I TOLD A FRIEND WHEN HE ASKED ME “WHY BAPTIZE A BABY OR VERY YOUNG PERSON?” I TOLD HIM HE WAS GIVING THEM, THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, A SWORD TO FIGHT EVIL INSTEAD OF A BUTTER KNIFE!**

THAT IS HOW YOU HAVE GOTTEN TO THIS DAY. GOD HAS WATCHED OVER YOU, GOTTEN YOU THROUGH THINGS GOOD AND NOT SO GOOD. IF YOU EVER DOUBT GOD'S COMMITMENT TO YOU JUST LOOK UP AT THE CROSS ON THE ALTAR OR IN THE STAIN GLASS. THEN REMEMBER JOHN 3:16 *and put your name in there - “god so loved **you** that he sent his only son...”*

**OF COURSE PARENTS AND FAMILY, AS WELL AS SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS, HAVE HELPED YOU GROW IN FAITH.** NOW THIS MORNING YOU STAND HERE TO CONFIRM THOSE WORDS YOUR PARENTS SPOKE AND GO ON WITH YOUR LIFE AND GROWING IN YOUR FAITH. NOW AS YOUNG PEOPLE YOU CAN CONTINUE TO GROW IN THE FAITH BECAUSE IT IS YOUR DESIRE TO DO SO. THERE WILL CONTINUE TO BE OTHERS HELP YOU.

**GOD HAS MADE THE COMMITMENT TO YOU AND TODAY YOU WILL MAKE THAT COMMITMENT TO HIM.** PSALM 37:5 *“Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust Him, and He will help you.”* THE WAY TO LIVE FROM THIS DAY FORWARD IS TO KEEP GOD CLOSE AND LISTEN FOR THE GUIDING VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU.

**THE SECOND WAY TO GROW IS TO KEEP LEARNING.** IN SCHOOL YOU ARE OVER HALF WAY DONE WITH YOUR PRIMARY EDUCATION, BUT ONCE YOU GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO TO COLLEGE, TECH SCHOOL OR OTHER OPPORTUNITIES, **THERE WILL BE STUDY AND LEARNING.** WHEN YOU GET ON THE JOB THERE WILL BE MORE LEARNING. **FAITH IS LIKE THAT TOO,**

WE CALL IT “SANCTIFICATION, THE PROCESS OF BEING HOLY OR MORE LIKE JESUS”. JUST LIKE IN SCHOOL OR IN A JOB YOU CAN NOT BE JUST HEARERS OF OF ALL THAT KNOWLEDGE, IT HAS TO BE PUT TO USE. THERE IS A SAYING *“people mark their bibles, but their bibles never mark them”* YOU CAN LEARN ABOUT FAITH FROM PARENTS, FAMILY, TEACHERS, AND THE BIBLE, BUT YOU MUST CHOSE FOR YOURSELF, AND EXPERIENCE IT AND LIVE IT. **FAITH IS NOT ABSORBED BY BEING AROUND OTHER CHRISTIANS.**

YOU HAVE HEARD ME SAY THAT THE BIBLE IS GOD'S “LIVING WORD” AND I BELIEVE THAT WITH ALL MY HEART. **SO NEVER OUT GROW THE NEED TO STUDY THE BIBLE AND LEARN FROM IT** WHETHER IN SUNDAY SCHOOL, A STUDY OR READING.

I INVITE ALL YOU TO ATTEND THE SUMMER STUDY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE PEOPLE THAT WERE AROUND JESUS DURING HIS MINISTRY. WE WILL BE VIEWING THESE PEOPLE IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN YOU HAVE BEFORE AND LEARNING THEIR PART IN JESUS' LIFE.

I READ A RECENT BOOK SERIES AND WHERE THIS WOMAN HAD BEEN KEPT IN A HOUSE ALL HER LIFE AND READ AND READ AND READ, BUT HAD NEVER EXPERIENCED THE WORLD OR PUT TO USE ALL THE KNOWLEDGE SHE HAD IN HER POSSESSION. **IN OUR FAITH IF WE ONLY HEAR THE WORD AND NEVER PUT IT TO USE JAMES WRITES THAT OUR FAITH IS REALLY DEAD.** THE MORE WE LEARN THE MORE WE SHOULD SHARE. THAT IS THE FUNNY THING ABOUT FAITH. GOD WANTS US TO SHARE IT WITH OTHERS NOT JUST KEEP IT TO OURSELVES.

**ANOTHER TRUTH ABOUT LEARNING AND GROWING OUR FAITH IS TO ALWAYS LOOK AT THE BIBLE NOT AS A RULE BOOK RESTRICTING YOUR FREEDOM, BUT AS AN INSTRUCTION BOOK THAT GIVES FREEDOM IN THE TRUEST SENSE OF THAT WORD.** BY FOLLOWING THE WISDOM IN IT YOU WILL BE FREE OF THOSE THINGS THAT KEEP YOU FROM YOUR GOD-GIVEN POTENTIAL IN LIFE AND IN SOME CASES REAL HARM. FOR THOSE SITTING AROUND YOU, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, FRIENDS THEY KNOW HOW TRUE THOSE WORDS ARE, LEARNED IN MANY CASES BY NOT SO PLEASANT EXPERIENCES.

**YOU WILL MAKE MISTAKES, BUT IF YOU REMAIN CLOSE TO GOD, HE PROMISES THAT HE WILL REMAIN CLOSE TO YOU. HIS GRACE AND FORGIVENESS WILL BE THERE FOR YOU AND HE WANTS YOU TO MOVE FORWARD IN YOUR LIFE.**

**THE THIRD WAY TO GROW IS TO FOLLOW THAT COMMANDMENT JESUS GAVE HIS DISCIPLES – “to love one another”. FAITH IS ACTION. WHEN WE LEARN AND LIVE, THEN WE WILL DEMONSTRATE LOVE LIKE JESUS DID. WE WILL LOVE GOD, DO NO HARM, AND DO GOOD.**

**CONFIRMATION – IT WILL BE A BEGINNING OF A LIFETIME OF LEARNING, LIVING, AND LOVING.**

MAY YOU REMEMBER FROM THIS DAY FORWARD AND WE WHO WERE CONFIRMED MANY YEARS AGO NEVER FORGET THE WORDS OF OUR BAPTISM AND OUR CONFIRMATION. AMEN.