

Preached by Rev. JF Hudson: 5/4/08, Confirmation Sunday!

From the text: "Then I will pour out my spirit on all people...and your young women and men will see visions." Joel 2

The philosopher Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." As a Christian I might tweak that a bit and say, "The unexamined faith is not worth believing." Today mark's the culmination of four months of examination by all of you about God, Jesus, Church, all things Christian. You've studied, gone on retreat together, shared suppers on chilly winter nights, had spirited debates, laughed, loved and built a community of 18 confirmands, three grateful co-teachers, numerous parents and loved ones and our whole Pilgrim Church. Today you declare in word and promise: "This I believe." As young adults these are your first mature steps with Jesus, just the beginning of your faith—not the end. As a class you are some of the most thoughtful and curious and committed confirmands I've ever had the pleasure of teaching. So before your big moment—when we lay on hands and ask the Holy Spirit to bless you as full church members I'll share with the congregation some of thoughts on faith you wrote in your individual faith statements. As we the congregation listen consider—what do you believe? What can our sons and daughters teach us?

About God: "I believe that God is the love throughout the world...created all that is within us...listens to me when I pray...helped my parent through their illness...is watching over me, making sure I succeed and I want to be the best and live my life to its fullest to make him proud." Another wrote: "God is love and compassion. God loves everyone, no matter who they are or what they have done. We need to spread God's love throughout the world by helping others...then maybe those whom we help will help others, and those people would help even more...creating a chain reaction of God's love." From one young person: "God created everyone for a reason so that each and every one of us will leave something important [in] this world. We have a purpose [and] we are all connected..." Another declared, "God has no boundaries in what he can do and no places no boundaries on what we can do if we truly believe...I have faith in God and He has faith in me." From one confirmand: "I find God in nature; the rain, his comforting touch to the earth and skin, so rejuvenating and reviving, the sun, his love, providing and warming." Another concluded, "Praying isn't just a message to God...it is a conversation with him and he answers us by doing good things in the world."

About Jesus they wrote: "Jesus was fully human when he came to the earth but when he rose from the dead he was fully God...Jesus knows pain and suffering and temptation so He knows where we are coming from when we pray." Or: "I believe Jesus was sent to the earth to teach people how to live our lives in peace, give us hope and to show people that love is more powerful than hate." And: "Jesus was very brave and wanted his people to have a better life." One student said, "Jesus is the loving face of God in human form."

About Church they said: " [It] should be a place where no one feels left out...where every one of every shape and size, race and gender, can come under one roof and feel equal." "Church is a place where people connect with God." "Churches were made for people to

have a place to come and forget work and everything and just relax but still focus while they are practicing their religion.” “A place where every one can express his or her felling without being judged....”, “a community [where] our responsibility is to do good things and spread God’s word—that is what God expects of us.” “The church was founded for this reason...I believe that people should never be alone. When you are alone you are not helping anyone. When you are alone you are not spreading love...the church was founded to bring people together.”

On putting faith into action, the confirmands said: “The best way I can live out my Christian faith is by helping any one that is helpless, lost or just in need of comfort.” “God wants me to send my message loud and clearly, to make a difference and leave a unique mark on the earth, to live, to untie the knots God has given us to untangle.” “My faith will be a part of me for the rest of my life. I have learned to always love, to be the best human being I can possibly be.” And, “God wants me to do the best I can, be the best person I can be by helping others and have nothing hold me back.”

And finally, this is how one confirmand concluded their statement:”Although my faith statement may bend or change over the years this is where it stands for now. I will try my hardest to live this out and learn from my mistakes I will make along the way....I know I will always keep this wonderful experience in my heart and life forever.”

Confirmands: you are ready. Pilgrim Church: it is time to welcome these disciples into our fellowship as full members and fellow travelers with us on the road with Jesus Christ. Their journey, our journey, has always just begun. Let all of us say and believe, “Amen!”