

Pentecost, 2010
CONFIRMATION
John 14

The launching pad for my sermon this morning will be the Gospel lesson, found in John chapter 14. Jesus and His anxious disciples were in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was Thursday night, and in a few short hours the Lord would be arrested, and then crucified.

So let's pray. Kind and gracious God, in your goodness you created us and all living things, and as if that wasn't enough of a gift you also sent your Son Jesus, who died to forgive us then rose again to save us. Keep us faithful to Jesus in word and deed, through all the days of our lives on earth; and then in your mercy receive us home, and grant us a place in your eternal kingdom; in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, AMEN.

Thursday night in the Garden of Gethsemane—the Lord Jesus knew for a fact He was about to be crucified, and the disciples always a bit slow, well they were beginning to figure it out too. Now, Jesus dying on a cross to forgive us our sins, then rising from the dead to save us—this is what we here call The Good News. It's the Gospel, the story of our salvation, it's the plan God had all along to rescue us, and give us a place in heaven—it's Good News! But the disciples, didn't exactly hear it that way. They were nervous, and they were afraid. To be told that Jesus was going to be taken from them—to be told that He was in fact about to die—that did not sound good. It was scary, and they were nervous, they knew they needed Jesus and *did not* know what would happen if Jesus wasn't physically there with them, the disciples were very upset. And they kept saying to Jesus, “Please don't

go. Please don't go away from us, don't leave us, let us stay with you!

There's so much more you can teach us, there's so much more we need to learn, good teacher—why can't you stay with us and tell us more? Teach us, help us learn!”

You know, I've been teaching confirmation for over 20 years now, not once, not once have I ever heard a student say that, not even close. They can't wait for me to go away! Granted, the disciples in John 14 had a better teacher. Still, 20 years, not even once!

Well, poor me, that is nevertheless exactly what the disciples were saying to Jesus in this chapter—“Don't go! Don't leave us! Stay and teach us more!” Now, you know the rest of the story, how these disciples bailed on Jesus—one denied Him, one betrayed Him, everyone else turned tail and ran, so their pious feelings here in chapter 14 did not last much past chapter 16. These disciples were only human; they let the Lord down too. Still, what you need to see, they *were* only human—that's the point! They were weak and confused and sinful, they had problems they had fears, they were flesh and blood and would one day grow old get sick and die—they were only human! And in this moment John 14 they understood that—and they knew they needed what only the Son of God could give. “It's true, I am only human! I need you Jesus, I need what only you can give me, forgiveness life

salvation, I need that Lord, don't go away! Don't leave me, I can't do this alone."

So how about us? How about us, we who are also only human, do we need Jesus? Do we need what only the Son of God can give? Well, most all of you have been through confirmation, so I suspect most all of you could recite on cue the correct confirmation response, "Certainly we need Jesus! Of course pastor, we all always need the what Son of God can give! He died to forgive us, He rose again to save us, He's coming again to open the gates of heaven for us, can't get through those gates without Him, so of course we need Jesus!" Well, good answer, you are correct. You pass confirmation. But do you buy it? Do you believe it? Do you sense anywhere at all in your life, that you really do need Jesus? You know I *have* been teaching confirmation for over 20 years now, in three different states, and I can tell you there are a lot of kids *and a lot of families* involved in confirmation, who are just marking time. Waiting to get out, no intention of ever coming back, nice little religious ritual *but nothing I really need. Nothing I really need*, so about it? Who here honestly needs Jesus.

There are times in life, particularly in this country, so rich so free so blessed—there are times in life when a body could easily be tempted to answer no; no! Our confirmation students—13 years old? Fourteen? You

have houses, you have food, you have families who love you and a future to look forward to. What's wrong with this picture, nothing, what do you need? Ok, you have sins in your life, sure, but they've been there a while already and nothing real bad seems to happen as a result. You will die one day of course but you're 13 years old! That's a very long way away, so do you need this stuff, this Jesus thing? Looking at the young especially, I suspect there's really nothing harder in life than to be a Christian, when you really don't see why you need to be a Christian. I'd like to repeat that I think. I suspect there's nothing harder in life than to be a Christian, when you really don't see why you need to be a Christian.

But here's the thing. You will. Let me tell you, sin catches up with you. Gossip in the cafeteria, have a good laugh at someone else's expense, ok for now but sooner or later people learn—you can't be trusted. Be careless in how you treat other people, think only about yourself, it won't be long you will be all by yourself—selfishness like that has consequences. Sin, has consequences, it catches up with you, and when it does who can mend what you have broken? Who can restore what you carelessly have thrown away? Who can forgive, and make new, and start life over?—only Jesus. You may not sense the need when you're 13. But I bet you will.

You will not die when you're 13—I mean, God forbid, we know accidents

happen, but God forbid it befall someone here. But we all age, we all zip through life, and so do people we love, do you need God? Will you? You're only human. Wait and see.

Well, here's the Good News of the Gospel, the story of Jesus. God understands how much we need Him. God knows we need Him and God did not wait for us to send Him a nice invitation. God came, uninvited, on His own, God came to earth and died in your place. Jesus died to forgive you, He rose again to save you, He will come again in person to usher you home to heaven and He is here now. If you want. He is here now to change your life forever, and to change it for the good, I need that. Me, the one who's been teaching this stuff for 20 years, I need that. That's why I'm here. And if you need it too, then I'll tell you the truth, there's nowhere else to go.

Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior, who is there when we know we need Him, and who is there when we think we don't. Blessed be Jesus who loves us still, and who always will. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, AMEN.