

Acts 2:1-21

There are four special services in our Lutheran hymnal. On page 268 there is the Order of Holy Baptism. Following that is the one we will use today - the Rite of Confirmation. Then comes Holy Matrimony, and the last of the four is the funeral service. Our hymnal pretty well has our life mapped out for us. We are baptized, we're catechized and confirmed, we marry, and then we die. Sometimes the sequence does not follow this exact order, and the time frame is not all that exact either, especially when it comes to the funeral service.

Of the four, we ourselves have control really only of two. Our entrance into the church through Baptism, and our entrance into heaven through death are the work of God alone. We do not choose to enter His Kingdom of Grace, nor do we choose when we enter the Kingdom of Glory. We have more control over the rite of Holy Matrimony - at least we should. And we do have a say in the Rite of Confirmation. We can choose to say "no" to the teachings of the Catechism if we want to.

Five of you are joining countless saints who have gone before you (some of whom are here with you today) in saying "yes" to the questions that will be put to you today in the Rite of Confirmation. You should know that the only reason why you can say "yes" is because God already in your Baptism said "yes" to you in Christ.

I did some counting last week. Do you know how many times you are saying the word amen in church today? A dozen times in our Divine Service. Five more times in the Rite of Confirmation. That's seventeen amen's! Seventeen yes's, because that is what amen means - yes. You have been saying Yes to God here in church countless times since the day you were baptized.

You should know, however, that this is totally unnatural. By nature we say No to God. Ever since our first parents said No in the Garden by refusing to obey Him, all of their children, us included, are conceived and born in this great big No!

Children do not naturally obey their parents. It's why parenthood is such a struggle. Nor do we who are God's children naturally obey Him. We all know the Ten Commandments. God expects...He demands that we embrace each and every one of them with a great big Yes. Not a Yes with our mouth, but a No with our conduct. A Yes with both our mouth and our daily life.

Do we? Hardly. How often do you say No to God's Third Commandment, putting the activities of life as a priority over worship? How often do you say No to God's Fourth Commandment, refusing to obey your parents and other authorities? How often do you say No to all the other Commandments by lusting, gossiping, and what have you? Sadly, I say No every hour of every day. And if you are being honest, so do you.

But today you're saying Yes. An amen here, an amen there. You're amenning all over the place. And this is good. Do not, however, ever get the idea that by saying Yes to God, you can get Him to say Yes to you. His Yes to you hung from a cross even before you were born. Jesus embraced your sin. He pulled all of those great big No's out of your heart and was punished for them. God said No, not to you, but to His Son on the cross. He rejected Him. He forsook Him. He said No to Jesus so that His cross now is God's Yes to you.

God's Yes to you in the cross is placed into the waters of your Baptism. Your Baptism never says No to you, but always Yes. Yes, you are God's child. Yes, your sins are forgiven. On the altar in bread and wine is the Yes of the cross. Yes, here is Jesus for you. Yes, this is His body given for you. Yes, this is His blood shed for the remission of your sins. No wonder we say so many amen's throughout our worship. God is saying Yes to us from the Invocation to the Benediction. How can we not respond in faith by saying amen! Yes, Lord, I believe You. Yes, Lord, I lay claim to all of Your precious promises and gifts to me in Christ.

Now if you know anything about the historical record of past confirmation classes, here and everywhere, you are well aware of the fact that confirmands, in general, say Yes with their mouth on the day of their

confirmation, but they do not follow through in their life. They say “Yes, Lord, I will be faithful to You unto death.” But it’s not long before they are saying Yes to a boss who wants them to work on Sundays, and No to God. They say Yes to the one they marry, and are quickly pulled away from their Yes to the Lord. They say Yes to all that the world has to offer, and their Yes’s to God become more feeble and less frequent.

What about you? Now is the time for us to look at our text. It is no coincidence that your confirmation day falls squarely on the Day of Pentecost. On this day, God poured out His Spirit on all mankind. Had this not taken place, no one could say Yes to God with their mouth or with their life. You and I cannot, by our own strength or reasoning power, come to Jesus, nor can we remain faithful to Jesus. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit alone that sinners are brought to faith in Christ, and remain in the Faith until we die.

But the Holy Spirit, though He was poured out in full measure on the Day of Pentecost, is given in one way, and in one way only - through the Word of Christ. No matter how big your Yes is today, you will say No to God in your life if you neglect His gifts to you in His Word and in His Sacraments. But friends, with the Holy Spirit in your heart, as you come faithfully to hear the Word of Christ and receive His Sacraments, your life, even unto death, will be Yes and Yes, Amen and Amen.

Some of you know this, and I pray that we all find this to be true...the more you are in the Word of God, the more the Holy Spirit will be at work in your heart and life. And so the better you will deal with temptations to sin; the more cheerfully you will give to the Lord from what He gives you; the more naturally you will witness your faith in Christ. I could go on and on...the list is endless.

I’m not saying that life will be easy. Not at all. For the devil will work even harder on you when he sees you faithfully in God’s Word and Sacraments. But he will fail with you. He will not succeed in severing you from Christ; in robbing you of the joy, hope, and peace which are yours in Jesus. He will fail because God’s Holy Spirit within you will keep you safe from the evil one.

On the Day of Pentecost, some were mocking God by saying that the disciples were full of wine. They were half right. They were full, but not of strong drink. They were full of the Holy Spirit. And being filled with the Holy Spirit, these disciples were doing amazing things and declaring the mighty works of God.

Your life in Christ will not involve speaking in tongues with a flame of fire on your head. But, nonetheless, your life will be amazing. Not on account of you, but because of the Holy Spirit who lives in you. This is where the Holy Spirit is given; right here through Word and Sacrament. Already, each and every one of you is a mighty work of God. What God did for you in Christ is amazing. In love, He calls you His child. In mercy, He forgives you. Yes, God forgives every one of you. This is His Yes to each of you. God’s mighty work is one of pure grace and mercy. No matter how big your No has been to Him; no matter how many No’s have filled your heart, your mouth, and your life, in mercy, God forgives you. And in mercy, through His word of forgiveness in Christ, He puts His Holy Spirit within you to believe His Gospel, to fight against sin, to protect you against the devil, and to keep you faithful unto death.

You will, in your life, be filled with the Holy Spirit, as God keeps you in His Word and Sacraments. In these holy things, God is saying Yes to you again and again. And you, therefore, when this life is over will, in truth and in certainty, hear Jesus saying Yes to you. “Yes, My child, enter the eternal mansion which I prepared for you.” Amen!