

## Sermon- Our Saviors Lutheran Church- Reformation Sunday and Confirmation Sunday

### How Did We Get Here and What Are We Here For?

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. It's a big weekend here at OSLC where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are above average. It's Reformation Sunday weekend. The focus of this homily will not be on the Reformation other than to say: Luther always considered himself a catholic even after he was excommunicated. He hated the fact that his followers called themselves Lutheran, always saying, "Did Luther die for you? No! Call yourselves Christians, not Lutherans!" He didn't want to leave the church and start a new one, he only wanted to reform the one he loved. He wanted people to be able to read the Bible in their own language, not just hear it in Latin, which they didn't understand.

He wanted to hold up the dignity of all kinds of work as Ministry, not just the work of priests and nuns. He wanted the church to stop playing on people's fears as a way to get rich. In short, he wanted us to always improve and reform the church. Our work to do so continues even today.

So keep thinking about how to improve the church while I spend the next few minutes focused on Confirmation -The Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant. You see, it's not only about the 14 young people reaffirming their Baptism but really about all of us. To get at what's it all about Alfie, I pose two questions.

#### 1. How did I get here?

I'm really not talking about the mode of transportation to arrive at church this morning. Whether you drove, walked, took a bus or subway. I'm talking about how you "Really" got here. This has to do with our Baptism. That's where the journey started. Some of you were baptized here at OSLC and others in different churches. I was baptized in a Norwegian-speaking church in Brooklyn. The point is that we were baptized children of God. We were marked with the cross and filled with the Holy Spirit. Wow!

Then, we got here through the influence of people. A host of people were involved in our journey. Parents/ Godparents/ Grandparents. They were

our mentors. And very important on this list were teachers, specifically Sunday School teachers.

My Sunday school teacher that had a huge influence on my life was Miss Edna. Edna Nelsenius who taught myself, my older sister, and scores of other children at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Brooklyn. She taught for 65 years. I remember vividly when I was 17 and would soon attend Upsala College in the fall. She took me aside and said, "Dennis, you will be the second person to attend college from this church. You have to make us proud". In the fall I arrived at Upsala with one suitcase in hand and checked into my dorm - named Nelsenius Hall. Her family had donated the money for the dorm. You talk about pressure. But, I remembered her words. And I followed them. Yes, people have been your mentors. The point is that we need to be mentors for others on their journey. Which leads me to the second question.

## 2. What Are You Here For?

The 14 young people will make a public declaration of their faith, and hopefully you will do so as well. They will tell us that they are glad they are part of the Christian Church which at this point in their lives is called Our Savior's Lutheran Church. We all will state that God is our God - the one who made us, saved us and given us faith and the willingness to be obedient to what God wants us to do. Powerful.

We are here today to say that worshipping God is a priority. It is at worship that we receive God's blessings, hear what He has to say to us while on the road that is sometimes smooth and other times bumpy. It is at worship that you will hear your sins are forgiven and receive Holy Communion so that we can continue serving others with God's love.

Why are you here? We are here to express a commitment to keep on learning about God. Learning about what God has done for you and what his will is for you. Hear his word spoken to you, read it, study it. We call that life long learning. It never stops. You are here because you want to serve. Being a Christian isn't so much about what you want and like. Rather, it is about the needs of others and what it is that they like and how to help them. Serving is key.

Finally, you are here to witness. To say to others what it means to be a person who loves Jesus. What we say and what we do and how we interact with others speaks volumes of witnessing. When our mouth gets us in trouble, when we apologize and make friends again, we have a beautiful example of God's love in our hearts. Nothing is more awesome than to share God's love and peace with each other.

Follow me

Dedicate some time to study God's word.

Trust me

Love one another

Be understanding

Serve one another

Just remember that God gave us the Holy Spirit to help us on this journey.

With God's help we can do it.

Amen- Let it be so.