

*When the ruling priests and the Bible scholars saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple, “Our Savior, the Son of David!” they didn’t like it at all. “Do You hear what they’re saying?” they asked Him. “Yes,” Jesus answered them. “Haven’t you ever read: ‘You have made children and babies praise You?’” (Matthew 21:15-16)*

God has prepared for himself praise. His Word is the only thing that gives him true praise. His Word declares who he is. It declares the love of the Father. It declares the Son of the Father who became flesh in the Virgin’s womb, who bore the sin of the whole world, suffered in the place of all sinners, was crucified, die, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day. The Word declares one baptism into Christ where the Holy Spirit gives new birth and eternal salvation by the power of Christ’s resurrection. The Word gives faith and new life. The Word gives strength and maturity in this faith and new life. The Word causes prayers to rise from the heart, giving the faithful the very words to express petitions, praise, and thanksgiving to God. God has prepared all of this by his Word.

Another term for praise of God is a confession of God’s name. To praise God is to confess Christ. It is to confess and make known what God has done – that he has created you and provided you with all you need to support this body and life; that he has redeemed you by his own blood in the death of your Lord Jesus Christ; and that he calls, gathers, enlightens, and keeps you in the true faith until you die. To talk about these things is to confess God’s name. It is to confess Christ. It is to praise God. And God has prepared this praise for himself.

Today, Adam, Alexandra, Kyle, and Megan are confirmed publicly before this congregation. They are publicly confessing their Christian faith, being supported by their fellow Christians who confess the same faith. In fact, throughout this year, as they have answered examination questions on the various parts of the Catechism, they have been confessing their faith. And I would like for these young Christians, as well as everyone here this morning to understand something about this confession. This confession has been prepared by God. When you were baptized, God gave you this confession. As Paul says in Romans 10, “The Word is near you, in your heart and in your mouth, that is, the Word of faith, which we preach.” When you were baptized, God placed his Word into your heart and your mouth. The confession of God – the praise of God – was all there when you were baptized into Jesus’ name. Wherever the Word of God is placed, there is the confession of Christ and everything he has done.

The priests and the scribes expressed their disapproval of the children calling Jesus the Son of David. Jesus responded to them by quoting from Psalm 8:2, “Out of the mouths of children and babies you have prepared praise.” Now, we’ve all heard little children sing hymns and repeat what their parents say. I ask my three-year-old what Jesus did. She says, “He died on the cross.” I ask, “To do what?” “To take away our sins!” she says. Those who think they understand child psychology and behavior might imagine they know better. They figure that the kids are just repeating what their parents told them. The children, who likely heard their parents praising Jesus, also blurted out the same thing: “Our Savior! Hosanna! The Son of David!” They’re just parroting their parents. Or so says the expert. So says the one who thinks he knows better.

But Jesus says that such praises of the children were prepared by God. If the children don’t praise him, then the very stones on the ground will cry out. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the only Savior. He is the Son of David, the King of Israel, the only true God, begotten of the Father from eternity. He has come to save sinners from condemnation. This man is God. It is therefore this man alone to whom all glory, laud, praise, and honor belong.

The Bible speaks of confessing Christ in two ways. There is the confession itself. And there is the act of confessing. The confession itself is already prepared for you in Christ. He is the High Priest of our confession (Heb 3:1). He is our confession (Heb 4:14), the author and finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2). This confession was given to you in your baptism. So even as a little baby, you had this confession. As God says in Isaiah 57: “I create the fruit of the lips.” And again, as Psalm 8 says, “Out of the mouth of children and infants, You have prepared praise.” The confession itself is already prepared and fulfilled in Christ, given in full through the Word. But in the meantime, we learn as we grow to confess God’s Word. We learn from God’s Word to express this confession, which was given to us.

So the confession these four young Christians make this morning is the very confession given to them in their baptism. It is the confession they both receive and express every time they eat the body and blood of the one who is the very substance of their praise and their confession. And it is the same confession they will continue to learn and in which they will grow by God’s grace.

The Rite of Confirmation is not instituted by God. It is a tradition of the church used to give Christians an opportunity to confess what they have learned from God’s Word. But the confession itself is instituted by God. Jesus told his apostles to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the Triune God and by teaching them all he has given them to teach. These two things are inseparable: baptizing and teaching all things Christ has given.

The fact that Jesus tells his disciples to teach all things he has commanded shows that in baptism he gives everything his Word declares. It is yours the moment you are baptized. It is prepared for you. So as you confess your faith today, God has prepared for you to continue in this confession, especially as you commune at this altar. He has arranged for you to continue learning this confession. Through this confession of Christ, through this Word, through his body and blood, he gives you courage, humility, and patience.

He gives you courage. Christ headed toward Jerusalem to suffer unspeakable pain, misery, and death for the sins of all mankind. He was going to be beaten, spit upon, and mistreated in the most shameful way. But he didn’t turn away from this great task. Knowing that the Father had sent him, he went ahead with courage. He knew who he was. He is the Son of God. So he made the good confession, bold even in the face of death and condemnation. Therefore, when you rely on Christ’s boldness, his Word gives you the courage to speak the truth even when the world is opposing it.

He gives you humility. Christ didn’t come into Jerusalem on a warhorse. He came in meekness and humility, riding a donkey. He is the Lord of the universe, one in glory and majesty with the Father, true and everlasting God. Yet he humbled himself, taking on the form of a servant. He was obedient to the Word and will of his Father. So as you depend on his humility, you learn to confess the truth in meekness. With confidence, you also know who you are. You are God’s child, an heir of eternal life. You therefore don’t need to exalt yourself. When the truth of God’s Word is under attack, you can speak it with calm, confident, and humble meekness.

Finally, you learn patience from Christ. He bore his cross with patience. He knew that the Father would not abandon his life in the grave. He knew he would rise from the dead. He knew that he would be saved from the pit, saving you also from eternal condemnation. This gave him joy to confess the Word he came to fulfill as he patiently bore his cross. You therefore are given patience to confess God’s Word, because you know the joy Christ has prepared for you.

It might seem like confessing the Word doesn't bring about much fruit. People dismiss what you say, telling you that it's just your opinion. Others get angry when your confession of the truth runs contrary to their own lifestyle, whether it is sexual immorality, drunkenness, or love of money. And all the while, the Word you learn to confess also exposes the sin in your own heart. You see how unworthy you are to confess God's Word.

But remember that this confession was not given to you because you were worthy of it. God fulfilled his Word by his grace. He prepared this confession because he is merciful. He knows you don't deserve to have it in your heart or in your mouth. Yet, he still put it there. He put it there for the same reason he sent his Son to die for you. So dear friends, both young and old, don't be afraid to confess what God has given you to confess. He has prepared such praise for himself. Christ himself has fulfilled it by his obedience, bitter suffering, and death in your place. And even though you confess his Word with great weakness, Christ has graciously attached this promise to those who confess him before men: "Him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven." God grant it always in Jesus' name! Amen.