

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he came as the promised King and Savior of his people. He didn't come in on a warhorse or a chariot. As the prophet Zechariah had foretold, he was gentle and meek, riding a humble donkey. And when he came, the people praised him. They made a confession. They confessed Jesus to be the Christ, God's anointed one, the King who has come to save them. This is how it still works with us. Jesus comes to us with kindness and meekness in his Word. He creates faith in our hearts. And then he causes us to confess his saving Word. As we consider our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, I would like to speak to you all about confessing Jesus' Word. And I would like to focus on four Bible passages, which serve as the confirmation verses for each of our four confirmands this morning. Each of these Bible passages teaches us what makes for a true confession of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The confirmation verses are as follows. Jett's confirmation verse is John 6:63. Jacob's confirmation verse is Ephesians 2:8-9. Oscar's confirmation verse is Titus 3:5. And Easton's confirmation verse is 1 Peter 3:15. We will consider each of these in order and how they help us confess Christ.

Jett's confirmation verse is John 6:63. These are the words of our Lord Jesus when he says, "The Spirit makes alive; the flesh doesn't help. The words I spoke to you are Spirit, and they are life." These words of God teach us that a true confession of Christ does not depend on our flesh. It doesn't depend on how clever you are, how strong you are, how nice you are, or how intelligent you are. When you talk about your Savior Jesus and what he has done for you, you are simply relying upon the words of your Savior. His words are Spirit and life. His words give you faith. He therefore also gives you the words to confess your faith.

Not everyone is as articulate. God gives us all different gifts. Some people aren't afraid to speak up. Others are more timid or careful about when they speak. If we rely on our flesh, then both of these characteristics can be used for a lot of damage. If you aren't afraid to speak up, then your sinful flesh will lead you to speak when you should be quiet or say things you shouldn't say. If you are naturally more shy or careful, then your sinful flesh will lead you to be silent when you should speak up. But if you are relying on your Lord's words, then you can know that the Holy Spirit is guiding you. He has given you faith and life in Jesus. He forgives you of your sins because of what Jesus did for you. He credits to you the very righteousness of your Savior. When you rely on the words of God, then you can know that you are in Christ and that he is in you. You live in him, and he lives in you. And there is no greater life than to know God and his Son Jesus Christ. His birth, life, death, and resurrection – his words of eternal life – give you the confidence, not only to believe his Word, but also to confess it.

You have learned the basic teachings of the Bible. You've learned the Ten Commandments. You've learned about the Triune God, who created you, redeemed you by the blood of Christ, and called you to faith by the Holy Spirit. You have learned that Jesus is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, and that he is your Lord. You have learned that you can't believe by your own reason and strength, but the Holy Spirit has called you by the gospel. You have learned to pray to God with the confidence that he promises to hear you. You have learned how Jesus won for us the forgiveness of sins and how his Word delivers this forgiveness to us. This is why your baptism saves you. It's what Christ gives you when he feeds you with his body and blood. You have learned these basic things from the Bible.

This means that you can confess them. If you hear someone contradict these plain teachings of God's Word, then you can still stand on the truth. Even if the one who is contradicting God's Word has read the Bible more than you have and can recite more Bible verses than you can, you don't need to be intimidated. Of course, this should motivate you to keep learning Scripture and keep growing in your understanding of Christian doctrine. But in the meantime, you rely on the words your Savior has given you. And you can know that the Holy Spirit gives you life through these words.

Jacob's confirmation verse is Ephesians 2:8-9. St. Paul writes: "Yes, by His grace you are saved through faith. It was not your own doing; it is God's gift. It is not the result of anything you have done; and so no one may boast." These words of God teach us that a true confession of the gospel involves learning the truth and rejecting error. St. Paul doesn't just say that we are saved by grace through faith. He clarifies that this is not because of our own works. He clarifies that it did not come from us at all. If we say that God saved us by his grace, then we also learn to clarify that this excludes all of our own works. We can't boast in any quality of our own. We can only boast in Christ who took away the sin of the world. Some will teach that God saves us by his grace, but they will define grace in such a way as to include our own good works. They say that God's grace is that he helps us do good works so that we can make it into heaven. But Paul clarifies. No, it is not by your works at all. Some will teach that our faith comes about by some decision we make with our own free will. But again, Paul clarifies. No, it did not come from you. Faith comes from hearing the Word. It is not from you willing it or running after it. It is only by God's mercy that you believe. His Holy Spirit gives you faith and life through his Word.

The gospel is simple enough for a child to learn. Jesus came in humility to die for the sins of the world, and he gathers his little lambs into his arms and gives them eternal life. But God also teaches us to confess this gospel and guard it against false and confusing teachings. Your instruction doesn't end today. As you rely on your Savior's words, he will continue to teach you, prepare you to resist false doctrine, and guide you always to rest in his saving gospel promise.

Oscar's confirmation verse is Titus 3:5. St. Paul writes, "He saved us, not because of any good works we did, but because He was merciful. He saved us by the washing in which the Holy Spirit gives us a new birth and a new life." When you confess Christ, you are confirming the gifts God gave you in your baptism. Here the apostle describes baptism as a washing in which the Holy Spirit gives you a new birth and a new life. Everything you have learned to confess from God's Word was already given to you in your baptism. You just couldn't articulate it at the time. And yet, God still gave you his Word. When you were baptized, God placed his Word into your ears and into your heart. And now, as you have gotten older, you have learned to talk about and express this Word of God. He opens your lips to declare his praise.

This again shows that you are simply depending on God's Word when you confess it. And just like you didn't understand it when you were baptized, you still don't fully understand it. You never will fully understand God's Word until you reach your home in heaven. Yet, you have begun to understand God's Word. You have learned a lot. And you should be happy about that. You should know that it's pleasing to God. It is a good work to learn and confess the gospel. It's a good work to grow in understanding. But your salvation doesn't depend on how well you understand. God didn't save you because of any good works you did. He freely gave you faith and life when you were baptized. And as you continue to seek a better understanding of his teaching, you can continue to rely on this free gift.

Think about the people who met Jesus when he rode into Jerusalem. They confessed him to be the Savior and the King. Did they fully understand what they were confessing? Of course not! They didn't understand that their Savior and King would have to carry his cross to Calvary only five days later. They knew Jesus was their Savior, but they could not yet articulate the depth of what this meant. And yet, Jesus said that if these children didn't praise him then the very rocks would cry out. God doesn't wait around for you to have a Master's degree before he has you confess his Word. He gave you his Word when he baptized you. He gave you his salvation. He gave you a new birth and a new life. And he continues to teach you to confess and articulate what this new life is.

Finally, we consider Easton's confirmation verse from 1 Peter 3:15. St. Peter writes, "But give your hearts completely to Christ as Lord. And always be ready to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have, but be gentle and respectful." These words of God teach us that a true confession of Christ is always filled with hope, humility, and respect. When the people cried out to Jesus – "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who is coming in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest" – they were hopeful. They had been waiting for the Savior to come, and he finally arrived. When we confess the gospel, it is always an act of hope. We look forward to what God has prepared for us. We look to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. As often as we eat Christ's body and drink his blood we confess his death until he comes. We are always looking to his coming whenever we confess his Word.

And this means that we should not be discouraged when people reject God's Word. Were there false believers mingled in with the crowd that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem? I'm sure there were. There are always hypocrites and ungodly people secretly mixed in with Christ's church on earth. And this is often very discouraging. When God's Word is questioned or denied in subtle ways, this often makes it difficult to confess it. But St. Peter speaks of our confession as the hope that we have. Even when we must face opposition to God's Word, our hope for what God has prepared for us in his kingdom cannot be taken away. He keeps it for us in heaven even as he strengthens us to confess it here on earth.

In the meantime, God teaches us humility and respect. Confessing God's Word is very humbling. And it can also be very scary. But remember that the Lord who gave you his Word to confess is the same Lord who came in meekness and humility to save you from your sins. He faced the terror of the cross where he not only bore the hatred of the world, but he also bore the righteous wrath of God against our sins. He will not put your weakness to shame. In fact, he himself teaches you to be gentle, meek, and kind. When someone is challenging your hope in Christ, you don't need to be afraid. You don't need to be frantic. If they insult you, don't insult them back. If they are disrespectful to God, then don't be disrespectful yourself. If people make fun of God's Word, don't join in. Don't be afraid of being left out or looked at as a fool. Don't fear those who can only harm your body. Instead, fear God. Respect him. Show reverence toward his Word. Because he has delivered you from every fear and terror, and he invites you rely on the gentle words of Christ, which have the power to save your soul.

Dear friends, when you confess your Savior, you are simply relying on his Word. You are learning to stand on his truth and reject all errors. You are resting in God's promise first given to you in your baptism. And you can be certain that, no matter how much you are humiliated, no matter how many trials you have to face, your hope remains secure in Christ. Because he remains your King who came to save you from sin, death, and hell. God grant us always the strength to confess his name, confident that he will confess us before the Father in heaven. Amen.