

Professing Faith – Revealing Maturity

This morning, four of our young adults will (Lord willing) stand before the congregation to profess their faith. That should fill our worship with much joy!

But we do well to pause and recall what this event *means*. Because unless we understand what it says about our standing before God, our public profession of faith becomes merely a *tradition*, with no true significance.

When they stand before the congregation and affirm the four questions asked of them, there are at least three things these young adults are *not* doing.

First, they are not *joining* the church. Actually, one of them is, since Alex was not baptized into this congregation. But the rest have been “members” of the church – albeit “immature” members – since the day of their baptism.

Second, they are not *becoming* Christians. They were baptized as Christians – as those to whom God extended His Covenant promises, as children of believers. In that act, they were set apart from the children of unbelievers and marked as heirs of the Covenant in Christ.

And third, they are not simply being acknowledged as adults. There *is* a recognition of maturity involved in making profession of faith. In fact, *maturity* lies at the heart of this event. But that maturity has nothing to do with age.

So what, exactly, *are* they doing?

They are confessing their *trust* in God and in all that He promised them when they were baptized. That confession is a sign of maturity – showing that these young adults understand and embrace both the promises God has given them and their own obligation to respond to God’s promises in all of life.

The children of believers are different than the children of unbelievers. God, in His grace, has set them apart as holy (1 Cor. 7:14). He promised to be their God (Gen. 17:7). He promised to give them the blessings of Christ, including salvation from sin and the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39).

These promises are God’s gracious gifts – not at all something we can earn or in any way merit (Titus 3:4-7). Yet we must *receive* what God has promised *through faith* (Col. 2:12) – or we will forfeit the promises, showing that we were never truly His (Rom. 11:20-22). That faith will result in a continual repentance from sin and a striving to fill their lives with gratitude to God (Romans 6 and 8).

From the day of their baptism onward, we regard our children as belonging to the Lord. They are His, and we have the calling to raise them in God’s discipline and instruction (Eph. 6:4), setting His Word before them continually (Deut. 6:7 ff.). They must learn to trust in *Him*, as the only source of knowledge (Prov. 1:7), blessing (Prov. 3:5-6), and purity (Ps. 119:9-10).

To that end, the elders spend years teaching them the truths which God reveals in the Bible and which the church summarizes in our Catechism. Meanwhile their parents read the Bible to them, discipline them with appeals to God’s Word and His promises, and teach them to trust in God continuously.

As their understanding grows, they are called to profess their faith – explaining what they believe concerning the reason for their hope (1 Pet. 3:15). They are encouraged to confess Christ at every opportunity, recalling His promise to confess them before our heavenly Father (Matt. 10:32). And they are urged to submit their lives to God, showing their love for the Lord by obeying His commands (1 John 5:2-3).

Standing before the congregation to profess their faith is a logical part of the spiritual maturity to which we constantly call our children. They are saying: “I believe all that God has said, I trust His promises, and I intend – with God helping me – to live as one of His children, through Christ.”

In short, by professing their faith before the church, they show that they are *mature* members of the church. They have learned how to examine themselves sufficiently to partake of the Lord’s Supper and to live as adult members of the Church. And they intend to continue growing in the Lord – nurturing their faith, developing their gifts, and showing gratitude in every part of their lives.

That’s a step worth celebrating, as we recognize how faithful God has been to draw these young adults into a greater knowledge and a stronger faith.

It also is a reminder of our need to *pray* for them (and for all of our fellow members), asking God to continue the work He has begun. It’s a reminder that we all are called to *confess* Christ – not just before

the church, but before a watching world. And it's a reminder that we all – young and old, regardless of our maturity – depend entirely on God to strengthen and sustain us.

Then, with praise, let us thank God for the answer our prayer will surely receive, being confident “that He who began a good work in [them] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Php. 1:6).