

Text: Acts 2:43-47

Theme: Passing Another Milestone

Confirmation May 14, 2017

What can you tell me about milestones? What are they and why do they matter? How many milestones have you passed in the last twelve or thirteen years? As you, our confirmands, think about those questions, most of you would probably have a difficult time defining a milestone and an even more difficult time naming milestones in your life thus far. Yet if we asked your parents or grandparents, they could recall milestones in your past. Yet the milestone you pass today will ultimately be one of the most significant in your lives.

The words of Acts describing the early Church, are appropriate words for Confirmation Sunday because they provide direction for each one of you as you pass this major milestone. 1. Our text tells us that they devoted themselves to God's Word. "Devoted themselves..." They committed themselves; they decided that what they would do was important, important enough that they would make sure that it occurred. In their minds, it wasn't optional or "if I feel like it" or "when I get around to it." It was going to happen because it was that important. As far as they were concerned, their future depended on remaining devoted to God's Word. As you, as our confirmands, pass this major milestone, you need to remain devoted to God's Word.

2. As you pass this milestone, you need to be devoted to fellowship. There's that "devoted" word again because it's such an important word. But what does it mean to be "devoted to fellowship"? Some of you are thinking, "I like this because it means that we need to eat more donuts after church." Nice try, but fellowship is more than donuts. It's gathering together with other Christians to encourage, build up, compliment, and assist each other. You might think, "Why should I do that? My life is fine; who cares about their life?" For the moment, it may look that way, but life will get tougher for you and when those moments arrive, you will be grateful that others care enough to encourage, support, and pick you up when you fall on your face.

3. As you pass this milestone, our text also encourages you to be devoted to the Lord's Supper. Next Sunday, you will receive Christ's body and blood at the Lord's Supper for the first time. But "Devoted to" instructs you to return, to stand here frequently admitting you have messed up and desperately need the assurance of forgiveness Jesus offers. This is not a place to stand when it's convenient, but a place to stand when you are fully aware of who you are, when you know in your heart that this is where you need to be. "Devoted to" also focuses on frequency. Luther said it as well as anyone, "If you do not have the desire to receive the Lord's Supper frequently, you should check to see if you are still alive!"

4. As you pass this major milestone, our text encourages you to be devoted to prayer. By now, you're probably tired of that "devoted" word because it expects something from you. Some milestones, like the one today, are more than mere achievements. They are milestones with expectations. Right now, a lot of other things seem important. Computers, cell phones, texting, apps, games. But before all those things distract you, remember the expectations of this milestone. Remember the expectation to remain devoted to prayer. Ask any grandparent here

today and they will tell you that staying connected to God is crucial, more important than you can possibly realize at this moment.

5. As you pass by this milestone, you're also expected to do something you're often not very good at - sharing. Ever since you were kids, you've been told to share, to think about someone other than yourself. Today, I'm telling you the same thing because as you pass this milestone, you need to notice the needs of others, to look beyond yourself. And as you see a need, your response is to meet the needs of the other person. You can tell yourself that someone else can do that, but I guarantee you will gain more by sharing than you will ever gain by being selfish. The people in our text were generous and willing to share because their hearts told them that's what God expected.

6. As you pass this milestone on life's journey, God needs you in this place for worship. Our text says that they continued to meet together. Those words aren't a history lesson, but words of instruction. This milestone isn't an invitation to disappear, but an invitation to reappear here next week and the week after that because this is where God needs you to be. If you want Him to step into your situations, you need to be here so that He can prepare you for those situations. He knows what you don't know and He knows what you need to survive. It's a smart move to be where He prepares you for another week.

7. An attitude of sincerity and gladness is also what you need to possess as you pass this milestone. Ninety percent of life is about attitude. If you are negative and think the world is out to get you, life will be what you imagine. Attitude is everything. It affects how you feel, what you do or don't do, who you follow, where you go, and what you do when you arrive. As you take the next step, you need to be genuine, to actually care about other people. You need to be authentic, the real you and that real you needs to carry an attitude that says, "Life is good because God is good. Life is great because God is great!" With an attitude of gladness and God at your side, you will exceed your dreams.

8. As you pass this significant milestone, praising God becomes part of each new day. Many years ago, I was actually your age. Surprisingly, I can remember bits and pieces. Forty plus years later, I'm here to tell you that when God is most important, everything else in life will find its place and it will be a good place, a place better than you could have created on your own. Maybe everyone else isn't giving God the credit, but that doesn't make it wrong. It just means a lot of people are self-focused instead of God-focused. When praising God is what you do daily, He will step into your life more often and do more great things than you can begin to imagine.

9. I'd like to tell you that I'm just doing my job today, that it's Confirmation Sunday so I have to say something about Confirmation. But life out there is going to get tougher, meaner, more hurtful, more stressful, more frustrating. It's going to be worse than you can imagine. I know and so many others sitting here today know that you need all the help you can get. Our text provides a starting point as you pass this milestone. But as you step out beyond today, remember where to step back. Remember the need to be devoted, to share, to worship, to carry a great attitude, and to praise your great God. For when you pass this milestone with those points imprinted in your mind, you will know where to return when you realize that you didn't know everything after all. Amen.