

“CONTINUE IN WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED”

2 Timothy 3:14-15

Pentecost, Confirmation Sunday

May 15, 2016 – 10:30 AM

ALL I NEEDED TO KNOW I LEARNED IN KINDERGARTEN is the title of a best-selling book that was first published 30 years ago in 1986. It was written by the American author Robert Fulghum and it is actually a collection of fifty different essays that he had written throughout his life. Some of these essays, he had written for friends. Others he had written for family members. And still others he had written primarily for himself. In the preface he tells us that he had never planned to publish any of his essays, but so many of his friends and family members kept encouraging him to do so—that he finally did.

“All I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten” is the first essay that ended up also being the title given to his whole book.

Now of course, Mr. Fulghum was not being totally serious—when he said, *“Everything I needed to know, I learned in kindergarten.”* For certainly there were some very important things about life and about his living out his life in this world that he still had to learn after kindergarten: such things as how to drive a car, how to shave and how to balance a checkbook.

What Mr. Fulghum is saying is that there were some very important lessons about life that he had learned by the time he was in kindergarten that have continued to serve him very well throughout his life.

Let me just share ten of these lessons with you:

- (1) Share everything;
- (2) Play fair;
- (3) Don’t hit other people;
- (4) Put things back exactly where you found them;
- (5) Clean up your own mess;
- (6) Don’t take things that don’t belong to you;
- (7) Say you’re SORRY when you have hurt someone;
- (8) Wash your hands before you eat;
- (9) Watch out for traffic, especially when you are crossing the street; and
- (10) Never forget that all of your pets, such as goldfish, hamsters and white mice will eventually die, and he continues, so will we. We will all eventually die, unless our Lord Jesus returns in glory to “take us to heaven to live with him there” before we do.

Today is Confirmation Day and you six young people have been learning some very important lessons about life too; not from Mr. Fulghum’s book, but from a book that we Christians treasure above all other books in this world; firmly believing that it is the most important book that has ever been written in the history of the entire world. The Holy Bible, sometimes called the “Holy Scriptures,” or the “sacred writings” is a book in class all by itself.

It too, is actually a collection, not of 50 different essays, but of 66 different books, with 39 of those books appearing in the Old Testament and 27 books appearing in the New Testament.

We believe what the Bible even tells us about itself—in the two verses immediately following the text I just read to you: *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

The Bible has many things to teach us about life, about what we are to do and about what we are not to do. You learned in your catechism classes with Mr. Boykin, that those parts of God’s Word that tell us

what we are to do and what we are not to do are called the LAW OF GOD; which are certainly given to us in the form of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus chapter 20, and again in Deuteronomy chapter 5.

The reason that God gives us his LAW is because he wants to protect us and to protect other people in this world too; just like when you were babies and your parents placed you securely in a car seat before driving down the road; they did this not so much to constrict you, as to protect you, though it did constrict you too.

- (1)** The reason God gives us his LAW is to teach us right from wrong and the Bible says that living in obedience to the LAW of God can bring many blessings into our lives. In Psalm 1 we read: *“Blessed are those people whose delight is in the law of the LORD; especially when they meditate upon his law day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in due season” (Psalm 1:1-3).*
- (2)** The law of God was primarily given to us, however, to show us our sins and to lead us to repentance. St Paul says in Romans 7:7, *“Apart from the law I would not have known sin!”*
- (3)** Our biggest trouble in life is that we were all born into this world with a sinful nature. By nature we are separated from God, and Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, taught us that we are so separated from God--the way that we are born into this world, that only way we could be true come to know God and his love for us was by being born again into his kingdom, by the grace of God!

Jesus told Nicodemus: *“Very truly, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5)*

We Lutherans believe that when Jesus talks to us about “water” he is talking to us about the Sacrament of Holy Baptism that he instituted as the Risen Savior shortly before he ascended back into heaven. Jesus told his first disciples, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age!” (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Yes God gave us his law to protect us and to protect other people. God gave us his Law to teach us right from wrong; and the Bible also teaches us that the Law was given to us to show us our sin and our need for a Savior; our need for God’s salvation.

The law was never given to us to take all of the fun out of our lives. The law of God is in some respects just like those guardrails along the winding, ever-twisting roads on the Blue Ridge Parkway when you are traveling through the Smokey Mountains. Those guardrails are not there to harm you, but to protect you and help you, not only preserve you own life but the lives of other people who may be riding with you in the car, when in just a few years from now, you too, will be old enough to drive.

The good news is that God sent his only-begotten Son into this world to become our Savior.

Jesus was not born into the world to simply become for us another Moses; to simply give us more commandments about what we are to do and what we are not to do. He came to keep God’s law perfectly for us, and then to offer his totally sinless life unto death on a cross in payment for our sins and to reconcile us to the Heavenly Father whom he also came to reveal to us.

One day Jesus said: *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day!” (John 6:35-40; selected verses)!*

St. John tells us: *“God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son so that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life! For God did send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him!”* (John 3:16-17).

“Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings that are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ!” (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Today is a day for each one of you to remember who it was that taught you the Word of God all throughout your life to this point. In many respects it was your parents and your grandparents. But don't forget to remember all those Sunday school teachers who have been teaching the Bible to you and the good news about Jesus being our Savior, from the time you were in preschool, kindergarten, grade school and now Middle School.

Think about the fun times you had in Vacation Bible School. Certainly Paul was reminding Timothy to remember how his mother Eunice and his mother Lois had taught him the faith of God as it had been revealed to them in the Old Testament scriptures. Paul was grateful that this faith also now dwelt in Timothy! God even called Timothy to be a pastor in the church; every year we pray that maybe one of the young men being confirmed on a day like today would answer the call of God to become a pastor—if the Holy Spirit—were calling them to do so.

Think of all the things you have learned from the time you were born into this world, boys and girls. How to crawl and how to walk. How to read and how to write. How to dress yourselves and tie your own tennis shoes. You had to learn how to take a bath and clean up your room. You had to learn how to add and subtract numbers. **BUT OF ALL THINGS YOU HAVE EVER LEARNED—THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS FOR YOU TO HAVE COME TO KNOW JESUS AS YOUR PERSONAL LORD AND SAVIOR.**

I want each of you to know how grateful I am to God that he gave me the privilege of baptizing every one of you, shortly after you were born into this world! C. J. was baptized on October 19, 2003; Kaley on January 18, 2004; Will on January 25, 2004, August on February 15, 2004, and Derrick and Mariah both on April 8, 2004, I believe there is something else that you have learned in your life, from your parents and your grandparents, from your Sunday school teachers, and certainly from Mr. Boykin these past two years—the Word of God that can make you wise unto salvation--the most important thing of all!

Sometimes when you will be driving down the road called “life” there will be times when you come to a fork in the road and have to decide to go right or left: “Should I go to Clemson, or should I go to the University of South Carolina?” These are two separate roads that you could take, but you can't take them both, and the way that you choose is going to have a definite impact on your life forever.

Jesus says this in his Sermon on the Mount, *“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few!”* (Matthew 7:14).

Sometimes doing the right thing certainly does not mean doing the easy thing! Sometimes doing the right thing means that you are willing to stand alone in the crowd. Fortunately entering the narrow gate is not something we have to find for ourselves, for God sent Jesus into the world to reveal that narrow gate to us. He himself is that narrow gate. It is this same Jesus who says, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through me!”* (John 14:6)

All that I needed to know I learned in kindergarten: *Maybe so, if you can with certainty: “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so, little ones to him belong they are weak but he is strong.... Jesus loves me he who died...”* So you may have heard about that kindergarten teacher who had given each of her little kindergartners some paper and crayons one day and told them to draw whatever it is that their little hearts wanted to draw. Then, a little later, walking round the classroom observing the children, she came to one little girl who was working diligently. She said, “Susan what are you drawing!”

Susan replied, "I am drawing God!" The teacher replied, "But no one knows what God looks like!" Without looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute!"

Hmm... I don't know what Susan was drawing on her paper that day, but I know what I wish she were drawing on her paper that day: A picture of Jesus, imitating some of those great artists whose renderings of Jesus on the canvas we all can immediately recognize.

"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is in the closest relationship with the Father, he has made him known" (John 1:18). Amen