

I want to start with a question this morning. How do you know the right thing to do? How does one tell right from wrong?

This was a straightforward question when each of us was little. Don't eat the dog's food. Don't hit your sister.

But as we grew older and life grew more complicated, the answer became more complicated as well.

How do you know the right thing to do? Is not an easy question, and time doesn't make it any easier. At first, we simply followed the rules. But we learned to consider whether it's a family member, or a friend, or even a stranger. We factor in intent and outcomes: Will I be praised? Embarrassed? What will I gain? What is the cost?

But you and I come at this question as people of faith. We factor in the 10 Commandments as we heard in the OT reading, and the witness of Jesus, who speaks in our gospel reading.

Today Madison and Logan have publicly and intentionally taken on the identity of a 10 Commandment, Jesus following God person like most of us here. Our question becomes 'How do these commandments and Jesus figure into our lives going forward?

Is the Rite of Affirmation of Faith no different than making the varsity cheerleading squad? Or has the question of What is the right thing to do just become more complicated?

That is the question for today.

Let's start with the 10 Commandments. Out of the 10, 7 are fairly straightforward and don't appear to be too difficult to follow: not many of us have ever murdered anyone or taken the stand in a court of law and told lies about someone.

But those of us who have studied Martin Luther's small catechism have learned that a much broader understanding of these commandments is needed. Do not murder means much more than the taking of someone's life. It can mean killing a person with unkind words.

Do not commit adultery has meaning even for those of us who are not married; we are to be true to any relationship where trust is foundational and loyalty expected.

Commandment #8 about bearing false witness means we don't tell lies, but it also means we protect the reputation of others who are being maligned.

It is easy to see how making decisions about what the right thing to do has just become a bit harder.

Which brings us to Jesus. Most of us have a lot of questions around Jesus but I'm fairly certain that at the end of our time, we will want to be found on the Jesus team. But Jesus comes with a cross.

And there's more. If we read the Jesus story closely, we learn that we are to do more than just feed the hungry or forgive a lot of people, but we are also to pray for our enemies, and forgive even those who persecute you (like that miserable guy who cheats off your algebra test) and take care of smelly, dirty, cranky strangers.

Jesus reduces it all to a simple formula: love God, love your neighbor. We are to love our neighbor: not just feed or hand over our old outgrown coat, or sit next to some foreigner we don't know, but love them.....and to do it with all of every part of us. To love with our words, our lives, our actions, our wealth, our thoughts - ALL of us.

We may ask ourselves “What is the right thing to do?” but, in the end, we find we aren’t interested in doing the things Jesus says are important. By this time, I am tired and certain that I will never get it right.

I think we have now arrived at the core question for us What does it mean to live as a person of faith? Love God, love your neighbor. Love the mysterious, incomprehensible God who is inviting each of us into a deep relationship which includes loving every one of our neighbors.

NOW we know the scope of the task we have each taken on: love God with every fiber of our being by living out that love in everything we do, every decision we make, every action we take. Even though a whole lot of the time God appears to be on vacation and we don’t particularly like our neighbors.

This is where we stand today: Logan and Madison and each one of us and every believer around the globe. We are committing ourselves to this God, this Jesus of the cross, and these 10 commandments.

We are committing ourselves to a life of faith and trust in this Creator God through Jesus who models a faithful life and the Holy Spirit who gives us the strength to hold fast to this course.

Each of us commits to live with God as our North Star, and the commandment of love as our central value. We call ourselves Lutherans, but we are not committing to Luther, or to a particular form of worship or even to specific doctrines, but to the Creator God of Love, the crucified Christ, and the powerful Spirit. We commit to trusting the promises that flow from this God of love above all the false promises of the world.

On the best and worst days of our lives, we are to hold Jesus' teaching before our eyes as we make decisions large and small....because we believe Jesus' promise that even on our worst day, when we don't even like ourselves, Jesus will look at you and love you.

As we celebrate this day of Reformation and the public affirmation of faith of Madison and Logan, let us hold before our eyes the cross of Jesus.

May that cross shape your actions and words. Love God, love your neighbor. Not because you understand, not because it is easy and not because everyone agrees with you, but because you trust the one whose love came first.