

Imagine a young girl walking through a wooded area. At first, she enjoys the world around her with great glee. Her eyes take in all sorts of marvelous things that she has never seen before. She gets so involved in her looking that she hardly notices the sun going down. Before she knows it, it is pitch dark, and she is very afraid. She knows that there was a path she traveled to get to where she was, but in the darkness she has no idea where it even is. She sits in the darkness and cries. If only she had a flashlight, she could continue on the path back to safety. But she does not have one. And so she sits in darkness lost.

This is indeed a very unhappy story. And yet it tells the story of most of our world. Most people of our world are people that have wandered off and become lost in darkness. Of course, I speak metaphorically. To put the situation most accurately, the Bible tells us that all are born in the darkness of sin and remain in that same darkness unless God intervenes with His grace. Being lost in sin is indeed scary. Most people who wander off from God assume they can always get back if they need too, but the darkness of sin makes it so that they do not even know the direction back. They too must sit in darkness and be afraid. If only they had a flashlight, they too could return to safety.

Megan, Chelsea, Melanie, and Laura, the Bible indeed tells us that we are all born into the darkness of sin. That means you too once were lost. But thanks be to God, you were given light before you ever even realized that you were in darkness. Each of you years ago when you were still babies were brought to this font and were baptized. Baptism is a light-giving event. It is light-giving because as we learned in confirmation, there are two things present at Baptism, water and the Word. The Word always illumines, enlightens, gives light.

This truth is best taught in the verse which you ladies picked to use today as group verse for your confirmation. Psalm 119:105 which says. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." At your Baptism, the Word went to work on you even though you could not read it and barely could hear it. As that Word was connected with water, your sins were forgiven and you received the Holy Spirit. And as each of you grew up in the faith, God continue to light your path with His Word. Through your parents, through Sunday

school teachers, and through many others in this congregation, God's bright Word was given to you that you might know where to go. The bright light of God's word has led you time and time again throughout your life to your savior Jesus' loving arms. For the light-giving Word always leads us to the Light of the World, Jesus.

Today, you have reached a significant milestone in your walk with Jesus. Today each of you have confessed that the light of God's word has kept you in the faith from the time of your baptism until this day. You have also confessed that it is by that Word that you will continue to live your life until your own death. Confirmation can well be thought of as hinge on a door. It signals in many senses the end of your childhood faith and welcomes you into the adult life of faith. Indeed, having been instructed in the faith, the church now sees fit to withhold from you nothing that is has been given by God. You are received this day as full members of the church, and judged able to examine yourselves properly for the Lord's Supper.

Indeed, today is a day when we rejoice knowing that God's Word has been active and effective in you. We rejoice that God's Word has been a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path. We rejoice that the bright Word incarnate, Jesus has taken you by the hand and led you through your life. We rejoice that your sins were forgiven by His death and that your names are written in the book of Life because of His resurrection. We rejoice that the Light of the World is your light and your joy.

However, there must be spoken thought one word of caution. Confirmation is not an end, but a beginning. Today, you confessed that the Word has been active in your life. As you go forward from this point, the church delivers more of the responsibility for your own spiritual life to you. If you wish to continue in the faith until death as you have promised, it will be your responsibility to make sure that you place yourself where God's Word is. The church will no longer question you publicly as to your faith as we did Wednesday, but indeed the world will have many questions that need answering. As you grow, it is important that you remain faithful in coming to church, in reading your bible, and receiving the Lord's Supper. It is not important just because it is something that you should do, but it is important because through those means, God will deliver to you His Word. Through those means He will keep the path on which He wishes for you to walk well lit. Through those means you will be led back to the Light of the World, Jesus, time and time again throughout your entire life.

It is a sad but true fact that all too many people get confirmed only to later walk off into darkness. For all too many confirmands, confirmation is an end. I trust that that will not be the case for you ladies because I know you and your families.

Do not be deceived, Satan will try his very best to distract you throughout your Christian lives. As you walk down the path that God has called you to walk, you will see off on the sides of that path all sorts of things that seem pleasing to the eye. Satan will try to lure you into focusing your attention onto those things rather than onto the path which Jesus has called you. And if you do not keep God's Word in front of you constantly, you too can end up looking at the things Satan wishes for you to see and not even notice that the sun is going down. If Satan can pull you away from God's word, the lights will go down, and soon you will sit once again in darkness.

That is the bad news. But we are not here to focus on the bad news. Rather we come to church to hear the good news. And what is the good news? If God's Word finds a prominent place in your life, your path through life will be well-lit. You will be able to make godly choices and in so doing live a very blessed life indeed. It will be a blessed life because you will never walk down the path alone. The Light of the World Jesus will walk with you. He will guide you, He will forgive you if you stumble off the path, and He will eventually welcome you into the place where His path leads, your heavenly home.

Today we celebrate that those who have been blessed to walk with Jesus need never be found alone and in the darkness. We do have a flashlight and therefore always know where we are going. We turn to Jesus and His word, and we see things clearly. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. In Him do we find our way. Amen.