

Revelation 21:1-5 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Imagine a Nascar race. As the drivers speed around the course, one car pulls in for a pit stop. As the cameras watch the pit crew go to work, the driver slides out of the car. The pit crew responds with amazement. What is he doing? Why is he leaving the car? The race is not over! But the driver gets out and begins acting as if just finished the finish line. He walks over to a cooler, pulls out a celebratory bottle of milk and drinks away. With amazement, the crowd watches on as the driver seemingly mistakes a pit stop for the finish line. Who could imagine such a careless mistake?

For the six of you, today is your confirmation day. At face value confirmation seems to signal many ends. An end to catechism classes. An end to memory work. An end to sermon notes. But the real truth is that confirmation is not the end at all. Indeed, we take time today to stop and reflect on the faithfulness of God. We rejoice that God has brought each of you confirmands to faith in Holy Baptism and kept you in that same faith throughout your lives to this point. But this is not the end. Confirmation is much more of a pit stop than a finish line.

All too many people pull into confirmation as if the race was over. They mistake this pit stop for the finish line. They assume that their education in the Christian faith is complete. But today I remind you that Confirmation Day is not the finish line, it is not the end. If you want to know where the finish line is, we must turn to the second reading for the day from the book of Revelation. It tells us about the finish line, the real end of

Christian life. In fact it tells of the end of all time and the end of the world we live in now.

Consequently, it also tells of each Christian's end. Thankfully, unlike this corrupted world our end is not destruction by fire. Rather the picture that Revelation gives for us Christians is wonderful indeed. That last day will be our end because it is only on that day that our Christian lives come to their intended completion.

The book of Revelation as a whole tells us about many things that will happen in the last days before Christ. It tells of wars, and rumors of war, of great disasters, and of great trials. But in the twenty-first chapter of revelation where our texts falls, God reveals the final end of all things. Here we get to the real comfort of Revelation. All of those things He has mentioned in earlier chapters had to come, but after they came, then the finish line could appear. Then could come what all who believe in Jesus have been waiting for their entire Christian lives. This world and all of its corruption are destroyed, and a new heaven and earth are created. And this new heaven and this earth are absolutely perfect. They are perfect for the same reason that the first heaven and earth that God created in Eden was perfect. They will be perfect because in this new heaven and new earth, God will once again dwell side by side with His people. In the Garden, God strolled around in the garden in the cool of the day right next to Adam and Eve. Likewise, in the new heavens and earth God will live right next to His people. Revelation says that He will tabernacle, or dwell with His people. And since the Holy God is there, nothing evil will be allowed in. All of the bad stuff that we deal with here on earth will be banished forever. John mentions specifically crying, pain, death, and sorrow. But feel free to add anything evil and hurtful to the list, because nothing evil will be there.

Each of you confirmands began the race towards Heaven on the day of your Baptism. For most of you, you were very little indeed on that day. But it didn't stop God from placing you on the road towards Heaven. He forgave you of all of your sin and gave you His Holy Spirit on that day. He placed His hands upon yours and steered you

on your way as only a loving Father can do. Throughout your life, God has used many people to continue to keep you on the right track. God has used people like parents, grandparents, pastors and teachers to continue to deliver to you His Word in order that you might continue the race of faith. Today, we stop along the way. We pull in for a pit stop. We stop to look back and to look forward. We look back all the way to your Baptism. And as we look back, we kept help but be amazed at all that God has worked in your life so far. But we also look forward. We look forward all the way to your intended end, the new heavens and earth. We rejoice that as you continue to walk with God in the community of his church nurtured by His Word and His sacrament you will indeed be brought to the finish line safe and sound.

As each of you pull back out onto the track today after confirmation, God will keep you going by giving you glimpses into what that last day will be like in order to encourage you along the way. He will wave the checkered flag in front of your eyes each time He reminds you of His promises through His word. He will give you a glimpse of what the victory lap will be like each time you take the Lord's Supper. For there just like in the new heaven and the new earth, God will come to dwells with you in His body and blood. At the Lord's altar there is no pain, no crying, no death, but only the life and salvation that He accomplishes for us through the forgiveness of our sins. In fact, each time you gather in His house you are given an idea of what the stands of Heaven will look like when they are filled with all of the saints.

Today, you begin the last leg of the race. You begin you travel from confirmation day to that last day. And what is the way from confirmation day to the finish line? Well, the answer is quite simple. Jesus is the way the truth and the life. He is the way to get from here to there safely. And so as you confirmands now begin the adult life of faith, simply stay where Jesus says that He is, and you will be fine. Come to His house, open your bible in your homes, and come to the Altar of the Lord, and you will kept strong in the faith. And as He comes to you time and time again He will give you the grace, the forgiveness, and the power you need to live as His children all of the days of your life.

He will keep you on the track that leads to eternal life. He will be with you every day of your life and then, one day, He will call you home with Himself. And then on that last day, He will raise up your body and take you over the finish line into heaven itself. And there will you live with Him and all the other believers forever.

The Christian life is a race from baptism to heaven. Confirmation is a pit stop on that track. But it is not the end. Eternal life in heaven with Jesus is the end. May God indeed keep each of you in the faith racing for Him until that final day. Amen.