Text: Confirmation (Adam, Ethan, Koelle), Pentecost

**Introduction/Pentecost**

“Out of the heart….”

Our culture has a lot to say about that phrase.

“Do what you love and you will never work a day in your life.”

“Follow your heart and dreams will come true.”

“Let it go.” By which is always meant stop regulating what the heart desires with the mind or the will.

They are all basically forms of the noble savage – a Romantic trope. It is just civilization and religion that get in the way of our natural flourishing. Imagine how great and self-fulfilled we would all be if such things would just disappear. The assumption is that only good things come out of the heart.

Of course this advice is contrary to the wisdom of every age and culture. Confucius would say that “at seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right.” It took a lifetime of training the heart for it to desire the right.

The Buddha’s great insight is that “you suffer because you want.” You heart desires that which is cannot have, which to him was permanence. But he would teach a way – an 8 fold path – that you could train your heart

I reference the East because the western wisdom tradition is Christian. I suppose I could quote Marcus Aurelius or a Stoic whose counsel is likewise how to train the heart. But the point here is to show that the best of humanity in all times and places has more or less come to what C.S. Lewis called the Tao. Natural revelation, far from the noble savage, should lead you to Jesus’ summary of what comes out of the natural heart.

“Out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (Mk. 7:21 ESV)”

In natural religion – in the realm of the law – Jesus is not different from any of the deep sturdy wisdom traditions. The fact that our age is ruled by foolishness is just more testimony against it. At the end of the age Sodom and Gomorrah will rise up and testify against us. If the wonders that have been witnessed to us had been done there, they would have repented (Matt 11:23).

But this is where the religions and philosophies of the world, and Jesus separate. All the religions and philosophies of the world – religions of the law – will try and teach you a way. Confucius will train you to be a jun-zi, a gentleman. Buddha’s eightfold path to nirvana. The stoics’ way of acceptance. Even the woke really isn’t that different. They’ve just made the path of enlightenment a mandatory forced march. If we force the collective to move, we will all arrive at the utopia of social justice.

Jesus preaches the gospel. There is nothing you can do by yourself. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me…out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the Spirit.” You can spend 70 years training your heart, and without the Spirit, it will still desire foolishness. You can walk the 8 fold path, but you will still suffer without Hope absent the Spirit. Without the Spirit Social Justice is just meeting the new boss, same as the old boss.

But the Spirit that has been given to you in your baptism is a well of living water. That Spirit has been given to you by the free Grace of God, purchased with the blood of Christ. The philosophies of every age put the burden on you and send you into the desert without water. Christ has given you water that can turn the desert into a garden. And this is given to “whoever believes in me.”

**Confession**

And that is where I’m going to start making a turn in the audience. Because the confession of that faith is the purpose of confirmation. If you confirmands were adults – baptism and confirmation would be at the same time. In fact the order might have felt switched. Having heard the Word, one might have believed and confessed, confirmed it first. And baptism then been the sacramental seal of that belief. But you three, along with many of us here, were baptized young. Our parents and sponsors confessed for us. Our parents ensured that we received instruction. That we might come to know both Jesus and the Spirit that has taken residence in our hearts through baptism. And eventually, that eventuality being today, the questions they confessed for you are put to you.

As Jesus says, “out of his heart will flow rivers”. Out of a specific heart. Do you believe in God the Father almighty? Do you believe in Jesus Christ his son? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

The Faith, once delivered to the Saints, through your parents, has been given to you. Do you confirm this gift? Do you confirm your baptism?

You get the opportunity to confess that publicly. And because God is superabundant in his love and promises, there is even one for today. “Everyone who confesses me publicly here on earth, I will also confess before my Father in heaven (Matt. 10:32 NLT)” I’ll return back to your three in a second.

But first a final word to those gathered. This might not be your day to confess. But every day we live can be that day. The living water will flow out of your hearts. Listen closely to the questions these three will get in just a bit. I’d urge you to renew your own confession. Let the Spirit leap forward in your hearts.

Now back to you three. One of the traditions of Confirmation in the bestowal of a confirmation verse. It is printed on your certificates. Different places do it different ways. Because I’m a tyrant, I pick your confirmation verses. Although I would hope you don’t take it as just a meaningless action of a tyrant. But instead take it as the gift of a Spiritual Father, and Ethan in your case a physical Father as well. Someone who is supposed to be more mature in the faith, who in prayer has picked out something for you to ponder. That hopefully it will be light to your feet at the appointed times.

I’m going to go in Alphabetical order, to avoid playing favorites.

**Adam (Proverbs 2:6-7)**

Adam, yours is Proverbs 2:6-7. “For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.”

I want to thank you for answering some of the questions I threw out in our time together. I have this tendency to ask questions that I have no right to expect answers from. But multiple times you gave me a surprise in knowing or offering an answer. Not the type of answer that you can memorize. I have a feeling that none of this group – well maybe Koelle in the last few weeks – has done the memory work I would have liked or that was assigned. But Adam you answered the type of questions that require some wisdom. And as Jesus said to Peter with he confessed him as Christ, “blessed are you for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you.” Wisdom, real wisdom, the stuff beyond just recognizing the way things are, isn’t natural stuff. Now it is hard enough recognizing the way things are. Which is why we rightly revere those like Confucius who did. But real wisdom comes from the LORD. Real wisdom in from that indwelling Spirit.

And the world will tell you to it is meaningless to read the bible. Nothing worthwhile can be learned from there. The world will go so far as to say that everything you find in the Word of God is contrary to hard reality. But those are just the lies of Satan. Know that whatever you learn in your life you never have to be afraid that it will conflict with the truth of the Word. Because all knowledge and understanding come from the mouth of God. Whether you study physics or medicine or cars or psychology or anything. You are studying the mind of God. You are studying the way he has ordered all things.

Now Satan at some point will make us all think we have to trespass that Word to grab the brass ring. But the promise of God is that “He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk with integrity.” If you have to trespass the Word for a ring, the ring isn’t worth having. It is already tarnished and decaying. The sound wisdom, the stuff that is worth having, is for the upright.

Don’t descend to the beasts but walk upright with integrity all your days. Follow that Spirit that clearly dwells within and you won’t be disappointed.

**Ethan (Romans 1:16)**

Ethan, I’ve given you Romans 1:16. “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”

Your dad I think was part of the last generation to grow up in what was called Christendom. And for now just accept a definition of that as everyone accepted the basic teachings of the faith as good. Not everyone had a personal faith. There might have been lots of people is a church on a Sunday that were there for other reasons than to receive forgiveness and worship Jesus. But nobody would call you dumb for going to church. Nobody would exclude you from other things, because you were a member.

You are growing up and coming to adulthood in a much different age. The faith that lives in you will get you called stupid. It will probably cost you some of those brass rings I mentioned to Adam. That same faith cost the Apostle Paul, who wrote your verse, everything in his world. Elsewhere in the bible he’d tally up everything it cost him and he’d conclude that it was all rubbish anyway.

Satan and the world will try and shame you out of the faith. Don’t give an inch. There is nothing shameful in the gospel. For the good news of Christ is the power of God in this world for the only thing that will escape this world. This world is coming to an end. It is already groaning. Do not be ashamed for boarding the Ark. And this Ark of Christ is your salvation. And it’s a sturdy one. It has proven itself for millennia. Don’t be ashamed of Christ and His church and trade it for some dinghy that will sink tomorrow whatever the paint job the world puts on it. Because this is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.

**Koelle (Psalm 103:17-18)**

Koelle, I’ve given you Psalm 103:17-18. “But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and His righteousness to children’s children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do His commandments.”

I don’t want to put a downer on it, but the larger context of that psalm is something that might be heard at funeral. “As for man, his days are like grass…”. But such a reminder I think is salutary – life giving. There is only one thing in this entire life that lasts longer than the blade of grass. And that is love.

Prophecies pass away. Tongues cease. Knowledge becomes useless. Faith and Hope will eventually resolve. But love abides.

The love of your parents is a firm example of love. But if you are like my kids at all, all human love is tested. There are certainly days I might tell Ethan, don’t ask today. We parents, as I’m assuming in time you will understand, are sadly fallible. But the steadfast Love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting. With God there aren’t those days when he says “don’t ask.” Jesus’ plea is “ask, seek, knock.”

God has loved you from everlasting - when he chose you before the foundations of the world, to everlasting - when on that new earth in that resurrection body that will not be like the grass. You have been loved with that steadfast love such that even if we go astray, it remains, scanning the distance for our return.

And because we have been so loved. From our mothers arm he has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love that still are ours today. Because we have been so loved, that he has given us his righteousness to children’s children. Because we have been so loved, recall the covenant and the commandments and walk in them. They are not a burden, but a further expression of his love. This is how we return the love of God and love our neighbor. This is how we participate in that everlasting.

Not that it is easy, but that is the still more excellent way.

**Conclusion**

That’s all I have.

My the Lord bless you. And may that stream of living water flow out of your hearts. From this time forth and forevermore. Amen.