

# "Continue - At Home in the Word"

John 8:31-36

October 29, 2006

Well - this is a special day - a celebration, really. And what will we celebrate? For Christians, every Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection of Christ. Do we celebrate that? It is "Reformation Sunday" - the day we make as the 'birthday' of the Lutheran church. Shall we celebrate? For us here at First Lutheran it is Confirmation Sunday - that is certainly something to celebrate. Or perhaps we will just celebrate the Word of God - knowing the Truth that sets us free from sin and the power of death. Of course, it may all be lost in the world's celebration of Halloween. The costumes, candy and running around in the dark can be fun and can easily distract us from the life and light of Christ. So, with the red paraments of celebration decoration our chancel we turn to the Word of God to seek guidance in how we celebrate.

"If you continue in my word...", so the text begins. I was surprised and pleased to read the translation used in The Jerusalem Bible. I have always wondered how we should understand this call to "continue" in God's Word. Of course it is a good word for Confirmation Sunday as a group of young people come to that place where they believe that they have completed the course. It is good to be able to point to a scripture that says - think again - you have to continue. But it is a critical word for all of us. How shall we 'continue' in God's Word? The Jerusalem Bible has a great translation of this line - it says: **"If you make my Word your home..."**. Are we not 'at home' in the Word of God? I will always remember one of my confirmations students some years ago picking up a Bible to read an assigned verse {it happened to be a King James Version} and in dismay, looked at me and said, "huh???" -- Not a bad reaction - it is not an easy place to be 'at home'.

An article I read suggested that in the USA, we have made a home for the Bible - it said there is an average of 5 copies of the Bible for every man, woman and child living in the United States. Unfortunately, outside of the U.S. 3 out of four people don't even have one Bible. We have really made a home for the Bible. And it is really highly spoken of: George Washington once said: *"It is impossible to righteously govern the world without God and the Bible."* — Andrew Jackson said: *"The Bible is the rock on which our republic rests."* Charles Dickens referred to the New Testament as: *"...the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world."* Growing up many of us probably learned the same little song about the Bible -- *"The B-I-B-L-E, Yes that's the book for me. I stand alone on the*

***Word of God - The B-I-B-L-E!*** Isn't it a good thing that we have so many Bibles around our homes?

It may be a slight paraphrase, but doesn't it say 'you will be my disciples if you take my word into your home'? --Well, no -- that isn't exactly what it says. It says: *"If you make my word your home you will be my disciples; ..."*

A home is where you live - it is where you feel comfortable and want to go and spend time. It is where you are surrounded by those things that identify who you are. Imagine what a difference it would make in our understanding of God and what it means to be His follower if we made His Word our home, if we were so comfortable in it that it was a place of security and identified who we are.

When Martin Luther began what we know as 'the reformation' one of the biggest problems that he identified was that the people did not have access to the Word. Whole towns were without Bibles. But we are blessed. But availability is not the answer. I think often of the little poem about a child that found a big, old, dust book high on a shelf and asked his mother about it. He was told to handle it with care because it was God's Holy

It's not easy to make the Word our home. We have so many 'homes' in our lives - so many places that we spend our time and energy - places that are comfortable and where we want to spend time. God's Word is easily relegated to the high shelf where it is out of the way. I enjoyed a quote from a book entitled *"Parents Deserve to Know"* that said: *"A home? Why do I need a home? I was born in a hospital, educated in a college, courted in an automobile, and married in a church. I get my food in a restaurant. I spend my mornings at golf, my afternoons at the club, and my evenings either dancing or at the movies. — What do I need with a home? All I need is a garage!"* "At home in the word"??? - Mostly, I suspect that we hardly find time to make the Bible a garage. Yet it is the Word of Life!

There was an 81 year old man that worked as a National Park guide. He was stationed at Yosemite National Park. If you ever have the chance to go there - take the time. He told of an occasion when he returned to his tent after a long afternoon with tourists when a young woman hit him with a question that really hurt him. It was the question that he always hated to hear. The day was slipping away as this woman rushed up to him just before he slipped into his tent. A bit frantic, she said: "I only have an hour to spend here at Yosemite. What would you suggest that I do?" Although it was not an unusual tourist question, that day it really struck him and he turned slowly to the woman and replied: "Only an hour, huh? I suppose that if I only had an hour to spend in Yosemite, I'd just walk over to that river over there, and I would sit down and cry."

**The promise is simple - if we make the Word of God our home, we will know the truth. We live in a world where everyone wants to give us their own version of the truth. But the true Truth is Christ himself. In this Word of God we encounter the Truth that will make us free. I suspect that we are very much like the Jews of Jesus day who believed that they were already the most free of all people. Yet we allow sin and darkness to pervade our lives. The Truth is light, life, freedom from bondage, eternal joy.**

**Today you, the confirmation class of 2006 have completed the course that we have offered to you. You will stand before us to speak words of promise and faithfulness. God has blessed you with the opportunity to really come to know the Truth. Make it your home. Live with God's word and allow Christ to dwell in you.**

***"If you make my Word your home...you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."***

**AMEN**