

## Promising Faithfulness on Confirmation Day

James 4:4

Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

What a beautiful sight you are – members of the confirmation class of 2017! You have a lot of class! God was generous in providing each of you to be an individual blessing to your families, and also to your church family here at Zion. One of the joys of being part of a class is that you've had the opportunity to develop friendships that might never have happened if you had been individually tutored. Confirmation class members sometimes remain friends with other class members, perhaps even for the rest of your lives. Others will develop new friendships.

Your confirmation vows and promises should play a big role in determining just who your friends will be in the future, and what kind of friendships you will develop. As people move into and out of your lives, you will get an inner sense as to whether you want to develop a friendship with someone, or be quite content, thank you, without counting some people as friends. In your confirmation vows, you are saying, among other things, that you will not let a friendship come between you and the Lord Jesus. You would rather die than let that happen. All the rest of us confirmed members said it, too, when we were in your place. So how do you think WE'VE done?

It's takes a special kind of smart to be able to tell a real friend from a fake friend, or a Facebook friend. It is a gift of God to be able to distinguish between a friend and an enemy. Really! That may seem ridiculous to you right now, but there are way too many people who cannot accurately determine who their enemies are, and who are their friends.

The Bible has some pretty shocking things to say about friends. In the book of James, it says: "Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

Most of us like the world. Most of us live in this world, even though we sometimes say that he or she is on another planet! Most of us want to make our way in the world. Most of us like the things that this world has to offer. The world is full of people, and the truth is that many people in this world are enemies of God. They are not just living their lives without God. They are not just ignoring God. They are not just arguing with God the way we may argue with parents or a brother or a sister or teammates. They are enemies of God, and it's not because of God. It's because of their attitudes. They are convinced that what THEY think is more important than what God thinks. They think they can pick and choose which commandments they will obey and disobey, and THEY will decide if there are any consequences for breaking them. That is not the kind of talk that comes from friends of God. That kind of talk comes from God's enemies.

There is a denomination of Christian believers that calls themselves "Friends." They are known for their simple lifestyle, and their preaching against any kind of violence, even military involvement. They believe some things and practice some things which we might not agree with, but I love their name – Friends. They are the society of Friends, and if you were ever to visit one of their meetings, I would hope they would be modeling their name.

We have chosen a different name for this church – Zion Lutheran Church. Another way of putting it would be "Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church -- the church of the Good News." Jesus is the Lord of this Church, and it is much more His church than it is OUR church. We didn't gather ourselves together, but the Holy Spirit called and gathered us together, and now after a couple of years of instruction, you are among the enlightened ones. In your ongoing relationship with Jesus and with the people of this church, I trust you will come to appreciate and love the people here who gather with you around the cross of Jesus. These people are your real friends. Not just the people of your same age – but all the people who are a part of this

congregation are in the best sense of the word, your friends.

You will develop other friends at school and at work during the coming years. If you are normal (are you? are they?) some of your closest friends in 2017 are people you will not have even talk to in 2027.

But this is a promise and pledge to you – if you were to move away this summer and come back to visit Zion in ten years, here you will find your real friends – people who are interested in you, people who love you as a brother or sister in Christ, people who care about what you are doing and where you are headed. Your other friends may come and go, but you can always find friends among the people of God because we all have one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. We loved you yesterday. We love you today, and in Jesus Christ, we will love you tomorrow, whether that tomorrow is Monday, or whether that tomorrow is 10 years or 20 years, or 40 years from now.

On this Confirmation Sunday, I pray that you will be led to keep the promise of faithfulness you make today. Today we thank God for each one of you, the special gift you are. Together, we all confess the same faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is because of what Jesus has done that God and human beings can be friends again.

If you ever get to the point where you can't identify a friend, or if you don't really know the difference between a friend or an enemy, come to God's house – this one, or any other one that proclaims the God's truth. There you will find genuine friends, and at the center of it all, is Jesus Christ. What a friend we have in Jesus! Amen!

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