

Connected to Christ
John 15:1-8
May 6, 2007 Confirmation Sunday

In preschool most of us learned the song *Dem Bones* or *Dry Bones*. It was a great way to learn the parts of our body. “The toe bone connected to the heel bone. The heel bone connected to the foot bone. The foot bone connected to the ankle bone.” And so on through the leg, knee, thigh, fingers, hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, neck, chin, nose, and head!

As we grow we learn that those bones are connected by ligaments, that muscles are joined by tendons, and that our bodies also include organs, blood vessels and many more parts to make these complex machines we call bodies. The various parts of our bodies need to be connected in order to work properly.

That’s like the vine and the branches that Jesus talks about in this morning’s scripture. When we pull a branch with a leaf from a vine, it will soon shrivel up because it is no longer connected to the vine that nourishes it. The sap can no longer flow through to feed the branch.

These days the most common connection we probably talk about is being connected to the internet. We often panic when we can’t get connected to read email or instant message or research on the internet or find out the movie times or get directions to where we need to go next! The internet connection sometimes feels like the most important connection we can ever have because it helps us access nearly anyone and every thing we need.

The connection that we celebrate today is our connection to Jesus as the True Vine. Our confirmands are making a commitment to be bonded with Jesus. In a few moments they will be asked questions that have been asked of members of the church since its earliest days. The first questions are called Renunciations. They are things that we refuse to follow or obey, such as the forces of wickedness, the evil powers of the world, and sinful ways that separate us from God.

After turning away from evil, we declare those things to which we will connect. These are called the Adhesions. We might think of duct tape, super glue, or glue guns. These are strong forces that make an everlasting bond between two objects. We choose to claim the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression. We declare Jesus Christ as our Savior and promise to follow the way of life he teaches. We connect ourselves to the church, the body of Christ in the world today, the family of God.

Human beings were made to be connected. We need to be bonded with other people and with God, or else we will shrivel up and die. Sometimes we make the mistake of attaching ourselves to money, or power, or possessions, or entertainment, or work as our primary connection. But none of those can bring the meaning to life that we all need.

A missionary in Africa had a small generator to supply electricity for his church and house. Visitors from an outlying area noticed the electric light hanging from the ceiling of his living room. They watched wide-eyed as he turned the little switch and the light went on.

One visitor asked if he could have one of the bulbs. The minister gave him an extra bulb, assuming he just wanted a trinket. One day the missionary went out to visit the man at his hut. He was surprised to see the bulb hanging from an ordinary string. He had to explain that you had to have electricity and wire to bring electric current to the bulb. The bulb has to be connected to the electric current in order to light up and fulfill its purpose.¹

The connection to God is the most important connection we can make in our lives. There will be other very important connections that you make in your lives, connections to life partners, to children, to employers, to friends. But if our connection to God is the most important connection we have, it will make all of our other connections far more meaningful. Jesus shows us a way of life that treats even people who are different from us with respect. You will have relationships with people in the church that bless your lives with joy, friendship, support, affirmation, and love.

Today brings back memories of a similar day just over 13 years ago. Jeff gave me permission to tell you the story of his baptism at the Los Gatos United Methodist Church. He was two months old. So many people at church were excited to see him that day that his mom forgot to feed him before worship. He cried all during his baptism. Then his Dad took him to meet the children who had gathered at the communion rail up front to watch the baptism. One by one the children touched his foot as a way to bless the baby and welcome him to the church family. As Jeff looked those children in the eye and felt their caring touch, he stopped crying. It was as if he knew he was now a part of the loving family of God, a family that would care for him and dry his tears when life got tough.

Confirmands, today you are connecting yourselves to the God who gave you life, who created you with unique gifts and personalities, and who desires the fullness of life for you. You are binding yourselves to Jesus Christ, who continues to teach us about God and who challenges us to follow those teachings. You are attaching yourselves to the Christian

Church, the Body of Christ, and the United Methodist Church. This is a community in which we offer the comfort and love of God, hold one another accountable to following the way of Jesus, and grow the fruits of God's Spirit, such as joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, and self-control. As you attach yourselves to Christ, we bind ourselves to you and renew our bonds with one another, for we all need to be connected to God and to one another. This is the most important connection we can ever have.

¹ *Homiletics*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 24-25.

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