**Devoted to the Apostles' Teaching**

Based on [Acts 2:42-47](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Ac2.42)

Preached on May 11, 2014

Easter 4, Confirmation Sunday

By Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

[*Four cowboys were at the old saloon*](http://scams.wikispaces.com/Second+Dealing)*in Tombstone playing poker. A lot of money was at stake as the cards were dealt, and each player was keeping a sharp eye on the other.  
  
As one of the players called the hand and laid out his cards, another one stood up in amazement.  
  
"Hey, George is cheatin'. He ain't playin' the cards I dealt him!"*

You never know what's in someone's heart...right**? If you could know, poker wouldn't be any fun at all.** The whole point of poker, and a lot of other card games, is to see who can bluff and get away with it. If we all had the ability to see within one another's heart...there would be no more bluffing or lying, and also, there would be no need for trust.

It has become cliché today, to say, "**You can't know what's in someone's heart.**" Maybe not with mathematical-type certainty. Even lie-detector tests are inadmissible in court because they're not accurate enough. You can never truly know if someone is trying to deceive you, or *use* you, or tell you just what you want to hear...to bluff a gullible person out of their money, or talk a pretty woman out of her clothes. There are people who lie and deceive to make their way in this world, and Jesus says that they are the children of the devil who is the father of lies (John 8:44).

Lying is the devil's native tongue. Wouldn't it be better if we could pick up on his accent? Wouldn't it be so much easier if we could just see into someone's heart and see if the devil is speaking. Wouldn't the world be a better place? We wouldn't need courts, or judges or lawyers. We wouldn't need to worry about accidently putting innocent people in jail, or letting the guilty off on a technicality. We wouldn't have to listen to campaign promises, and politicians speeches and wonder, "Is this guy sincere? Is he for real?...or just telling me what I want to hear to get elected?

**"The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).** God spoke that to Samuel, when he was to choose a small ruddy boy named David to be king. David was the youngest of seven brothers and by all appearances, the least likely candidate for kingship. And so God tells Samuel, **don't concern yourself with the appearance, for I will choose a king according to his heart.** And so Samuel chose David and annointed him to be king. The old cliche is that you can't know what's in someone's heart and yet, Samuel knew what was in David's heart. How? Because God told him to choose David.

God also told his church whom to choose for eternal life. Jesus Christ, after he had risen from the dead, before he ascended to heaven said to his disciples, "**Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations**." Who is to be chosen as a disciple of Jesus, "all nations." Everyone. And he continues, "**make disciples of all nations by baptizing them, and teaching them all that I have commanded you.**"

Today nine young persons will be confirmed in the Lutheran/Christian faith. How do you know...how do I know that they should be confirmed as disciples of Jesus? **Because He said so.**  How do I know that after today, these nine individuals will continue in the faith they have been taught. I don't. I'm not God. I can't see into their heart. But Jesus never said, "Go and make disciples by looking into their heart." He said, baptize and teach and by these things you will know as well as you can, what's in their heart. God promises to make disciples from baptizing and teaching, and I don't think he was bluffing...do you?

Just look again at our first reading from today in the book of Acts. It shows that the church from its earliest days followed this pattern, one-time baptism, lifelong teaching. Before our reading begins, the previous verse told of how 3000 souls were baptized. And today our lesson continues reads, "**And *they* [that is the 3000 people who were just baptized], they devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching, the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."**

We can know what's in someone's heart whether they devote themselves to the teaching of the apostles or the world. Whether they are in *fellowship*, that means, **whether they hold everything in common not only money and goods and possessions, but the same teaching,** or whether they divide off into their own cliques.

Ladies and gentlmen, we can know what's in these disciples hearts because they are devoted to the breaking of bread...that is Holy Communion, the Lord's supper, **whereby they become one with their saviour and with each other in paticipation in the same loaf.** And "the prayers", and this is interesting. These are not spontaneous off-the-cuff "heartfelt" prayers, but memorized and recited liturgical prayers that all Jews had learned and prayed. They prayed, not as they felt, but as they were taught...and that revealed their heart.

One other thing we wouldn't need if we could see directly into a person's heart is Confirmation. Today is Confirmation Sunday, ladies and gentlemen, and the very word "confirmation" implies that we can to some degree know what is in someone's heart. Confirmation means that our church **confirms** that the teaching of the apostles is in their heart. **How can we know what's in their heart, because they have confessed it with their lips.** St. Paul says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You "confirm" your Paypal account by providing the right passwords every time you want access. You "confirm" Christians by providing the right teaching everytime you want access to your Lord. The difference though is that you can choose and change your password, you don't choose and change the teaching of the church. This is not this or that pastor's teaching, or this or that churches teaching. It is the apostle's teaching that they themselves learned from Jesus himself...summerized in the apostle's creed which our confirmands will speak before this altar this day, before God and men and for the first time join in the breaking of bread in the communion of saints.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we could see directly into the hearts of men, we would all be thrown into jail. For we are all sinners. But you don't need x-ray vision to see what's in people's heart. I know Jesus is in your heart. Jesus tells us how he gets in our heart. He get's there when his word is preached into your ear, according to the apostle's teaching. He gets there when his body and blood are delivered to your mouth in the breaking of bread. Are you bluffing? I don't know and I don't care. God doesn't bluff. He said this is my body and blood given for you and your forgiveness and God doesn't lie. He said that we make disciples by baptizing and teaching, and he wasn't wearing a poker face.