

Sermon for Taylor Breann Chandler's Confirmation

The Rev. Cheryl Kester-Schmidt

at

Christ the Victor Lutheran Church in Victoria, Texas

September 15, 2024

Taylor, this is your big day, and we are so proud of you. I have Taylor's permission to tell some stories. I had only been here at Christ the Victor a few months and was preaching. Taylor was three and would lay her head on her Daddy's shoulder to watch me preach. One Sunday, I happened to look right at her. Her response was to stick her tongue out at me. So being the adult I am, I stuck mine out at her. She swung her little head around so fast, I thought she broke Jeff's jaw. I also knew, she was taking in everything around her and was curious.

Taylor would go to camp with the family and at five or six had her own Bible so she too, could participate in Bible Studies.

She is a self-starter and completed the last two books required in less than 6 weeks. I had to race to keep up. She was always prepared with homework done and she brought questions.

I had to be on my toes. She completed her mentoring during Lent and Easter with her mentor Linda Crisp earlier this year. They bonded well.

Taylor, your Mom and Dad taught you Biblical truths at your kitchen table. They brought you to the communion table and they join you in serving others at the community table. They took the promises made at your baptism seriously and now you are ready to affirm those promises for yourself.

Robin and Jeff, you have been faithful to the promises you made to God the day Taylor was baptized. You made sure she was learning the marks of discipleship – pray, worship, read your Bible, serve others, keep Christian friends and tithe - and you got her to class and church every time she needed to be here! Well done! Faithful servants! You have raised another wonderful young woman! Thank you!

Taylor, you are so smart, ask deep theological questions, and have insight to thinking in terms of what is God doing in your life and the world around you. You learned most theological

questions are answered with – it is a mystery and through your faith - believe. You memorized the 23rd Psalm – the King James Version – I would like to think for me but I know the bookmark was the KJV! Continue to say it with your prayers and the next time a challenge comes you will be ready with that comfort for rough times.

You are kind and caring. Cruelty to others hurts your heart. You love your pets.

I love your smile and your quiet sense of humor.

You love your sister, Madison. Miss her and continue your relationship with her. You are a teenager but take pride in your work. You serve others here at Christ the Victor and in the community. You participated in God's Work Our Hands Sunday and brought a friend. I am so proud to know you.

We give thanks to God for each of you who have taken time from your schedules to celebrate with Taylor. She is special and

each of you has had an influence on her growth in Christ. You too may be proud because you helped to bring her to this moment.

Taylor chose Isaiah 43:2 as her confirmation verse: "Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I've called your name. You're mine. When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end— Because I am GOD, your personal God," (The Message)

This wonderful verse tells us God is with us in the midst of challenges. If God is with you, Taylor, nothing can be against you. God will be in the midst of your trials and temptations. He will give you courage and strength to overcome – just as he was with the Israelites.

God's word is true. He keeps His promises. He will give you peace like a river as well as work in ways we do not understand. He moves us through rough times for a purpose. We may have lessons to learn, but He will be with you need in the middle of

challenging times. In a few moments, you will stand before God and affirm the promises made at your baptism. But first...

I pray you continue to enjoy the sweetness of the Gospel. Truly hear the words - Christ died for your sins and rose to bring you eternal life with Him. The Holy Spirit is with you always - He took up residence in your body when you were baptized. When you receive the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it becomes part of your body. Your earthen vessel carries God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit, take care of it.

I pray your life is filled with good things, but difficult times will come. You may experience illness, or those you love will be ill, you may have to mourn the loss of those closest to you, or your friends may turn on you. Be strong! You have a foundation built on Christ and His Word. Always remember - Christ keeps His promises. You are strong and with Christ can overcome any difficulty. Hurt will happen and you may suffer, but in your heart you know what Christ did for you on the cross, and that He has

promised you eternal life. Taylor, be open to the grace God pours upon you. Receive it and give it to others.

You are a long way from that 3-year-old I met in 2014. You are smart, you are inquisitive, and you take risks – in 18 years of confirmation, you were the only one who walked boldly into the room and sat beside me. You are a fine young adult, and I am proud to say those words in the midst of our assembly today.

Being confirmed does **not** mean you never have to attend church ever again. Your attendance helps all of us grow in faith as well as yourself. This is a place where you can reflect on life and get support from people who truly love and care for you.

Christ the Victor will continue to be part of your sacred story; and, perhaps even more importantly, they need you to be part of their story as well.

Be brave. Be humble. Be courageous. Be kind. Work hard and bring glory to God in all you do even – in playing your flute, in your schoolwork, in Scouts, in volleyball. Keep your sense of

humor. Embrace the unknown. Strive for excellence. Show compassion. Extend grace. Love without fear. Shine your light and carry Christ's light into a world too often filled with darkness.

The mark of the cross was imprinted on your forehead at your baptism. You have put your imprint on Christ the Victor, your community and the world. Know that God has chosen and called you for great things. Remember God so loved the world that He sent His Son to save you – Taylor - from sin, death, and the devil as He gives you eternal life.

This is most certainly the Good News of Jesus Christ. Amen!