

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran  
Church**

**By Pastor Anthony E.  
Schultz**

**May 7, 2017**

**Confirmation Sunday**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter (WELS B.)**



**Acts 20:28-32**

**<sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup> Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. <sup>32</sup> “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.**

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in Hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God – and especially you Confirmands:

Do you remember your Confirmation? I was confirmed on May 29, 1966! That was 51 years ago. That was a long time ago! I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated! The years just before I was confirmed – the biggest concern? Civil rights! A black man named Medgar Evers – a civil rights advocate – was murdered – gunned down by a sniper. There were all sorts of violent protests. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led a march on Washington, D.C. and gave a speech that included

the line, *“I have a dream!”* Remember that? A black church in Birmingham, AL was bombed and 19 people were injured and 2 more were killed! We were having confrontations with the Russians and people were afraid of nuclear war! At school we would practice for a nuclear attack by climbing under our desks! Two weeks after I was confirmed – there was a landmark case involving a man with the last name *Miranda*. From then on – if you are arrested by the police they have to tell you, *“You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law! You have the right to have an attorney present during questioning. If you cannot afford an attorney – one will be appointed for you. Do you understand these rights as I have read them to you!”* In some ways the world was very different the year I was confirmed. In many ways it is painfully the same! It will not be long before you – the class of 2017 will look back on today and say, *“A lot has changed since I was confirmed. A lot has stayed the same!”* The second lesson for this the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – the brand new WELS Series B Pericope is from Acts chapter 20. Words which the Apostle Paul spoke to Elders in the city of Ephesus. Words of Gospel encouragement:

**We Commit You To God!**

- 1. God’s Word builds you up**
- 2. Your inheritance is secure!**

The Apostle Paul is without doubt – the greatest missionary in Bible times. He wanted to go to Ephesus to preach God’s Word – but he was prevented from going there by the Holy Spirit until the time was right. The Great I AM – flawless in every respect – is especially flawless when it comes to timing. He is never late – and He is never early. At just the right time Paul preached God’s Word. The Apostle Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit to follow a plan. Paul went to big cities – lots of people. Paul would begin in

synagogues with lots of people – who were very familiar with the Old Testament – the Gospel promises of God. Paul would show them – beginning with Moses and Prophets and the Psalms – show that God’s Gospel promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah were all fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. Some would believe – and many would not. Finally there would come a split – those who believed in Jesus were driven out by the Pharisees – the teachers of the Law – who thought they would go to Heaven because they were literally physically DNA descended from Abraham. People who found their confidence in fasting twice a week when the Torah said just one day a year – *the Great Day of Atonement!* People who found their confidence in their tithing even their table condiments and seasonings! Then Paul would shift gears – and begin to preach the Gospel to Gentiles – people who were anything besides Jewish! Paul taught God’s Word – law and gospel. The law reminds us we were born dead in trespasses and sin! *Dead!* When I was in college and the seminary professors would say again and again – dead means *dead!* There is nothing a body in a casket can do for itself! All our righteous acts are like *filthy* rags. This is Scriptural – Biblical truth. It is not popular. It is not politically correct. It is not the message *itching ears* want to hear. It is not the stuff of motivational speakers and the power of positive thinking. But it is God’s Word – law and gospel. With the Apostle Paul we say, **“What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”**

It is then and only then – that the Gospel enables us to live a life that is filled with fruits of faith! Paul told the Ephesians: **But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place,**

but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a person is an *idolater* – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Ephesians 5 Paul also wrote to the Ephesians about the Christian family – where the faith of our confirmands will continue to be nourished and built up – while you are in High School! Paul wrote about the Christian Family: <sup>25</sup> **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church – <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. Ephesians 5.**

Paul wrote to the *Elders* – the leaders of the Christian congregation in Ephesus: <sup>28</sup> **Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.** Pastors, Sunday School teachers, Trinity St. Luke’s Lutheran Grade School teachers, teachers at Luther Preparatory School and Lakeside Lutheran High School are shepherds. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm King David wrote, “**The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.** Martin Luther wrote – the *green pastures and still waters* are not just daily bread. They are nourishment and refreshment in God’s Word for our faith and for our soul. This summer the Evangelical Heritage Version of the Bible will be published – the New Testament and the Psalms. The translation of the Old Testament – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel – Hosea, Joel, Amos and more – are finished. Very shortly the whole Bible will be published! This is not – translation – that

is reworking of the King James reworked into the NASB or the New English or Beck's or the NIV. Those Bibles and the EHV are each a fresh translation from the Old Testament *Hebrew* and the New Testament *Greek*. They are not 5 or 6 or 10 times removed from the original. They are the original Old Testament Hebrew and original New Testament Greek faithfully translated into accurate and readable and understandable English. Is this translation any good? There is only one way to find out. Read it! Read it cover to cover! Read the Gospel of John! Read the Letter to the Romans. Read Ephesians and Philippians. Read the Revelation to St. John and learn about Judgment Day. Look into the Kaleidoscope of God's Word – and read the Revelation to St. John. Don't be afraid. Read the Revelation to St. John after grounding your faith with the Gospel of John and the letter to the Romans and maybe Galatians and Ephesians. And you will understand because God's Word is clear! If you get stuck – ask your Pastor. Trust me – there are few things that make Pastors happy more than a sheep who is reading God's Word and wants to understand it better!

**<sup>29</sup> I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup> Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> So be on your guard! Be on your guard!** That means read your Bible. Come to Church all the time! Come to Church May 25<sup>th</sup> – a Thursday – 40 days after Easter – Ascension! God's Word says Jesus will come back on Judgment Day – when you least expect him! Could Judgment Day be Christmas Eve? Absolutely! The symmetry would be incredible – baby Jesus born in a manger – King of kings and Lord of lords... Allelujah – Handal's Messiah – could you see that? I don't think so! Could Judgment Day be Good Friday or Easter – Jesus is risen from the dead! The Church is full of Easter lilies and the

choir singing and people playing trumpets and the sun beams making Easter Breakfast for Jesus? Again, I don't think so! How about Pentecost – tongues of fire – mission festival – preach the gospel to every creature – Reformation this year – the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – *A mighty fortress is our God!* Again – I don't think so. Thursday – May 25<sup>th</sup> – a hand full of Jesus' disciples saw Him go back into Heaven. Could you see Jesus return on Ascension Day? Absolutely! Again the symmetry would be flawless! Who will Jesus find being faithful? Next Sunday – your first chance to come to Lord's Supper? Who could miss that???

**<sup>29</sup> I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup> Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> So be on your guard! *Be on your guard!*** You are Jesus' disciples – His students and followers and imitators! For confirmation for the last many many years Pastor and Mrs. Gartner and Mrs. Schultz and I have been giving confirmation students a little red Prayer Book. It has a morning and an evening prayer – a different one for the 30 days of a month – special prayers for special temptations – for special needs – for special troubles. Read your Bible – come to Church – come to Lord's Supper – *say your prayers* – learn God's Word in High School every hour of every day – and the spiritual wolves won't get you either!

**<sup>31</sup> So be on your guard!** It was 51 years ago – that I was confirmed. September of my 8<sup>th</sup> grade year – Sandy Koufax pitched for the LA Dodgers against the Chicago Cubs. I was fortunate to see Sandy Koufax pitch – not that day – but against the Cubs. September 9<sup>th</sup> Sandy Koufax was hot. 14 Cub batters swung and missed – 14! Sandy Koufax would wind up and pitch – swing or don't swing – it was a strike---1,2,3 *yer out!* Sandy pitched a perfect game – one of only 8 in the history of baseball!

The Packers beat the Cowboys and were NFL champions – then beat the Kansas City Chiefs to win the first Super Bowl – and so? The war in Viet Nam raged on – *5,008 U.S troops died – over 30,000 were wounded* just that year! The Dow Jones Average hit an all time high of 995 then crashed to 744. Caesar Chavez organized illegal alien farm workers in California. My God-father had a bumper sticker – *eat only union grapes!* I still remember that. And Medicare was invented! The first artificial ♥ valve was installed. What a miracle that was! But the real concern remains today – your ♥ of faith. Jesus gave you a new ♥ about 13 or 14 years ago – when you were hours – maybe days or a week old. The faith planted in your tiny ♥ has by the grace of God – grown and grown and by the power of the Gospel will continue to grow – until you are safe in Heaven for Jesus' sake. Amen!  
**To God alone all glory!**

*Rev. Anthony E. Schertz*

