

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor A. E. Schultz
3rd Sunday of Easter/
Confirmation
May 4, 2014 1 Peter 1:17 to 21



¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God – especially you – confirmands:

Savor the moment! We say that at my house all the time---“Savor the moment!” Soak it in! Soak in all the sights and sounds and smells. They say – there is no more powerful memory trigger than smell! Smells. Smell a barn – a stable. Smell the sweet dusty smell of the straw and hay and alfalfa. Smell the soft warm breath of the sheep and goats and cows and donkeys. Smell the dampness of the stone and the old boards – and it's Christmas Eve. Little people singing Away in a Manger and O little Town of Bethlehem – some sing sharp – some sing flat – some little people sing one glorious note through the whole song. Christ the Savior is born – the angels sang to the Shepherds who were **sore afraid** – then came with great haste and saw the Christ child and literally knelt – with their faces literally in the straw and dust – before their tiny King! We have an Easter lily at my home – 6 trumpets are open – 1 more to go. You smell that sweetness – and it's Easter morning at Church – the sun making the sky pink and purple and golden – people singing *Allelujah!* – *Christ is risen!* No smell of death or decay – but life and grace and mercy and forgiveness! Today is Confirmation Sunday – the smell of flowers pinned to your gown – the smell of grandma's lavender perfume and grandpa's Old Spice aftershave

and Axe and hair gel. At home the smell from fresh cut grass--vacuuming and dusting – Highlander Grogg coffee brewing and ham and cheesy hash-browns and cake with a Bible verse in frosting. This Confirmation Day as you make one of the most important promises in your whole life:

Savor The Moment!

I. When Jesus redeemed you

II. When you say, “Yes as God gives me strength!”

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on today is from Simon Peter’s first of two letters. From the second Sunday of Easter to the 7th Sunday of Easter – the Sunday after Ascension – we are reading from 1st Peter chapters 1 through 5. Simon Peter wrote a message of encouragement to Jesus’ lambs and sheep in places like Pontus, Asia, Cappadocia, Bithynia. Simon Peter sends greetings from “**She who is in Babylon.**” Babylon – perhaps Rome – very possibly Simon Peter arrived at Rome shortly after Paul’s release from his first imprisonment. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles set sail for Spain just as Nero’s persecution of the Christians began. Peter then would witness a wave of persecution spreading from Nero’s Rome toward and against Asia Minor. The Holy Spirit would then be moving Simon Peter to send a letter of encouragement to the Christians when they were paying a steep price for their faith in Christ crucified and risen! Pastor Gartner talked about that sure and certain hope last Sunday – how can we be sure that Jesus died and rose again? How can we be sure Jesus took all our sins away?

God’s Word says: ¹⁷ **Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.** God is our Father. We call Him that – every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer – and so? *Our Father who art in Heaven – hallowed be your name – your kingdom come – your will be done.* We pray that all the time. Do we stop and think what we are saying – or is it so common – so every day – that we can pray the address – and the 7 petitions – 7 requests – and the doxology – words of thanks and praise at the end without even really thinking it through? God our **Father judges each person’s work impartially.** God doesn’t play favorites! He judges my work impartially – according to the standard of His own holiness. Truth be told we fail again and again. We fail to love our Savior with all our ♥, all our soul, all our

strength, all our mind. We fail to love our neighbor as much as we love our self! *We daily sin much and indeed and indeed deserve nothing by God's wrath and punishment.* The priceless good news is – Jesus died to take all our sins away! It is the faith that was planted in our ♥ when as infants we were baptized. Little people – part of all nations – as King David wrote, “sinful from birth – sinful from the time our mother conceived me – subject to the wages of sin – were born again – adopted into the family of believers – with faith in our ♥. So we have faith – a gift of God – worked by the Holy Spirit – saving faith in Jesus, the crucified and risen Christ!

Live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. We sing at funerals, *“I’m but a stranger here. Heaven is my home... Heaven is my home.”* We are strangers here – just passing through. This past week there were tornados – one after the other – through Oklahoma and Alabama and Mississippi – with very likely many more to come. If you watch the news you see what 150 even 200 mph winds can do. Trees are reduced to splinters – homes are in a moment a heap of bricks and boards with sheets and clothes tattered little rags and scraps blowing in the wind. People look through the rubble for little scraps of paper – photographs of their family. Sometimes people say they lost *everything* – when what they really lost were only “things and stuff”. Sometimes it’s reported whole families were wiped out – when in fact – they all went home together! We are reminded when we see that – that gathering to ourselves more and more things and stuff is not the object of the game. We are reminded that what matters most – is being ready to come home to heaven – whenever Jesus calls! **Live out your time in reverent fear.** Realize what’s at stake – where your immortal soul will spend eternity. Confirmation is about so much more than having your picture taken in a white gown clutching your Bible in front of the altar – and at the foot of the cross. Confirmation is about so much more than coming to school tomorrow hoping to have the highest amount of money in cards from your grandparents and sponsors and aunts and uncles. Confirmation is about *promising to suffer – all – even death – rather than falling away* from Jesus. **Reverent fear** – is the concern your pastors and teachers and parents and grandparents have – that you don’t lose your faith. That you don’t become so distracted by Smart Phones and I-pods and I-pads and smoking and drinking and “hugs and kisses” and really nice clothes and really fast cars – and really nice homes – that you

forget about the one thing – the only thing needful – the † of Christ and his empty tomb and the inheritance stored up for you in Heaven!

Live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. Live your life close to Jesus. Read the Bible that your sponsors or your parents give you. Come to church. Come to Lord's Supper – Sunday after Sunday – plus Ascension and Lent and Advent and Christmas and New Year's and Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and Easter. Live close to Jesus every day. And then your marriages will be strong! You will marry someone who loves Jesus more than life itself – and they will encourage you in your faith. Then husbands will love their wife like Christ loved the church and wives will love and respect their husbands. Children will honor their father and mother and by grace alone God will bless you with a long life – 80s and maybe – just maybe you will be like little Frieda Knoll who had Lord's Supper on her 100th birthday and had Lord's Supper on her 101st birthday and had Lord's Super on her 102nd birthday and went to Heaven when she was 102 years, 8 months and 10 days – on the anniversary of her confirmation – the anniversary of the day her pastor put his hand on her head and said, *Sei getrost bis an den Tod, so will ich dir die Krone des Lebens geben.* **Be faithful until death and I will give you a crown of life!** Revelation 2:10b

¹⁸ **For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,** ¹⁹ **but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.** Fellow redeemed! That's what Pastors call their lambs and sheep – fellow redeemed! You don't read about kidnappings as much as you used to – I don't think. It was a long time ago – March 1, 1932 that a little toddler – 20 month old Charles Augustus Lindberg Jr. was kidnapped. The ransom note demanded \$50,000 in 20s and 10s and 5s was to be paid. Over 2 months later – the little one's body was found – not too far from the house. After an investigation that took some 2 years – Bruno Hauptman was arrested – tried and convicted and finally put to death in the electric chair. Bruno said to the end that he was not guilty. Redeemed – ransomed – rescued. Jesus bought us back – paid His Heavenly Father for our sins. Jesus bought us back – not with perishable things such as silver or gold – but with the precious blood of the very Lamb of God! **Jesus redeemed us – from the empty way of life – handed down from one generation to another.** What is the point of life?

To come to faith – grow in faith – share our faith. I read the other day about a man named John Mark – up in Canada. *John Mark was a hoarder of artifacts and antiquities.* He had a first edition of Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species. He had a letter written and signed by George Washington – military orders when Washington was leading the Continental Army. John Mark had all kinds of old and precious stuff that he stole. John Mark will serve 9 years in prison – and will forfeit all his stuff – his art, his home, his bank account – will give it all back! When we get to the end of our life – when we look back on how we spent our life – from when we were 13 or 14 until we were 65 and retire – or 76 or 83 years old – and we are in the Emergency Room at WRMC – and we realize our life is fast coming to an end – what will we think?

²⁰ **He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.** ²¹ **Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.** Before God created the world – it was decided that Jesus would be born of the Virgin Mary, suffer under Pontius Pilate to save us. It was decided that Jesus would *redeem me a lost and condemned creature – purchased and won me – from all sin, from death and from the power of the devil--not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood – with his innocent suffering and death – that I should be His own and live under him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness – even as he is risen from the dead – and lives and reigns eternally. This is most certainly true.* We put our faith and hope in Jesus! This past week a lady named Karine – a lady from Paris – a tourist in New York saw what she thought was a homeless man – picking in the trash while drinking a beer from a brown paper bag. Karine felt sorry for him. Karine's family had just finished eating a huge pizza – so big they couldn't finish it. So Karine gave the leftovers to the homeless man – apologizing for the fact the pizza was cold. The homeless man said, "Thank you! God bless you!" The homeless man wasn't really homeless – he was Richard Gere – a man playing a part in a movie--a man with personal wealth somewhere in the neighborhood of \$100 million dollars! We say what a wonderful act of kindness – and yet it was – truth be told – *leftovers!* Pretty small potatoes compared to what Jesus did for spiritually homeless people like you and me. **Jesus died for us!** Jesus sacrificed his life to save us. Jesus died on the cross – to save spiritually desperate people like us. As these 15 young people make their

confirmation promises – to suffer all – even death – rather than fall away from Jesus – we pray that Jesus would so fill their ♥s with faith and hope – so that they remain faithful in worship – in coming to church--in coming to Lord’s Supper – in hearing and reading and studying God’s Word – until we all celebrate safe in Heaven. Savor the moment *by grace alone*. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz