

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Easter 7 (Confirmation Sunday) – May 2nd and 5th, 2013

John 14:23-29

²³ Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵ “All this I have spoken while still with you.” ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

²⁸ “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.” ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

Dear children of God and especially you the confirmation class of 2013,

It is Confirmation Sunday! What a weekend! What are the feelings going through your head? Is there fear? Is there excitement? Is there worry? Is there a combination of all three? Last night as you sat in the front of Church and were asked questions, there might have been full of worry and fear – wondering if you would be able to answer the questions correctly. Today as you sit up here in the front of Church and everyone is watching you, you might be excited with a touch of fear. Amongst all of these thoughts and emotions, we can see that the Lord has answers for us. He does this for us as we listen to the words that he speaks to his disciples the night before he was betrayed.

What kind of thoughts do you think were going through the disciples' heads and hearts? I'm sure that there was some fear, and worry and excitement much like you are feeling today. Jesus' disciples were privileged to have Jesus with them in person for three years. Then the time came for Jesus to die, to rise again and to ascend into heaven. The night before he died he told his disciples to not be troubled because he would not leave them alone. Jesus wanted his disciples who were going to very soon be going through a very big moment in their lives as they would witness his death and resurrection to not be troubled and Jesus wants you who are going to be confirmed as well as all of his sheep who are gathered here today to not be troubled.

Theme: Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled!

- 1. Jesus left his words for you**
- 2. Jesus left the Holy Spirit for you**
- 3. Jesus left his peace for you**
- 4. Jesus left his power for you**

1. Jesus left his words with you

What joy we have in knowing that Jesus did not leave us alone. He left us with his words. “**Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”** A better translation for the word “obey” would be “keep.” Jesus words are like a letter that you receive from someone you love. Have you ever been away from someone you love and then received a letter? You read the letter over and over again, thinking about what was happening at home. When we love Jesus we love his teaching, we treasure his words because they bring us close to the love that he has for us. In fact Jesus says that “**My Father will love him, and we will come to him and**

make our home with him.” He tells us that the words he gives us do not just come from him but they also belong to the Father and they assure us we are at home with our heavenly Father.

You know the words that Jesus left for you – don’t you? For the past two years you have been meeting together weekly with Pastor Schultz and me. What were we doing during those times we were together? We weren’t just talking about the weather. We weren’t just talking about the events of the day. No, we were letting Jesus talk to us as we used the Word of God as it is laid out for us in the Catechism. The reason we don’t have to be troubled is because Jesus clearly has taught us in his Word that our sins have been forgiven and that heaven is our home. We don’t have to be afraid to make our Confirmation promises or anything else in this world, because nothing can take God’s love from us.

The people who do not love Jesus really don’t care much about his words. They do not like to read the Bible. They would rather read the newspaper or watch television, or do anything except read what Jesus tells us in his Word. How sad this is! The Bible is such a beautiful book because it takes us into the very mind of God. God comes and makes his home with us. John 1 tells us, **“No one has even seen God, but God the One and Only who is at the Father’s side has made him known.”**

Picture a young man fighting for our country away from the girl he loves. He receives a letter and appreciates every word, especially the parts that read, “I love you so much” and “I miss you.” The words that Jesus gives to us in his book the Bible can take our troubled hearts and just fill them with joy in the love that he and our heavenly Father have for us. Some of the best moments of your life will happen when you are alone with God in his Word, listening to him speak to you here on the pages of the Bible.

2. Jesus left the Holy Spirit with you

Jesus has not left you alone! He has also given the Holy Spirit to teach you all things and bring everything to your memory. **“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”** Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit is our Advocate. Literally the Greek word means someone who walks alongside of you and talks to you. As you leave this building today, you may not notice anything different than when you entered it. It is not like you all of a sudden will be smarter or better behaved or this spiritual giant. But as you leave today and every time you hear God’s Word you get this same promise. God the Holy Spirit will be walking with you. From the day that you were baptized, the Holy Spirit has been walking with you. What a blessing to know that the Holy Spirit is living in our hearts and is walking alongside of us, teaching us everything and strengthening our faith.

When you read the Bible, hear a sermon, come to Lord’s Supper or attend a Bible study, the Holy Spirit is there to teach you truths about the true God and about yourself. The Holy Spirit serves to convict us of our sin. He points out our faults and failings, shows us where we have done wrong and makes it clear we cannot save ourselves. Then the Spirit lifts our eyes to Jesus and helps us see him suffering and dying on the cross. It is the Holy Spirit who helps us remember that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. When we are troubled by our own weakness and sinful thoughts and actions, the Holy Spirit comforts us by reminding us of the little word “all.” We live in that word “all” and die with hope in that one little word. Romans 8 tells us the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit that we are the sons of God. How many times this past week did the Holy Spirit silently and softly and soothingly remind you that things are OK because you are dear child of your heavenly Father through Jesus?

What if you could get into the mind of God and discover how much he cares about you and loves you? You can actually do this because of the Holy Spirit who comforts you. 1 Corinthians 2 tells us, **“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.”** The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see and our hearts to believe in what has been revealed to us about God on the pages of the Bible.

On this Confirmation Day, I also want to remind you mothers and fathers what a privilege and great responsibility it is to be used by the Lord to teach your children God’s Word so the Holy Spirit can work in

their lives. It is the greatest honor and privilege of parenting. Bringing your child to Church to hear and learn God's Word is the most important things you can give them – our children need this above the best clothes or the newest cell phone or the best gaming system. Whenever our children hear God's Word, the Holy Spirit is at work in our children's hearts and lives.

3. Jesus left his peace with you

The loving Savior left his Word with you. He promised you his Holy Spirit. He also promises you a peace this world cannot give. **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”** The peace Jesus offers is a peace this world cannot offer.

No too long ago I was reading an article that was making the claim that people with higher incomes have more joy in life than people with a lower income. We can find a certain amount of peace in having a good, prosperous life such as we enjoy here in our country. We can find peace in developing friendships with people, but all of this peace is different from the peace that Jesus gives us. The peace Jesus gives is a peace of knowing God loves you in this life and for all eternity, not on the basis of any goodness in you, or any efforts to improve yourself. This peace is found in the perfect life Jesus lived for you and the perfect ransom payment he made for your sin.

When will this peace be important? As you stand here today and confess your faith, you might think that this is the greatest day in your whole life. What could be better than this? While I will not argue that today is very special, I would venture to guess that you have had more important days in the past and you will have more important days in the future. For instance what about the day you were baptized and God planted faith in your hearts. That was pretty important. In the future you will also have some pretty big events. What we want to remember today is the peace that God is sending with you today.

Last night, we ended the examination with the question, If you died tonight, do you know where you would be and why? The young man answered clearly and boldly that he knew he would be in heaven with 100% certainty – without any doubts because he trusted and believed that Jesus had lived and died and rose again on the 3rd day to pay for all our sins. That is the peace that Jesus is talking about. No matter what your future hold – whether good or bad. You will have the peace of knowing that heaven is your home because of the grace and mercy of Jesus. This is a peace that the world can never take away.

4. Jesus left his power with you

Jesus did not leave you alone when he left this earth and returned to his heavenly Father. He also left his power with us. Jesus told his disciples, **“If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”** While on this earth, Jesus set aside his power as God. The disciples saw him weak, tired, hungry, and praying for strength from his heavenly Father. That all changed when Jesus went home to his Father. Now he sits on the right hand of his Father, taking on the glory he had with his Father before the world began. That means he is in a position to oversee and even micromanage the affairs of your life, taking problems and even turning them into blessings. I pray that each of us gathered here today will remember that we have a Savior who is ruling over all things and is watching over everyone of you. He knows you by name and will continue to watch over long after you have left Church today. He will watch over you until he calls you home to heaven. With that in mind: Do not be Troubled, but be strong in the Lord who will be with always. Amen