

I.N.I.

Sixth Sunday of Easter/Confirmation
May 29, 2011
Prov. 22:17-21; III John 4

In Christ Jesus, Who is the truth in whom we walk, Dear Fellow Redeemed, especially you, Dear Confirmands,

Earlier this morning we saw and heard the results of three years of intensive study in God's Word. Three years of Bible Study in the six chief parts of Christian doctrine. But what led you Nichole, Kirsten and Rachel to answer and to testify this morning was not just three years of Bible learning but a lifetime of the Holy Spirit's work upon your hearts with His Word. For as Paul says to Timothy **AND THAT FROM CHILDHOOD (INFANCY) YOU HAVE KNOWN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE YOU WISE FOR SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS.**

Therefore this morning we have chosen words from Proverbs and the third epistle of John. Words from our God that say to you Nichole, Kirsten and Rachel---

THERE IS NO GREATER JOY IN THE HEARTS OF YOUR

I: PARENTS

II: PASTOR

III: HEAVENLY FATHER

THAN TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE WALKING IN THE TRUTH!

The words from Proverbs 22 were chosen to be laid on your hearts this morning as a reminder of what you have learned and how the Holy Spirit has taught you, and as an encouragement not to stop now, for "you've only just begun," just scratched the surface of your Bible learning, of learning about your Savior, of applying your hearts to His Wisdom and Knowledge.

Let's take a look at what the Spirit is saying to you on this your most important day.

First of all He says: **INCLINE YOUR EAR AND HEAR THE WORDS OF THE WISE.** After 14 years of living you have heard many words. Words from your parents, your teachers, brothers and sisters, friends, T.V., radio, movies. But the Spirit is directing you this morning to especially, to particularly listen to words of the WISE. And not just any wise words, but to "My Wise words, to My Knowledge" the Spirit says.

He says "**INCLINE YOUR EARS.**" Literally this word means "to stretch it out, to extend it." The picture that immediately popped into my mind was in the cartoons when they draw the picture of someone listening to a conversation they suddenly blow up his ear, it gets real big and stretches out to hear what is being whispered or said. That's what the Spirit wants you to do—to stretch out your ears, to extend them, to incline them to hear God's Word, His Wisdom—the Holy Scriptures that are able to make you wise unto salvation.

And after you have stretched out your ears to hear then Solomon says: **APPLY YOUR HEART TO MY KNOWLEDGE;**

This morning you were asked about 100 questions and you recited the 10 Commandments and their meanings; the Three articles of the Apostles Creed and meanings; the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and Keys and Confession. They have been applied to your head, your brain in memory; but as you know they will mean absolutely nothing if they are not applied to your heart and life in word and action.

God doesn't want us just to memorize His Word so that we know it up here, He wants us to apply it so that we believe it and live it in here. The Spirit through Solomon declares: **IT IS A PLEASANT THING IF YOU KEEP THEM---these words of the Lord--WITHIN YOU; LET THEM ALL BE FIXED UPON YOUR LIPS, SO THAT YOUR TRUST MAY BE IN THE LORD; I HAVE INSTRUCTED YOU TODAY, EVEN YOU.**

May these words all be fixed upon your lips. Literally this word means "to be firm, steadfast, established, confirmed." On your confirmation day you are being established, being confirmed in the words you have learned. May they forever be fixed upon your lips and in your hearts for then you will trust in the Lord your God. Then your heart will not lean on its own understanding but upon the Wisdom and Knowledge of God.

This instruction I have not given you. This instruction has been given to you by the Holy Spirit. Yes, I, your Sunday School teachers and your parents have spoken the words, but the Holy Spirit instructed you. It was He who snatched you away from Satan's control by calling you to be a child of God through your baptism. It was He who filled you with a saving faith in Jesus Christ alone as your Lord and Savior. It was He who led you to confess your sins, repenting of them and looking alone to Jesus for forgiveness, life and salvation. It was He who led you this morning to boldly testify to what you believe and it is He who is instructing you this morning again in and through His Word. And it is He, the Holy Spirit, who will lead you in a few minutes to make the most important promise you will ever make—to be faithful to your Savior God and His Word till death with the help of and by the grace of God.

And finally the Spirit through Solomon says: **HAVE I NOT WRITTEN TO YOU EXCELLENT THINGS OF COUNSELS AND KNOWLEDGE, THAT I MAY MAKE YOU KNOW THE CERTAINTY OF THE WORDS OF TRUTH, THAT YOU MAY ANSWER WORDS OF TRUTH TO THOSE WHO SEND TO YOU?**

As we read in our second Scripture lesson this morning, it is the Holy Spirit that will give you the ability to **ALWAYS BE READY TO GIVE A DEFENSE (ANSWER) TO EVERYONE WHO ASKS YOU A REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU, WITH MEEKNESS AND FEAR.**

Your confirmation promise this morning, your confession of your faith is just the beginning of your witnessing for Jesus Christ. What tremendous opportunities the Lord will be laying before you in the weeks, months, and years to come as you "answer words of truth," as you tell those who are lost in sin and unbelief around you in school, on the playground, at your sleepovers, or wherever you may be---God's Word of wisdom and love all of course centered in Jesus our crucified and risen Savior. May the Holy Spirit who is confirming you today, give you the strength and courage to ever walk in and speak the truth of God's Word to others.

And that is the greatest joy this morning that we have. The greatest joy in the hearts of your parents this morning is to know that you are walking in the truth. The Apostle John wrote these words to a man named Gaius, the head of a church in Asia Minor. The greatest joy that John had was in hearing that his spiritual children walked in the truth of the Gospel message of Jesus. And there can be no greater joy in the hearts of your Christian parents.

Yes, it is indeed a desire of every parent to see their children succeed and do well in school, sports, music, drama, work and in whatever area of activity their children choose. We want our children to grow up with social graces and a pleasant personality and get along well with people. But none of this can match the real joy that your mother and father feel Nichole, Kirsten and Rachel when they see what God has done in and through you. The prayers of your parents when you were born have been graciously answered. The Lord has filled your hearts with His message of forgiving love in Jesus Christ, you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are ready to partake of His life-giving meal of forgiveness and you are assured of His love throughout your life on into eternity.

May we parents ever remember that nothing, nothing can compare with the Christian Education that you have been given and will continue to receive as confirmed young adults.

Playing the flute well is great. Being in plays is fantastic. Being involved in sports and being a good teammate is super. But knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior and being a child of God is far greater and reaps eternal rewards.

As your pastor these words from John also apply to my heart. Nine years ago when I came here to be your pastor you, Nichole and Kirsten, were spindly, little four year olds whom I could never tell apart. And I met you, Rachel, five years ago and knew you only as the youngest of the Gerbitz' girls. And now you stand here before us and your God as young ladies, grown up physically, mentally and spiritually. What greater joy can I, as your pastor have, than to know that as you continue to grow in this life, as you face life as a teenager in this corrupt society, as you spread your wings with adult responsibilities and go off to ILC for schooling, that you are walking in the truth of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

And finally there is no greater joy in the heart of your heavenly Father than to see you three this morning stand before Him confessing your sins and confessing your faith in His Son, your Savior Jesus. What brings greater happiness to God than to hear His children acknowledge their lost sin-filled condition and give all praise, honor and glory to Him for forgiveness and salvation? Our God says to us in Isaiah 43:10-12: **YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS THE LORD, "AND MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN, THAT YOU MAY KNOW AND BELIEVE ME, AND UNDERSTAND THAT I AM HE. BEFORE ME THERE WAS NO GOD FORMED, NOR SHALL THERE BE AFTER ME. I, EVEN I, AM THE LORD, AND BESIDES ME THERE IS NO SAVIOR. I HAVE DECLARED AND SAVED, I HAVE PROCLAIMED, AND THERE WAS NO FOREIGN GOD AMONG YOU; THEREFORE YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS THE LORD, "THAT I AM GOD.**

That is the purpose for which the three of you were born. To live for Christ by living in Christ and His Word. Paul writes: **HE DIED FOR ALL, THAT THOSE WHO LIVE SHOULD LIVE NO LONGER FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR HIM WHO DIED FOR THEM AND ROSE AGAIN and JESUS CHRIST GAVE HIMSELF FOR US TO REDEEM US FROM ALL WICKEDNESS AND TO PURIFY FOR HIMSELF A PEOPLE THAT ARE HIS VERY OWN, EAGER TO DO WHAT IS GOOD.**

Jesus has given you life, Nichole, Kirsten and Rachel; life on earth and eternal life through His shed blood so that you might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and joy. In other words so that you might all the days of your life **WALK IN THE TRUTH!**

But that walk will not be easy. Satan has gathered all of his forces to battle against you. This sinful world with all of its temptations and evil influences will attack you. Your own sinful flesh rebels against what you are doing and promising this morning. There is no greater joy in Satan's heart than to know that a formerly faithful child of God; one who stood here before his God and pledged his faithfulness is now walking in a self-chosen, sinful, disobedient life-style; or in the falsehood of work-righteousness; or walking in a desire to live only for this life.

These temptations you too will face. But as long as you walk in the truth of God's Word, with your ears stretched out and listening to Jesus, applying your hearts to His knowledge and fixing His message of forgiving love in your heart you will not fail.

That's the promise your Heavenly Father has given to you through the Holy Spirit. Our closing prayer for the three of you this morning comes from the words of the Apostle Paul written to the congregation in Colossae, Chapter 3:15-17: **AND LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE IN YOUR HEARTS, TO WHICH ALSO YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE BODY; AND BE THANKFUL. LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM, TEACHING AND ADMONISHING ONE ANOTHER IN PSALMS AND HYMNS AND SPIRITUAL SONGS, SINGING WITH GRACE IN YOUR HEARTS TO THE LORD. AND *WHATEVER* YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM.**

Amen.