

Confirmation Sunday – June 3, 2012 – Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY

Based on Isaiah 43:1-7 written by Pastor Paul Horn

Do not be afraid

- I. Your LORD created you – Father**
- II. Your LORD redeemed you – Son**
- III. Your LORD called you by name – Holy Spirit**
- IV. Your LORD will be with you – Triune God**

So what do you think? You are the first class to be confirmed in this new building, and, I pray, the first of many more to come. Today you will make your promise to remain faithful to the one true faith that was planted in you at your baptism, to be faithful with Word of God and to participate in Lord's Supper. You will promise to suffer all, even death, rather than deny Christ. Today is a very important day. This is a serious promise you are making. So... what would you like to hear from your pastor? I chose this text from Isaiah because they are words I would like to hear if I had to do it over again. My prayer is that you remember these words, along with your confirmation verse, for the rest of your life.

In vs1,5 Isaiah writes, "This what the LORD says, "Fear not. Do not be afraid." Is there a reason why the LORD felt to need to command you not to be afraid? Because the omniscient God knows your future. And he gives you a little hint as to what is coming up in your life. In vs2 he says, "**When you pass through the waters and rivers, when you walk through the fire.**"

You have to understand the historical context of these words. Isaiah was preparing God's people for what would happen in 150 years. The Babylonian army would destroy the city of Jerusalem, they would burn the temple, and force the people to march hundreds of miles into exile where they would sit for 70 years. That sounds like walking through stormy waters and raging fires, doesn't it?

The LORD in his omniscience knows that tough times were ahead for Israel and there are tough times ahead for you. Notice that he doesn't say "if", he says, "**When** you pass through raging waters and rivers, **when** you walk through roaring fires... "

When your buddy gets his girlfriend pregnant and he comes to you for advice, and says, "We're thinking about abortion." And you know that life begins at conception... how will you encourage your friend to preserve life? In the next four years you will be offered pills to pop and drugs to smoke and alcohol to drink. A girlfriend will want to go a little farther when you're all alone... what choice will you make? You will sit in class with someone who opening practices the gay or lesbian lifestyle, and one day they will ask you, "What do you think about marriage?" What will you say to them? Friends and loved ones and family members will die. There will be financial difficulties in your life, and at some point you may look at the checkbook and wonder, "What am I going to do next month?" It may happen, I pray that it does not, that you will do things that will disappoint your parents, your friends, and your God... things you will regret doing, things you wish you had never said. Events will take place in the world and in this country that will make you question your faith in God, and you will wonder if God still exists, if he still loves you, if he is in control.

You will pass through these raging waters. You will walk through these roaring fires. I know. I've been there, and so have all of these people who have sat where you are today. But the LORD has commanded you this day, "Fear not!" And He can back it up.

This morning I want take you back to the catechism classroom. In the First article of the Creed you confess: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. Isaiah teaches this in his prophecy... **This is what the LORD says, "He who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel (vs1); whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made (vs7)"**, based on these facts, I command you, **Do not be afraid when you pass through the waters and the fire.**

God the Father has created you. Isaiah uses the word *formed* – a Hebrew word that means: a potter who sits at his wheel staring at the lump of clay, and pays careful attention to detail to create a beautiful work of art. Has not your Creator done that with you, just as he did with Adam and Eve? Look at how wonderful your bodies are made and the abilities you have and the marvels of your mind. It makes us shout with the Psalm writer, **"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made!"**

Your Creator takes an active interest in his creation. And so he promises to watch over you, to protect you, to provide you with food, clothes, a home. When you pass through waters and fires of life, when you wonder, "Where will my next meal come from? How will I pay my bills and support my family? How can I give back to God with my offerings?" God says to you, **"Don't be afraid, I created you. You are precious in my sight."**

God also takes care of your soul. After he breathed life into first man, it wasn't much later that with a sad heart he to tell that man he must die because he disobeyed. You learned in catechism class that because of sin, death has been passed down to us. We must die because we are sinners, even from conception. But God promised to take care of your soul and he did that through his Son Jesus - another reason why you will not be afraid.

In the Second article you confess: I believe in Jesus Christ... Isaiah teaches about Jesus in his prophecy... **The LORD says, "Fear not... for I have redeemed you."** (vs1) Do you remember the catechism definition of *redeem*? It means: To buy back. *Redeem* in Hebrew language has this picture: in Isaiah's day people bought and sold slaves like property, sold next to the fruits and vegetables in the marketplace. Let's say that today you are up on the auction block. A potential buyer steps forward, "I will buy him. What's the cost?" "Well, mister, it's not gold or silver, but your very life blood." The buyer says, "I'll do it." He goes off and walks through the water and fire of hardships and is never afraid. He then suffers and dies. And then rises to life again and says to you, "You are free. You are no longer a slave, but my son."

You and I were the slaves, held in slavery by our past sins, our poor choices; held in slavery by Satan, who uses the philosophies of this sinful world to sway you from the truth of God's Word; you were held by death, which will come for us. But Jesus laid down his precious blood, innocent and holy, pure, as the payment, and pays the ransom to his Father, who sets you free.

When you don't stand up for the truth, when you make poor choices that disappoint mom and dad, and friends and God, you will look back and say to yourself, "Why did I do that? How could God love me?" God says to you, **"Do not be afraid. I have redeemed you."**

What you don't see in this passage is the Hebrew language, when he says I have redeemed you, he doesn't use the plural pronoun, he uses the singular you—he makes it very personal, he's speaking to you as an individual, he means, "I have set you, Aaron Tomita, free from your sins. I have set you, Nathan Wood, free from Satan, you are no longer under his control. I have set you, Luke Cecil, free from death by my resurrection. Do not be afraid when you pass through waters and the fire. I have redeemed you. You are mine."

Finally we talk about the work of the Holy Spirit. In the Third article of the creed you confess: I believe in the Holy Spirit... Isaiah teaches this in his prophecy... **In vs1 he writes, "Do not be afraid, I have called you by name, you are mine."** Isn't that what you learned in Luther's catechism, "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing, believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. " Because Scripture teaches us that by nature you are, dead, blind and enemies of God. Dead people cannot do anything for themselves, can they? "But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the one true faith." The Holy Spirit has called you by name through the gospel – the good news of Jesus, and that gospel is found in his Word and in Holy Baptism.

When events happen in this world and in this country that make you wonder, "Where is God? Is he here?" When you are persecuted because of your faith and you wonder, "Does he know I am here? Does he care about me?" He says, "Do not be afraid, I have called you by name." That means God knows you personally.

When you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God put his name on you. You belong to him. You are holy and precious in his sight. This is who you are. This is who you will be in life. Even when you must pass through the raging waters of this sinful life, roaring fires of hardships and pain and suffering, and you will... loved ones will die, relationships will be difficult, friends will be lost, but through it all God the Holy Spirit commands you, **"Do not be afraid. I have called you by name. You are mine."**

Finally God, the Triune God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, say to you, **Do not be afraid... You are precious and honored in my sight, and I love you...** (vs4) Have Father, Son and Holy Spirit proved that to you? The Father created a plan to save you from sins, from eternal death. The Son executed that plan to perfection. The Holy Spirit created life in you at Baptism, giving you all that the Father and Son have accomplished. He proved his love to you, hasn't he?

He still proves his love to you every day... He has blessed each of you with Christian parents who brought you to the baptismal font, trusting in God's promise, that through water and the Word, faith would be planted in your heart. He blessed you with Christian parents who raised you in the Word of God, brought you to Sunday school, worship, and catechism classes. He has blessed you with a Christian family in this congregation, who are with you today, who have been praying for you, encouraging you to remain faithful, who are just as

excited to join you to enjoy the communion of the Lord's Supper with them, and stand shoulder to shoulder with those who have also made the promise to be faithful to the Triune God whom you will confess today.

Will you pass through many raging waters and roaring fires in your life? Yes. Will you be afraid? No. For your God commands you, Do not be afraid. I have created you. I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. I love you and you are precious in my sight. I will be with you wherever you go. I pray that you will always remember these words, until that day we stand together before our God and walk together through the gates of heaven to eternal life. Amen.