

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
May 15, 2011
Confirmation**

Hebrews 13:20-21

Equipped

1. *Thankful for what has already been done*
2. *Wary of what lies ahead*
3. *Confident in what will be accomplished*

Hymns: 153 – 452 – 457 – 310 --597

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

As we begin today on this very important day in your young lives, I want to take a few moments to go back in time. Certainly, this is for the young Confirmands, but all of you can open those treasure chests of memories. Search for the box from the time when you were 5 or 6 years old and find that memory of your first day of school. Now here is the question: Did your mom or dad or grandpa or grandma just drop you off and say, "Go, get 'em?" Very doubtful. Imagine if that is how it would've gone. You would've been unprepared, scared, unsure and most likely doomed for failure right from the start.

Instead, as you look back on that scene, you probably remember how much was done to get you ready. All the supplies had been gathered; you had your lunchbox in hand, you had your backpack in tow, filled with just the right number of crayons and a ready glue stick. Maybe you had a new set of clothes just for the first day of school. And when you arrived at school, your mom probably brought you right into the classroom, maybe right to your specific desk, just to make sure you were all set. There was certainly no drive thru drop off, see you at 3:30 farewell that has probably now become the norm.

Now the question is, why was all of that done? Quite simply, your mom wanted you to be equipped. She wanted you to be equipped so that you would be prepared, with nothing to worry about or anything to be scared of. She made sure that you were equipped so that you might succeed. Now we zoom forward to today and they aren't kindergartners anymore. But on a much larger scale, this day today is very much like that first day of school. Today, as I see it, your journey into adulthood begins. As a church, we look at you differently. You are able to confess what you believe, you are able to examine yourselves, you are able to partake in the Lord's Supper. We even have a new classification for you; not just baptized member, but communicant member. If you look at the church directory, you'll even notice that you are now listed individually, separate from your parents. That means that you, more than any other person, are now responsible for your faith. That is a huge responsibility, daunting even. Do you think they know what lies ahead?

On this Confirmation Day, let's say a prayer for these Confirmands as they begin a new stage in their lives, we'll turn to the words of the author to the Hebrews, chapter 13 verse 20-21. (It is printed for you there in the sermon notes if you wish to follow along.) ***"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."***

As you sit here today, ready in a few minutes to make your promises to God and this congregation, yet unsure of what lies ahead in your future, that prayer spoken by the author to the Hebrews fills me with confidence. His words spoken for you fill me with confidence because first and foremost he has reminded us once again what God has already done. He is the God of peace. In a world made chaotic by sin, He has established peace through the blood of the eternal covenant. Through the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary, the destroyed relationship between God and his people was restored. We know through that sacrificial work on the cross that the God to whom we pray this morning has kept his greatest promise. He took care of our sins and he sealed that forgiveness by raising the Lord Jesus, our great Shepherd, from the dead. And because of that, we know that he will answer our prayer today, ***"May he equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in all of us what is pleasing to him."*** Just as your mom spent time equipping you for the first day of Kindergarten,

making sure that you were ready; in the same way, a lot of preparation has gone into making sure you are ready for this day. And the wonderful news is that God is the one who has been getting you ready. It began long ago as you were washed under the waters of baptism. On that day he equipped you with this wonderful thing called faith. Through that wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit, he instilled in each of your hearts a trust in what Jesus, your good Shepherd has done for you. And for all the years from that moment until right now, God has been using his Word and his pastors and teachers and parents and friends and many others to help you grow in that faith, to help you grow in that conviction that Jesus is your only Savior from sin. He has allowed you to grow in grace, and also in knowledge and depth of insight of the Word of God. Anyone who was here last week had the privilege of seeing just how much God has done in getting you ready. What a privilege to witness firsthand how God has already answered the prayer we spoke just a few moments ago. Make no mistake, he has equipped each of you in a most blessed way. He has given you faith. And so this is a day of great celebration and thanksgiving.

But this day, where we get to stand in awe and marvel at how God has equipped, also comes with temptation. As we see how equipped you are, the temptation is to think that the work is done. The preparation that God has put you through has been long. Anyone who was here last week also knows that it has not been easy. And with all that preparation, there is a great temptation to think that now you can rest. You have gotten to this day and you're all set. You've been tested and you passed. So, now you don't have to be as dedicated to learning the Word. There is no longer a final exam in the front of church to keep you studying. And that temptation to sit back and relax is not just for these young confirmands.

As a congregation, you have contributed a great deal as God has thoroughly equipped these Confirmands over the past many years. As God's people, you have seen the importance and taken to heart the responsibility that we as Christians have to all of God's young sheep. And that makes each of these Confirmation Sundays a source of joy for all of us. We see the fruits of the labor of Holy Trinity School. We are reminded of what our support helps to accomplish. But this day of Confirmation, this day when we recognize these young adults as equipped Christians, this day does not mean that our role in their lives is now done either. There is a temptation for all of us to relax as well, to offer a congratulations and a handshake and to think that these equipped Christians will be just fine without our continued support.

So how do we stay on top of it? How do we avoid that temptation to celebrate this day and then drift away. Let's turn our eyes back to our prayer. We asked the God of peace to equip these young adults with everything good. And we didn't ask him to do such a great and wonderful job of preparation so that they could make it to this day. No, we asked him to equip them so that they could make it past this day. We asked for God to equip them so that for all the days of their lives, they might seek to do his will. As young confirmands you know what God's will is, you've studied it, you've memorized it. God's will is that all men would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. So first and foremost, God has equipped you so that each of you might stay in the saving faith into which you were baptized. The first lesson we learned in Catechism class gave us the definition of Confirmation, "strengthening." To live your faith and stay in your faith requires that you be strong in your faith, because you are going to face challenges to that faith, temptations to doubt, temptations to flee, temptations to ignore, and temptations that will never end. Through the ups and downs of life, continue to rely and build upon what you have been equipped with, faith given to you by God.

And accomplishing God's will also means that others might be saved. God has equipped you with faith so that you might share that faith. Last week gave you an opportunity to do that, this week provides another. As you go out into the world, you will be met with many more opportunities to confess your faith. Seize every chance to confess with your mouth what you believe in your heart. Share your Savior with full confidence that that is exactly what you have been equipped to do.

As we close today, it is impossible for me or anyone else here to know exactly where your life will lead from this place. Along with faith, God has equipped each of you with different gifts and abilities. He has also given you different interests and goals. And using those blessings, He'll take you down very different roads. Wherever you go and whatever you do, be fully confident that God has equipped you with all that you need. Armed with that great assurance, let us end our prayer today by asking that all that you do and all that any of us might do, may it be pleasing to God and may it be done to the glory of Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.