

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
September 15, 2013**

***“Christ’s Love, Our Calling”
Year 4: Love Speaks***

Hebrews 13:1-8,20-21

Love Speaks Confidently

- 1. Why we are confident**
- 2. How we are confident**

Hymns: 232 – 498 – Distribution: 441, 315 – 330

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Hebrews 13:1-8,20-21 –

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

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.

Confidence is a funny thing. Where does it come from? And why?

Imagine a basketball player with confidence. All of us have probably seen that athlete who is not the biggest or the strongest, yet who steps out there on the court with confidence. Perhaps their confidence and assertiveness is so high that players on the other team don’t want to tangle with them. It might be the player who steps to the free throw line with one second remaining. Their team is down by one, and they’re shooting a 1 and 1 free throw. Different players react differently to a situation like that. Some pull out their “I can do this!” attitude and give it their best stroke with a confident attitude. Other players struggle to find confidence at a time of pressure like that.

Confidence can make a difference at a piano recital. One player can sit down at the keyboard and in a remarkable way block out the pressure of the moment and have confidence in the practice they have put in and confidently play their piece. Others struggle to muster confidence as they play their piece.

Confidence is a funny thing. Where does it come from? And why?

As we continue the service series that our Wisconsin Synod churches are enjoying called **“Love Speaks,”** today we consider the theme **“Love Speaks Confidently.”** Why would this be so? Today our text from the book of Hebrews will explore:

- 1. Why we are confident**
- 2. How we are confident**

1. Why we are confident

One reason we can be confident is in the words of our text, which say, *“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.”* These closing, confident words of our reading show us the main reason we can be confident. **We are confident**

because of the message that we have been entrusted with as Christians.

This message that we carry in us does not start with confidence in our own natural status. In fact, our own natural state causes us to have depression instead of confidence. We needed saving!

When a coach talks to a player that is lacking confidence, they often will need to encourage the player that “They can do it!” After all, a player that is faithfully practicing and doing their drills should have no reason to fear a 15-foot free throw. If you put the work in during practices and your individual work, you can do it! This is not the reason we have confidence, the writer to the Hebrews says. In fact, if we consider the phrase “You can do it,” we could ask the question, “What did we do?” We did many things that have earned us separation from God and punishment from him. What did we do? We broke his commandments!

- We made our hearts an idol factory
- We chased after money
- We let our spouse down (again!)
- We blurted those quick words out that were insensitive and cut deeply
- We lost our temper
- We withheld our firstfruits from the Lord
- We neglected to help when we should have

In short, forget having confidence in yourself and your accomplishments. We needed saving!

Then the writer to the Hebrews tells us in some vivid words what God has done for us and the message he has given to us, in which we can be confident!

- **Eternal covenant / blood** – God made a covenant with you to save you. However, this salvation he has planned is not a two-way street. He sent his Son to pay the price of your salvation. He sent Christ to live a holy life for you. He sent Christ to die a painful, agonizing death for your sins. He loved you enough to plan this out and to carry it out perfectly.
What grace this is! Who of us would make a plan to help and save someone

who was opposed to us? If your adversary has gotten themselves into a pickle and is suffering in some way for it, is your first thought, “How can I get them out of that situation?” Or, for those of you who are parents here today, has there ever been a time where your child has gone against your advice – even against your orders – and has gotten themselves stuck? I’d imagine many of you have thought, “OK, how are you going to get yourself out of that one? I’m going to watch and see what you’re going to do, now that you’ve cooked your own goose!”

But God didn’t do that. He made a plan that we can see evident in the entire Old Testament that spells out how his Son, the willing Servant, would come to earth to save us by his holy life and his death on the cross. Amazing!

- Resurrection – This covenant that God has made and carried out for you ended with the resurrection of his Son from the grave and his exaltation to the right hand of God. Because of his resurrection, we too will not stay in our graves forever, but will be raised to live in heaven with him.

This is the message that we have to tell as our love speaks. What confidence this message gives us!

A second reason we can be confident is found in v. 8 of our reading: “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*” The Savior that we have is unchanging. When we think of the many changes that are around us in life, that truly is amazing! I recently ran across a website that has a number of lists called “The Mindset List.” It’s compiled by a couple teachers at Beloit College in Wisconsin, and lists what each year’s new college class have or have not experienced in their lifetime, I took note of the list for the graduating college class from three years ago. (They would be 25 years old now. How has life changed? What is their worldview?)

- Professional athletes have always competed in the Olympics. And the Olympics have always been every two years.
- They have known only three presidents.
- The Soviet Union has never existed and therefore is about as scary as the student union.
- Television stations have never concluded the broadcast day with the national anthem.
- They have rarely mailed anything using a stamp.
- FAXing is considered an outgrown means of communication.
- They have never heard anyone actually "ring it up" on a cash register.
- Most of them have never eaten a meal of "bad airline food."
- "Google-ing" has always been acceptable behavior.
- Their families have typically not had station wagons, but mini-vans.
- They were not alive when the Challenger space shuttle blew to pieces after takeoff.

Life sure changes, doesn't it? Yet we hear in our text that one thing never will change for you, for those confidants, or for the world. **Our Savior Jesus Christ has won eternal salvation for man-kind, and this gives us confidence to speak about this message to others!**

We read about a third reason we can be confident: *"God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?...' (He will) equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ."*

What promises we hear in those verses:

- God says he will never leave us. This is reminiscent of Jesus' words to his disciples when he left them: *"Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20). Therefore, we hear the confident

words this writer quotes from Psalm 118: *"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

I would imagine that many foreign missionaries have meditated on these thoughts as they were carrying out their work for the Lord's kingdom in places far from home. Recently, a missionary in our church body had his house ransacked by armed robbers. He's been beaten up, his wife has been attacked, and his things taken. Yet that missionary is still there doing the work with his family. Why? Why would he stay? Because through it all God was with them, and he will continue to be with them. The Lord actually strengthened their resolve through all of that. They see how much need there is for the gospel, and they will not be afraid, because even those robbers could not do any real harm. Jesus is still with them and they've got their eternal home waiting.

What risks do you take for sharing the gospel as your love speaks? Could it simply be a leap out of your comfort zone? Might you risk smooth sailing in your extended family? Or tougher conditions at work? Or a neighbor who is not as neighborly? **When we look at our risks, may we also say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" and speak with confidence!**

- Our reading also assures us that God will equip us. What a comfort that is! The Lord does not send us out to an assignment that we have no equipment or preparation for. He will give us what we need! Even if we come across the slickest arguing atheist that might be out there, we still have the simple gospel message of which we are simply an ambassador!

- We also hear that the Lord will work in us what is pleasing to him. He promises to be at work in all our actions and life.

This is why we are confident as our love speaks!

2. How we are confident

That leaves us with our other question today: How? How can we express our confidence as our love speaks?

It's interesting that the writer to the Hebrews mentions a number of things for us to learn today. As we look at them, it's almost like that school game students play called, "Show and Tell." A student might bring a keepsake or an item having to do with their hobby to school so he can "show and tell" what is important to him.

As a Christian reads these following things in our Scripture reading, we get the distinct idea that our love speaking to those around us is "Show and Tell." And each thing mentioned could be its own sermon in these verses, if a pastor wanted to expound on them individually!

Let's simply list what these "show and tell" items are:

1. *"Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."*

All these things boil down to one important point: **Love flows over to those around us.** In a day and age where people seem to be insulting, hurting, and persecuting each other, a Christian's love flows to those around him. He loves his brothers and sisters in the faith. He shows hospitality to those that he meets. He remembers the mistreated and imprisoned in his prayers and even with his tangible help.

2. *"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."*

Love leads us to respect and honor Christian marriage. In a day and age where people have been tempted and led into sexual immorality of all kinds and have even tried to "redefine" what marriage really is despite God's regulations, we honor marriage. If we feel like this is a big assignment, think about the times in the Roman Empire when these words were first written!

3. *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"*

Love leads us to be content with the material things that God has blessed us with. In a day and age where people are eager to "get rich quick" as a high priority, a Christian is content. Ambition, hard work, and planning are responsible and fine, but the Christian realizes that God will still choose to bless him with what he should have and that his needs will be taken care of.

4. *"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."*

Love remembers spiritual leaders who have gone before them, and imitates them. In fact, the writer lists a whole chapter's worth of past believers in Hebrews 11 for his audience for them to remember and be inspired by. Who might this be for you? A pastor from your childhood? A teacher from your schooling? A called worker from Holy Trinity you've known? Remember their witness and the way God blessed and took care of them, and be inspired in your own life.

“Love Speaks Confidently.” How true this is! What a worthwhile point to remember as we go through this service series.

As we close our look at confidence, however, may we always keep the concept of confidence in the proper perspective. Our own confidence will not convert one soul. Our own confidence will never change an unbeliever into a believer.. Only the Holy Spirit can use our witness to do that. Our own confidence does not sustain God’s Church. Only God’s own power and activity will do that. Yet his salvation and promises affect us. They move us to speak confidently. And God promises to use our witness for his purposes!

Therefore, may he give us confidence, not in ourselves, but in the plans and promises he has revealed to us. May he do it to his glory! Amen.