

Pastor T.C. Arnold
12th Sunday after Trinity
2 Corinthians 3:4 & Hymn #797
August 14th, 2016

If you haven't figured it out already, Sunday morning preaching is not the same as motivational speaking. It is true that at times it will insight motivation, but the true intent is to preach the Word of God – the law and the Gospel. However, this morning, I would like to say a word about confidence... which sounds a lot like a word you would hear in a “motivational speech.” What a great personal trait to have – confidence. Going into the board room you need confidence. When talking to a client you need confidence. When asking for a refund you need confidence. When speaking to your family you need to do so with confidence. When making a presentation you must be confident. Some would say this is the fundamental personal trait that separates the strong from the weak – that separates the leader from the follower – that separates the successful from the foundering. Like I said, this sounds like a great topic for a motivational speaker.

But I'm not sure I would go that far. Confidence is good to have, but there are times we are “not so” confident – and that doesn't make us any less of a person. It makes us human. But I do want you to be confident – especially when it comes to your salvation. These words from the text for today, 2 Corinthians chapter three tell us, “*Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God.*” And then St. Paul goes on to say that we are not sufficient in ourselves but our sufficiency is in Christ. That's confidence. And I guess that's why I chose a confident hymn to sing for the sermon hymn this morning. We sang the first three verses already but I would like to sing the next three with you. Keep in mind God's confidence – His words of truth that go beyond our understanding. Please turn in your worship bulletin for the “omitted” verse. LSB does not include this verse but the hymnal our parish-family was familiar with for fifty years, TLH, does include it. As we sing this verse, think about our confident God and how we can be confident of what He has done for us.

Sing “omitted” TLH verse of hymn 797

This is a confident hymn with a confident verse. *God the Almighty the GREAT Creator, Ruler of sky and land and sea.* The hymn even capitalizes “Creator” and “Ruler.” There is no doubt who the boss is – the one from whom all blessings flow – the one who was the beginning and made all things. It also says, “*His rule is over rich and poor, His promise ever standeth sure.*” Creator, ruler, the one who gives His promise that stands for sure. This hymn bleeds confidence.

And we shouldn't doubt these words either. Though this is just a hymn and not the Word of God itself – it is founded on the “confident” words of the 2 Corinthians text before us today – “*Such confidence that we have through Christ toward God.*” Dear Christians, these words are for you today. If you are suffering from a lack of confidence of believing that God doesn't know what He is doing because of the way your life seems to be playing out right now – retreat back to 2 Corinthians chapter three. Go back to verse four of this hymn. There is a renewed confidence given by God to all of us. Believe it.

But there is the danger of being too confident. Let's sing verse four of hymn 797 and call to mind how our lives can be burned by “over confidence.”

Sing Verse 4 of hymn 797

“Penitent sinners, for mercy crying, Pardon and peace from Him obtain.” Where does our pardon come from? From Him obtain! While confidence is appropriate and necessary in matters of faith directed to God – confidence is dangerous in matters of faith directed to self. In other words, being confident in our sins will lead us away from Christ and toward our selfish endeavors and philosophies. “I don’t need to go to church. I can find God anywhere. I don’t need to hear God’s forgiveness of sins. I don’t need the fellowship of the community of believers. I don’t need the strength offered by God through His Word.” I...I... I. This type of confidence puts self at the center of our universe instead of the one who created and rules the universe. This is how to destroy your relationship with God. It is the Gospel, though, that rescues the sinner from the tyranny of individualism. Thanks be to God.

“Ever the wants of the poor supplying, their faithful God He will remain.” That’s God’s promise of faithfulness to us as we turn toward God in our sins while saying – I cannot do this on my own. I am not confident in myself in earning righteousness. Only by God do we live. This is why we need the confidence of our Lord’s work and not our own self-righteous confidence.

And because of this confidence we have in the work of our Jesus, we praise Him only. Now let’s sing verse 5 of hymn #797

Sing Verse 5 of hymn 797

“All that has being, to praise Him solely, with happy heart its ‘Amen’ sings.” Such is the confidence that we do have in Christ. He is sufficient for our faith, says 2 Corinthians. He has made us competent to be ministers of a New Covenant, says 2 Corinthians. There is only one place from where all this comes. It comes as the source of life and the creator and ruler of all. And for that, we praise only Him – not the world, not ourselves – but God and Him only. He has made us this way by what He has done for us on the cross. Our sins are forgiven – our confidence restored – our hope and our life freely given by a Lord who loves us so much He would give His only begotten Son.

It’s true, that man has his eyes constantly looking up to the pinnacle of the mountain top. We strive to be there. We strive to make a name for ourselves. We strive for the glory on top of that mountain. But know this, beloved... God looks down at us and even sometimes puts us in the deep valleys where God can see us better. And even better than that... He comes into those deep valleys and walks beside us during our most difficult times.

So, beloved in the Lord, laud Him until death. Praise His name with your breath until your last breath. Know Him and be confident in God’s sufficiency for you. Tell others. He is alive! That’s worth saying again and again. That is worth sharing. It’s worth it because it’s yours. Place your confidence in the work of the Lord. His work for your forgiveness of sins on the cross saves you. Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.