

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE LORD THE GOOD CONFESSION IS SEEN AND HEARD

Hear again the Word of God for this eighth Sunday after Trinity:

*For who has stood in (the) council of YHWH, there to see and hear His Word?
Who caused to give heed to His Word and heard?¹*

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

This is a day in the Church Militant, in this place, to hear the good confession of the Faith. That may be clearly heard in the responses of pastor and people in the order of service. It may be witnessed in the respectful and worshipful attitudes with which God's people here receive and respond to His gifts. In the midst of this morning's service, the good confession will be (was) beheld as a confirmand, in the strength of the Lord, answers(ed) the questions of the confirmation rite.

For days, weeks, months and years in many cases, the young people who stand before this chancel rail have memorized, recited and begun to learn the truths of the Faith which were delivered to them with the water and Word of Holy Baptism. Under their parents' tutelage, with their parents' oversight, they were, and are, prepared to confess that they have learned the basics of the Faith. They have promised that they will endeavor to learn more deeply of those treasures as the years of their lives unfold.

Here they are reminded that when we bend the knee as we receive Jesus' Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins, we are actually in the council of the Lord. The confirmand's good confession today is given to lead her, and remind us, to be aware that we have been called here to see and hear God's Word. This is so that we all might be encouraged by their solemn vows to continue to give heed to and hear that Word.

In faithfulness to that Word, parents lead Catechumens to the Confirmation Rite through study and reflection upon God's Word. And so, this day, in this place, these words are fulfilled again by one who has been prepared, examined and found worthy in the Word to taste salvation. She will be (has become) a living embodiment that answers the prophet Jeremiah's questions:

¹ Jeremiah 23:18.

For who has stood in (the) council of YHWH, there to see and hear His Word? Who caused to give heed to His Word and heard?²

Each of us who has gone, or will go, through the Church's confirmation rite, promise to be in the Lord's council. Therein, in Word and Sacraments, we see and hear Him. We are caused by the Holy Spirit working through His Word visible and proclaimed to give heed to Him even as we hear Him. Our confirmation day promises – *to hear the Word of God and receive the Lord's supper faithfully... to live according to the Word of God... even to death... to continue steadfast in this confession and Church, and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it* – those promises (on p. 273 of the hymnal) we can only keep as we are held fast in God's Council to hear and see His Word.

Such we, you, are free to do as each of us remains in Christ. He alone has completely fulfilled God's Word for us. That is why congregations like this do not clutter up anymore the important promises our confirmands make with any trappings that might remind us of school graduations. No one in the right confession of the Faith and Church graduates from the basics of the Faith to matriculate to higher learning. Rather, Christians are all called to return to the Lord's foundation of the Faith in our lives each day. We all learn to make the sign of the cross as we begin and end each day in the Lord, to remind ourselves that we have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Many years ago, for an entire year, each Sunday sermon held a catechism review read into the ears of the hearers of the Word. All in this building those days were encouraged to open their hymnals and actually look at the question and answer for the day. A few were heard to grumble after a while something like this, "I learned that as a child. I do not need the pastor to make me hear and read it again each Sunday."

You may imagine their response when their pastor asked those grumblers to recite from memory that which they seemed to think they had graduated from many years before. One or two left, to go to where they might hear that which they wanted to hear,

² *Jeremiah 23:18.*

rather than that which they could no longer remember. That then leads us to the true prophet of YHWH's opening words for the day:

*Thus, says YHWH Sabaoth, "All of you, do not hear the prophets' words, the ones prophesying to you all; they cause to fill all of you with vain hopes. They cause to speak to you every vision of their own minds, not from (the) Mouth of YHWH."*³

With those words, God first called His people who were about to lose their nation, the right to attend His Temple, and their very homes through deportation, to repentance. God had been sending them rightly guided prophets for centuries. He had allowed them to witness the relatively recent destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. His Word of Law that called the people to repentance God continued to send out (compared to Isaiah, there is not a lot of Good News in the book of Jeremiah). Yet, the people who were to be in the Church then, those who also bore God's Name, did not want to hear that which returned them to the basics – repent, return, receive God's gifts – continue in such daily.

Rather, the majority of the chosen people of that Old Covenant era decided they would rather live in worldly prosperity – as if it would never end. Further, following the footsteps of their faithless brethren in the depopulated North, they assembled for themselves prophets, preachers and teachers who would affirm them in their own worldviews. They developed worship that would, to turn a modern phrase backward, have non-covenantal style with Old Covenant substance. They placed such worship alongside that of the one, true God, and figured all would be fine. Their priests and teachers had even introduced "priestesses" into the Lord's Temple precincts. (If you Adults want to know more about that worship, talk to our Hosea study class members. If you children need to know about such, ask your parents).

God, through Jeremiah, continues to warn His erring people about following the words of any person – even those called into churchly offices – if those words are not in accord with the revealed Word of God. He says that such preachers *they cause to fill all of you with vain hopes*. The word translated, "vain" may be rendered "delude," or "empty,"

³ Jeremiah 23:16.

with the sense of “filled with wind.” Those pleasing ear-fillers are shown to be by the Word – gasbags! Their prophecies were nothing but passing wind, filled with no substance, empty of the Word of God, yet their words were so satisfying to the ear.

Such contemporary popular preacher/teachers are still welcomed by those who do not desire to hear God’s Law which convicts, condemns and kills. Those windbags blow sunshine into those who should be called to turn from their sins that they might have life. They affirm people in their sins, and the people allow this to continue. Jeremiah still declares of such people-pleasing pastor/teachers:

They keep saying to those continuing to despise Me, “Has worded, YHWH, ‘Shalom will be for all of you;’” and as for everyone following stubbornly his own heart they say, “Not (it) shall come upon all of you, evil.”⁴

Those who despise the Lord are those who reject His Word – from its basic teachings onward. Such people seek out those who will tell them they are OK, and right with God, without ever calling them on their sins. They give their hearers blessings with no calls to repentance, gifts without turning from sin. They lead them to think that all scripture is the matter of one’s own interpretation – yes, that one is raising its ugly head again in the Church. Such teachers give only Good News while declaring no really Bad News – except maybe about “those unloving guys.” The pop-preachers in each generation of the Church studiously avoid the Law that declares why God’s people need the Gospel. After all, they point out, such negative proclamation does not fill the pews, nor the assemblies’ coffers. To that type of preaching and teaching, the Word of the Lord asks:

*For who has stood in (the) council of YHWH, there to see and hear His Word?
Who caused to give heed to His Word and heard?⁵*

Earlier you heard that those who stand, see, hear, and give heed to the Word are those called by the Gospel, enlightened with His gifts, confess the Faith, and bend the knee in the Faith at His table are in God’s council. That is because there was, is, and ever

⁴ Jeremiah 23:17.

⁵ Jeremiah 23:18.

shall be One Who is eternally One with the Father. In His counsel, He took the sins of all people, and most especially of you who are being saved, and placed them on His Son. He, Who from eternity stood in the triune council of YHWH – one in three, and three in one – He, for a time, in time, set aside His full glory that He might raise up fallen humans to His council Table. When the time was right, according to His own counsel, He established that Table to be found among those who are named with His Name, who continue in the good confession of the Faith. There, He comes to them bringing them, giving you, His gifts – His touch, His Presence, His Faith, His Life, His Salvation, His Jesus. Even so, for those who reject His Word, His basics of the Faith, He also has a Word.

Behold, (the) storm of YHWH has gone forth, wrath, (even as a) tempest whirling; upon (the) head of (the) evil ones it will burst.⁶

For you who remember the basics of the Faith, there is a reminder of the eternal Word. God's storm went forth. His wrath was a whirling tempest striking upon the sinless Person of the Son of God. God's fiery storm, the punishment all people deserve on account of sin, and their own sins exploded on the Body of Christ. He received the lashes for transgression, you and I have earned. He wore the crown of death, jammed into His brow as a cruel mockery of the reign He died to inaugurate. Jesus received the blows sinners deserve upon His head. Such blows all who are evil – that is every son and daughter of Adam for all time – such punishment all but Him deserved.

Today, that which was foreshadowed in the earthly destruction of the Old Covenant people and Temple is nearing. The tempest of the Lord is being prepared for those who remain unrepentant, who follow those who declare, "Shalom will be for all of you," without calling sinners to repentance. Because Jesus bore God's whirling tempest of wrath for you, you need not fear God's coming wrath. You are free to be like today's

⁶ Jeremiah 23:19.

confirmand, holding onto, and returning to the basics of the Faith even as you learn more each day from God's revealed Word.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Trinity VIII (*LSB* One-year series)

Introit Psalm 48:9-10, 1; Psalm 26; Jeremiah 23:16-19; Romans 8:12-17; Matthew 7:15-23

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Soli Deo Gloria

Third Draft Translation:

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They keep saying to those continuing to despise Me, "Has worded, YHWH, 'Shalom will be for all of you;'" and as for all following stubbornly his own heart they say, "Not (it) shall come upon all of you, evil."⁸

For who has stood in (the) council of YHWH, then to see and hear His Word? Who caused to give heed to His Word and heard?⁹

Behold, (the) storm of YHWH has gone forth, wrath, (even as a) tempest whirling; upon (the) head of)the) evil ones it will burst.¹⁰

⁷ Jeremiah 23:16.

⁸ Jeremiah 23:17.

⁹ Jeremiah 23:18.

¹⁰ Jeremiah 23:19.