

GOD THE FATHER'S GIFT TO JESUS
CONFIRMATION DAY

John 21:1-14

TEXT: *After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Lots of gifting going on this time of year! There are graduations and confirmations. Young couples plan their weddings and in addition to wedding gifts, there are wedding showers. Today is Mother's Day, and you may have noticed that the price for a dozen roses has gone up in anticipation for this traditional Mother's Day gift. My father's birthday was May 10th and every once in a while we faced that dilemma of having to ask our mother to help us find a birthday card for Dad, and then to ask Dad to help us find a Mother's Day card for Mom.

Today is Mother's Day and Confirmation Day. What a special gift you young Christians are to your mothers who have no greater desire than to have you confess your faith before the congregation today and to promise to hold faithful to God's Word until He calls us all to heaven! As I've often said, our children are the only earthly possession that we are able to take to heaven with us! May we all remain faithful to our confirmation vows that we may be united in heaven when our Lord comes!

According to the Word of God before us this morning, this is same gift God the Father gave to Jesus, His Son! The night before Jesus died on the cross, He prayed to His Heavenly Father: ***I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.*** Today, a day of gifting to Mother's Day moms and to young Christians being confirmed, let us consider this gift the Father gave His Son. This gift IS YOU! It is you who believe in Jesus. It is you who will live with Jesus.

When the Devil sinned, God cast him from His presence. Scripture says: ***God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment...*** 2 Pe 2 What could they do? Satan and all the angels that followed him were at the mercy of the Almighty Creator, but Scripture tells us that there was no mercy. There was no Savior. Why? That remains a mystery. God simply did not spare them, but consigned them to hell, the place Jesus described as: ***the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*** Mt 25 Yet in his terrible fury and hatred for God there is only one thing that he can do to "hurt God" deeply, and that is to continue to steal from Him what God loves so much that He gave His only Son Jesus to redeem from sin and death! Satan works day and night to steal you, God's gift to Himself and to His Son Jesus.

That night before His crucifixion, the Bible says: ***Jesus ... looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given***

him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ... I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. What a special day this is for us as we celebrate the fact that all that God has done for our salvation has been revealed to you! This means that out of all the world throughout history, you are among those whom God gave as a special gift to His Son Jesus! You are among those of whom Jesus said the night before He died on the cross: ***I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.***

Jesus speaks here of that most gracious and comforting Doctrine of Election, or Predestination. Evidence of your Election was revealed at your Baptism when God's Holy Spirit put His name upon you, giving you faith in the forgiveness of sins that the water of Baptism washed away. More evidence of your election was in your parents who continued to bring you to Jesus to worship, to hear His Word and to be instructed in all matters of life eternal. And now, you who are about to be confirmed, are invited to receive a most blessed assurance of your call to eternal life as your Lord Jesus comes to you personally with His true body and blood for you to eat and to drink, just as He did with His disciples that night 2000 years ago!

You, and all who believe in Jesus, as God's gift to Jesus! Jesus will delight in you as you are given time here on this earth to live to the glory of His saving name!

Our American culture is obsessed with self-admiration. Anecdotal evidence of how parents today try to elevate the self-esteem of children is broadcast every day. Recently, the discussion over what is called "Core Curriculum" set before us by the Department of Education is defended by many with a focus on what they call "critical thinking." While "critical thinking" processes sound sophisticated, they are meant to train children always to examine everything with a questioning mind. When this mindset is applied to one's beliefs, you can already know what this means when it comes to God's Word and the doctrines that are clearly revealed. Such "critical thinking" was the tactic used by the Devil in the Garden of Eden when he asked Eve:

Did God really say...?

How can anyone be certain of his election to salvation if he is taught to question the one thing that is our assurance? Jesus declared: ***I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*** In 14 The critical thinker would then say: "Really? What about those who do not know or who believe in God in their own way? Are they not also going to be saved?"

Do not be a "critical thinker." Be a believer in the truth of God's Word. Then you will know that you will live forever with Jesus because He Himself has told you. He has told you that for Jesus' sake your sins are forgiven, and as Martin Luther has written, "Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation!"

You are the answer to Jesus' Maundy Thursday prayer and God's own gift to the One who Redeemed you. Let God Himself, through His Gospel in Word and Sacrament ever keep that hope alive in your hearts! Amen.