

## Be a Fully Confirmed Disciple of Christ

✠ **Trust in Christ's authority (vv.16-18)**

✠ **Disciple all ethnic groups (vv.19-20)**

In the name of Jesus, the Great Commissioner of His Church, dear fellow disciples, and especially you, dear Zach, our confirmand:

“It’s time to get out on the water!” In one form or another this is the mantra for Minnesota this time of year. It’s safe to say that among thousands of eighth grade, high school and college graduates huge numbers would rather not go to their graduation ceremonies if they could get out on the water instead. What good is a rod and reel with no water? Who wants a shiny new fishing boat all gassed up and ready to go, but still tied up at the dock? With water, water everywhere, it’s time to get going!

But before the summer is done, some fun will have turned to tragedy. Boating accidents and drowning, alcohol impaired, ignorance and lack of skill, wind and waves, missing minds and missing life jackets will all combine to make sad memories for many in the permanent loss of life. And the hot pursuit of worldly passions will prove the importance again and again for you and me and each of us to **Be a Fully Confirmed Disciple of Christ**. Too many priorities are empty pursuits, but this one is eternal.

✠ **Trust in Christ's authority (vv.16-18)**

If your Confirmation is like most family gatherings, there will be a few among us today who are here out of love for you and loyalty to the family. But let’s be blunt. Some might see little reason for all the time and effort, and even less for a “Lutheran” Confirmation. They might shake their heads and wonder that a healthy young man like you devoted so many hours of study for over two years to a little book called *Luther's Small Catechism*. I can just see their cartoon bubble: “You mean there’s a ‘Big’ catechism besides the ‘Small’ one? Who’s this Luther guy anyway?”

One big clue for who he’s not ought to pop straight up from Jesus’ words right here in our text. Jesus say, “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**” Martin Luther, former Catholic priest and Augustinian monk could not live a perfect life in your place, but Jesus did. Luther could not die for you. But Jesus, the sinless God-Man did die in our place and washed away our sins and the sins of the entire world with His holy blood. Luther could not even provide resurrection for himself, but Jesus did on that first Easter morning when He burst from the grave, conquering sin, death and hell forever. You could not be baptized into Luther’s name. But “**in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**” you were baptized, and all by the supreme **authority** of Jesus **Christ**, God’s own Son.

Zach, with a memory like the one God gave you, I’m sure you could teach the first Catechism lesson and explain this to all our visitors. Only the first nineteen pages of this book we call *Luther's Small Catechism* is actually *Luther's Small Catechism*. The last 300 plus pages tell us why we believe it, not because Martin Luther said it, but because God wrote these truths in the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. Luther simply summarized what God wants everyone to believe according to the Bible. God knows if He got all of us off the water and up on that mountain in Galilee where Jesus took His eleven disciples to receive the Great Commission, some of us would be doubting. Our sinful doubts and fears come naturally. But the big surprise is how gently and firmly Jesus chases them all away.

God sent His Son Jesus to fulfill centuries of God’s promises to provide a Savior from sin. Our first parents Adam and Eve doubted God’s love for them and believed the devil instead. That’s why they took the forbidden fruit thinking they could be as smart as God. Doubt led to sin, and Adam brought death and suffering into God’s perfect creation. Doubt is still so deadly that God the Holy Spirit inspired our Lord’s Apostle James to write: “**If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives**

*generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*" (James 1:5-8 NIV) There was simply no excuse for the disciples who spent three years listening to the Master Teacher Himself. Jesus not only fulfilled all the words and promises of God but Jesus performed all the miraculous deeds which proved His divine **authority** as God. That's why there's no excuse for any of us either. Our first need as God teaches each of us to **Be a Fully Confirmed Disciple of Christ** and to **Trust in Christ's authority**, is to confess the guilt of our doubt and sin. Like the man we heard about in several lessons whose son was demon possessed, we too can ask our merciful Savior, **"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"** (Mark 9:24) Jesus spoke the Word, and the boy was healed. And it is by Jesus' Word today that we too are healed in order that we may help...

### † Disciple all ethnic groups (vv.19-20)

The lives of far too many people resemble the path of a jet ski on the water. If you were operating a spy satellite, you could plot the course from point A to point B, then to points C, D, E, F, and so on. "He picked up someone here. He ran out of gas here. Ah, here he took a spill and ended up with a belly full of water." At the end of the day, lots of fun, but nothing accomplished. Machines grow old, bodies too, the sunlight fades and the voice stills to a whisper. Each of us must finally face our Maker. At that moment more than any other each will be glad to **Be a Fully Confirmed Disciple of Christ**. Fact is, this life is meant for two major preparations: meeting our Maker in death, and meeting our Savior at His Holy Table which prepares us for a peaceful death and a glorious resurrection like His. And all this has come to us because Jesus cut through the doubts and fears of His apostles and generations that followed to empower them to **Disciple all ethnic groups**, even those fair-skinned Anglos up north in Europe.

Our Lord Jesus has been confirming, i.e. strengthening, you in the faith since Sunday School, and in concentrated focus these past two years in Catechism Class. He has been teaching you to trust God's Word for one simple reason. God has a purpose for you, Zach. It is as special as God's purpose for every Christian. There's nothing left for us to do here on earth to earn our salvation. Jesus meant it when He said just before He died, **"It is finished."** (John 19:30) Anyone who assigns penance or insists on human works on top of Christ's work is only putting himself beneath God's just condemnation. Over and over again in the Holy Scriptures of the Bible, the Lord says through His holy apostles, **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."** But in the very next verse He says, **"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."** (Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV) This is what James echoes in his epistle: **"Faith without works is dead."** (James 2:26 KJV) God has something for us to do. It's the reason He saved us. But our reason for doing it cannot be in order to get saved; God already did that. Our only God-pleasing reason is because we have been saved by grace.

Here's God's goal for your life, Zach, the purpose for everyone who realizes how good and loving God is to save us from our sins and to give us eternal life as a free gift of His grace. Literally translated, our Lord Jesus says, **"While going therefore disciple all the ethnic groups by baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and by teaching them to treasure-guard everything I have commanded you. And look, I am with you all the days until the goal of the age."**

Sometimes this life looks like a million hockey pucks flying around all at once. But nothing counts except putting it in the goal. With Jesus Christ as God's Goal Keeper, nothing gets past unless it is done by faith. And every good work a Christian does by faith is sure to score with Jesus there. He catches the puck and puts it in the goal. On the Last Day everyone will gather at the end line. Those who scored by faith in Jesus will celebrate victory for all eternity. Those who rejected Him in unbelief will find themselves on the losing side in eternal destruction prepared for the devil and his angels. From the Word-powered water of Baptism to the strengthening of your faith in Confirmation, God has equipped you to score. May many souls bless the day when they heard the Gospel from you. Amen.