

## **STRONG to serve ✠ With a Lively Prayer Life**

✠ **Confident God hears (vv.13-14)**

✠ **Knowing we have received (vv.13-15)**

In the name of Jesus, who shows us the heart of God, dearly redeemed family of God:

My high school alma mater no longer exists. It was called Northwestern Lutheran Academy in Mobridge, South Dakota. The Wisconsin Synod once planned to establish many academies like NLA. Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm was another. Synod budget constraints finally closed the academies in 1979, a great heartache for families around Mobridge. Since then, God has poured out amazing blessings on our area high schools. Grass roots federations of local congregations support twenty-four, including Great Plains, Watertown, SD, and two in the Twin Cities: West in Plymouth and Saint Croix in West Saint Paul. This month we focus on our federation and the ministry initiative for Saint Croix.

Some may wonder why we need area Lutheran high schools plus two WELS preparatory schools. I'm convinced this challenge is not either/or, but both/and. We need both sanctified lay leaders and well trained pastors and teachers. Think of these as flight training schools. Our cargo pilots are mostly trained at area Lutheran high schools. Many of our own New Life leaders were blessed by God's Word in every class. But God's Air Force also needs fighter pilots to take His almighty Word to the very heart of enemy territory. That's the prime task of our preparatory schools. At the "*gates of hell*" Jesus promises we will prevail as we "*snatch others from the fire and save them.*" (Matthew 16:18 ESV; Jude 23 NIV84)

We're seeing the fulfillment of God's promise for many parents, teachers and pastors. Load up the cargo and munitions today as God makes us **STRONG to serve ✠ With a Lively Prayer Life...**

✠ **Confident God hears (vv.13-14)**

The old Apostle John has seen it all: the actual miracles of Jesus, His death and resurrection, His ascension to God's right hand, and the spread of the Good News throughout the Roman Empire. But now most of the other apostles and many Christians have been martyred. John is ministering as the Elder Pastor to the flock God gathered at Ephesus where Paul once preached.

Sometimes we see so many things go wrong it seems the Gospel is losing. But don't be fooled by outward appearances. The Holy Spirit says through John: "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*"

What does it mean to "*believe in the name of the Son of God*"? Why doesn't this just say, "Believe in Jesus"? For one thing, the name "Jesus," meaning "Deliverer" or "Champion," was common for Jews in those days. Other cultures still use the name. So it's not the letters J-E-S-U-S which make the difference where you will spend eternity. It's the *reputation* behind Jesus of Nazareth that counts. Do you believe Jesus is eternally "*the Son of God*" as He claimed and for which claim they crucified Him? More personally, are you convinced "*the Son of God*" lived and died and lives again *for you*? The facts of Jesus' death and resurrection are history. These facts *for you* are received by faith.

Think of that devastating day September 1, 1894. Many Minnesotans around Hinckley thought the end of the world had come. A firestorm of 2,000 degrees melted barrels of nails into one mass and fused train wheels to the tracks. One train that did make it out of town had just crossed the Brule River

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<sup>1</sup> "STRONG to serve" ministry initiative of Saint Croix Lutheran High School – Sunday 2 of 4 at New Life.

when the wooden bridge collapsed behind it. Watching that train from a distance did no good. You had to be on it. You had to trust your whole life to it. Rolling up like a roly-poly bug would not help. Many did and died. When you hear Jesus blowing the whistle, get on the train. Escape the flames.

Resting by faith on Jesus' glory train, you can have all the confidence of a dearly loved child: ***"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*** Being able to pray ***"according to [God's] will*** means studying God's Word so you know what that will is. Every year our needs and wants change. My little scooter was my pride and joy, but now my bike seems more important. But none of these will get me home to heaven. Only the Good News that Jesus died for me and correction from my heavenly Father in God's Law can keep me on those railroad tracks bound for glory. I escape from the flames I deserve because of my sins.

God is not willing that any should perish. He wants everyone on the train with Christ as the conductor. The fuel that keeps the train moving is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He shed His blood in total sacrifice for you. Jesus is the only Savior we have. He teaches us God's will, so that we can enjoy a **Lively Prayer Life – Confident that God hears**. I remember the faces of my kids swimming in Grandpa's pool. "Look, Dad!" they'd shout, then show me their best cannonball. Didn't matter whether it was a dive or a belly flop as long as Dad was watching. When you see God's kind and smiling face, life's hard edges soften, and challenges become opportunities to glorify God. We keep on praying...

#### ✦ **Knowing we have received (vv.13-15)**

You don't have to be a star in English grammar to appreciate this. What's the difference between *getting* tickets to the big game and *having* those tickets in your possession? When the trains pulled out of burning towns like Hinckley and a few years later Cloquet, Minnesota, mothers held their children close and cried for relatives that weren't aboard. Isn't it true that a seat in safety is better than a distant view?

Listen again to the comforting way God says this through John: ***"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."***

Did you catch those verb tenses? When you believe in Jesus, you already ***have eternal life***. There is no bridge ahead that can burn out from under you. Our Conductor Christ will never jump off and leave you because He already died and rose for you. He keeps urging you to get your relatives aboard too. God's promise is as good as done. God is so full of love and truth that whatever you ask of him you already possess. ***"We know that we have what we asked of him."***

*Whenever* we pray, and as often as we pray, God always hears and answer according to His good and gracious will. This can keep us out of trouble on car payments and mortgages beyond our means. God loves to give us vastly more than we can ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20) Sometimes this means a better car or a more beautiful house than you had in mind. Sometimes it means less of those earthly things and more of the priceless blessings money cannot buy – like ***"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*** (Galatians 5:22f) All this is already our in Christ.

When we ask to be more like God in holiness and generosity, we don't need to say, "Thy will be done." God says this is His will. We pray **Knowing we have received** because Jesus taught us: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is another reason I rejoice at every ministry initiative or Gospel outreach or new mission opportunity. Even if unable to give a financial gift, God hears our earnest prayers for our fellow Christians. As we pray, God may show us resources we did not realize we already had – investments better than expected, an inheritance or gift only God knew was coming. He may give us a more generous heart that says, "I not only *can* help, I *want to* help with this!" God gives amazing gifts in answer to our prayers. He knows the bottom line is to get the Gospel to thirsty

souls. So God may provide better ways to deliver the Good News: electronic publishing, email and Skype, WELS young people teaching English in countries where we cannot send missionaries. Our infinite God has infinite imagination connected to His boundless love. He just wants us to ask! Then watch the way God blesses beyond what we can ask or imagine.

In the “Abba, Father” prayer for Saint Croix this week, we come to God like children who pester their parent until the parent yields. God’s patience and love already know our greatest needs. But that’s how intensely God wants us to come to Him whether we can add our gifts to those of others or lend support in our prayers. God who is rich in mercy gives us believing hearts to pray and willing hands to work. And every student who grows in grace during those precious high school years has an arsenal of life-giving, sin-destroying weapons of the Word for a lifetime of service on earth.

Keep up the pressure on the throne of grace. God loves to hear from you as His own dear child. He wants us **STRONG to serve With a Lively Prayer Life**. He wants us to be so **Confident God hears** that we are absolutely certain the answer is already in. We pray **Knowing we have received**. Cling to the cross, the proof that cannot be argued away.

In Jesus’ saving Name! Amen.