

Trust Without Shame

- ✠ **Justified confession (vv.8-11)**
- ✠ **Generous gifts on call (vv.11-13)**

Dear fellow redeemed, unashamed recipients of God's grace:

Something happened during the Counter-Revolution in China that most Americans could not understand. Whole communities would publicly shame anyone with an education or career or making a decent living. The Communists were successful in destroying families and churches by sending faithful believers to prison and death, confining teenagers to "re-education" camps force feeding propaganda.

It's not hard to see similar shaming in America today through the media, especially "Social Media." God-fearing women who respect their husbands and care for their families are one of the latest targets. But we've also seen how highly honored men, politicians and judges, who have spent a lifetime caring for others and honoring women, are suddenly accused of the most horrendous crimes without proof. Anyone who confesses Jesus as his Savior, especially in politics, is trashed like a Bible believing student standing up for his or her faith in the university classroom. Christian faculty members have long seen this coming in higher education. Now grade schoolers can also be publicly shamed for their faith.

So why does the Holy Spirit come to us today in this sermon title? **Trust Without Shame** ?

✠ **Justified confession (vv.8-11)**

Every year on the First Sunday in Lent we have the same Gospel story. As Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, He heard His heavenly Father say, "***You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.***" (Luke 3:22 NIV84) But then in Luke's Gospel account we have this strange happening: "***Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the Devil for forty days. He did not eat anything during those days.***" (4:1f EHV¹) From Baptism right to Temptation – doesn't that seem like a strange way for God the Father to show pleasure in His Son Jesus? And the Holy Spirit led Him into that forty day running battle with the old evil foe!

You can always count on the God of the Bible to speak unvarnished truth. He pulls no punches and hides nothing from His own. So we prayed in today's Prayer of the Day: "The battle of good and evil rages within and around us, and our ancient foe tempts us with his deceits and empty promises." But we continued with this request: "Keep us steadfast in your Word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen." Every word of that prayer has been under assault from the beginning.

Our worst shame comes from our sinfulness – God is holy, and we are not. You and I have every reason to thank God for the peace in our country, more food than we can eat, world-renowned healthcare, especially here in Minnesota. One member's medical emergency traveling in another state brought EMTs and firemen to a parking lot with life-saving medical care. Yet the biggest threat on our worship is not the weather, but our own laziness to guard the Sabbath from ourselves. And yet...

Nothing that we have suffered so far can approach the shaming endured by Lutheran pastors like Paul Gerhardt who wrote two of our three hymns for this day. When you're up against the worst that Satan and the world can throw at you in this life, when your own sinful nature proves again to be a

¹ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2017. NPH: 800-662-6022; also Amazon-Kindle.

desperate traitor, find solace in Paul Gerhardt's hymns. Miracle of faith walking hand-in-hand with Jesus, we sing, "Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me" (CW 428)? "If God Himself be for me, I may a host defy..." (CW 419). In the wee hours of the morning you might be surprised to discover Paul Gerhardt's name on a favorite evening hymn, "Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow" (CW 587). Google for details and discover YouTube videos of favorite hymns in Chapel at our own Martin Luther College, New Ulm. Chase away the night with soothing songs of fellow Christians' voices lifting your soul in praise to God.²

The Lord's Apostle Paul shows us how God covers our shame for sin by grace in **Justified confession**. "*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart,*" that is, *the word of faith that we are proclaiming.* ⁹*Certainly, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* ¹⁰*For it is with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and it is with the mouth that a person confesses, resulting in salvation.* ¹¹*For Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."* (EHV)

This blessed season of Lent ushers us from the winter of sin into the spring of God's marvelous grace. We get to follow Jesus through all that He suffered on trial for claiming to be the Son of God. It didn't matter to the Jewish religious leaders that the Father's voice declared it so! And the Gentile rulers became Christ-killers as Roman Governor Pontius Pilate took the easy way out of a revolt by crucifying an innocent man. Dreadful sin nailed Jesus to the cross – your sin and mine. Awesome love held Him there as nails never could. Truly, **Jesus is Lord!** And we are **Justified** because God raised Him from the dead. When God's love captures your heart in Christ, your mouth can't help confessing, saying the same thing. All shame the world heaps on you, honor from God sweeps away by His "Not guilty!" You have His Name on you in your Baptism – sins gone, righteousness secured – no shame in **Justified confession**.

‡ **Generous gifts on call (vv.11-13)**

This may surprise you, but Pastor Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676) was banned from preaching. The Thirty-Years War (1618-1648) devastated Europe – violence, famine, disease. Four fifths of the people perished; wealth was destroyed. It would take 200 years to recover from the ruin. Lutherans were caught in the middle between Roman Catholic armies and Reformed rulers. Lutheran soldiers from Sweden brought as much suffering as help. Personal tragedy took all but one of Gerhardt's children in infancy. And the year he lost his position as pastor his staunchly Lutheran wife, the love of his life, passed away. And what did the Calvinistic Elector Frederick William have against Pastor Gerhardt? The man would not sign an agreement to basically give up his Lutheran Confessions. Pastor Gerhardt believed fellow Christians should talk to each other instead of going to war and demanding sins against conscience.

With all that tragedy how could anyone keep hope alive? Read Gerhardt's seventeen hymns listed in the index of AUTHORS, TRANSLATORS, SOURCES of *Christian Worship* (p.938). You'll find a compassionate and understanding spirit, unique in hymns of that day. God's love was constantly lifting him from depression by the solid Bible truth of justification by faith alone. Jesus Christ is always **on call** as Paul was inspired to write: *For Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."* ¹²*So there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, who gives generously to all who call on him.* ¹³*Yes, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* "Saved" from sin – its guilt and power. "Saved" from death – its fear and shame in eternal punishment. "Saved" from Satan – who crumbles when you say out loud the Name of Jesus. That's why hearing hymns in the night chases away the forces of darkness. **Generous gifts** are always **on call**.

These hymns are **gifts**, forged in the furnace of affliction. You know you're never alone because Jesus is always with you. And fellow Christians are still standing with you in faith and prayer to hold you up. The prayer Jesus taught us is about "us," not "me." Just "**call on him**" and Jesus will prove powerful and loving to help you **on call** to endure and overcome. All you need and more in His Name! Amen.

² Google: "Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow," WELS Evening Chapel, 2/16/12. More in TheChristianhymns. For *The Preacher's Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife . 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126