

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz**

**Confirmation May 1, 2016
6th Sunday of Easter. Eisenach
Series
Isaiah 55:6-11**



⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. ⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the power and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

People of God-rescued from the flaming lake of fire in Hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

A man named Marques went to a Seven Eleven in Chicago—in the wee hours of the morning. Marques had just left the Seven Eleven when he was mugged. A guy punched him in the head—and Marques went down like the proverbial load of bricks. Now—you are saying to yourself—“surely someone came to the rescue! Surely someone came to help Marques!” But you would

be wrong – dead wrong! Oh, two guys came rushing up. They went through Marques’ pockets looking for \$--looking for a smart phone – looking for debit cards. They took what they wanted and ran away. After a while more people came – going on 10+ people standing around Marques – but nobody helped. Eventually it seems – someone at the Seven Eleven – perhaps the security guard – the guy guarding against what – shoplifting Snickers bars? Somebody called 911. But – alas – too late. Marques got runover – in the walkway by a Chicago cab. Marques is dead! That’s just wrong! And yet – this is the world in which we live. This is the world that people who are being confirmed are inheriting! This world so spoiled and dangerous because of sin! That’s the problem – sin! And the only solution is Christ – crucified and risen to forgive us! This Confirmation Sunday God’s Word says:

God’s Word Works!

- I. The Gospel changes now
- II. The Gospel changes forever!

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on is from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah! The People’s Bible Commentary on Isaiah has so much to say there are two volumes. Volume I – mostly but not completely Law. Volume II – mostly but not completely Gospel. Volume I chapters 1-39. Volume 2 chapters 40-66. There are little grandmas who go to St. Luke’s who know that. Did you? The Gospel of Luke tells us – when Jesus preached – taught in the synagogue in his adopted home town Nazareth – he chose to preach on Isaiah – that’s how important Isaiah is! Did you know that? We read from Isaiah every – *every* Christmas! Isaiah 9:6-7 New International Version (NIV) ⁶ **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, And he will be**

called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. Every Good Friday – every Good Friday we read, “⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:4-6

Chapter 55 begins with familiar words, too. “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, but and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live...” On days like Confirmation Day – like few other days in your whole life – you are surrounded by family – your sponsors who remember when you were only a few days old. They can't believe already you are young men and women – so grown up – so mature in many ways – and yet so breakable – even though it's tempting for you to think of yourself as almost indestructible! You are surrounded by your grandmas and grandpas – if they didn't go to Heaven already. Surrounded by your aunts and uncles and your teachers and friends of your parents. Many of them may very well ask you, “What do you

want to be when you grow up?" It would be very easy to say, "I don't know!" – and go and play video games with your friends. But it's not too early to be thinking – what are you going to do with the rest of your life. If we were Jewish – today would be your Bar Mitzvah or your Bat Mitzvah and you would be saying, "Today I am a man!" "Today I am a woman!" What are you going to do with the next 4 years – the next 8 years – the next 51 years? Before you know it – you will be as old as I am – and most of what you set out to do with your life – will be done! This past week a very gifted musician died unexpectedly – found dead in his own elevator – and so? Gifted – to the point of being able to play – what – 27 different instruments? Could you even name 27 different instruments? What is the point of your life? Is it to get a good education – so you can get a good job – so you can make lots of money – so you can buy lots and lots of things and stuff? Isaiah wrote down God's warning – don't spend your life on labor on what does not satisfy – does not have lasting worth! What matters most of all is what happens one moment after your ♥ stops beating – your lungs stop breathing. What matters is what happens when we meet Jesus face to face!

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. Mercy and pardon are undeserved love and forgiveness! Turn to the LORD is to repent – to acknowledge our sins and know that Jesus has forgiven every single one! I was reminded again just the other day – Jesus remembers your sins and mistakes – no more! He has forgiven us completely. Do we forgive our self? Do we forgive our neighbor – forgive and forget? Or do we pick at the scab until we are left with a scar? Jesus forgives us completely!

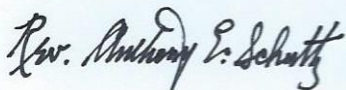
⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. God does not do things the way we do. I think the most powerful illustration of that has to do with preaching the Gospel in India. If you know anything about India you know that they operate under a caste system. You are born into a certain position and that’s where you remain your whole life – no changing – no mixing – no moving--know your place! When the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached in India it stood in sharp contrast to the chaste system. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: ²⁶ **So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,** ²⁷ **for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** ²⁸ **There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** ²⁹ **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.** Galatians 3:26-28 When by the grace of God – people heard the Gospel they began to realize we are all the same in Jesus’ eyes! The Brahmin was the same as the Untouchable. People came to Church and touched each other – they shook hands – they did that handshake thing where you shake hands and take their elbow or shoulder, too! They hugged each other! This would not work – if everyone thought everyone was one in Christ? The Shaman – the local medicine man put a curse on the Brahman and he grew sick. The people from church told the missionary who said not to worry. Jesus was more powerful than any devil’s curse! They prayed for the Brahmin – commended him to Jesus’ care. The missionary went and preached God’s Word and when he returned to town asked – how is my friend? Oh, they said – he died! What? He died! How can this be? Why

didn't Jesus make him better? Jesus made him *perfect*! They had a funeral and the people from the mission congregation sang! They sang to the glory of the crucified and risen Christ! They rejoiced in the powerful Gospel promise of eternal life! Jesus' way was the best way – the right way. Not the way we would have done it! But Jesus knew best! And all kinds of people came to believe in Jesus and be saved, too! It is tempting when there is pain and tears in our lives to wonder – what in Jesus doing? But Jesus always knows best. Jesus always loves us. His ways are not our ways. They are way above and beyond what we can know and understand. Jesus always loves us. Jesus always takes care of us. And in the end – Jesus brings us home to Heaven!

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. God's Word works! It is powerful – changing ♥s and minds and attitudes and behavior! It is tragic to read about three young women 16 – even 15 years old – stealing a car – again – racing over 90 mph down the road – crashing into a pond by a cemetery – literally drowning in that pond. It is painful to think – young lives – ended so early – when it didn't have to be that way! 3:30 in the morning is no time to be out stealing a car and running away. It would be tempting for all of us to say, "I would never do that!" It's tempting to think that in all sorts of ways. I would never do anything like that? Really? I was only a Pastor for a few months – when down in Rockford, IL a bunch of young people were walking through a very nice subdivision – kicking a soda can. Kaklunk – dink, dink, dink. Kaklunk – dink, dink, dink! Kaklunk – dink, dink, dink! Kind of

annoying – and so? A man working in his yard told those couple of kids, “Hey, knock it off!” They said, “Oh, yeah? Gonna make me?” “Yeah!”, he said, “I’m gonna make you!” And being a fireman – big and strong – he went up to his garage and came back with an axe handle. The biggest kid stepped forward – and without warning shoved the man – shoved him really hard – right in the middle of his chest – like in football – and so? And the man fell backwards – in front of his wife and his children – he fell backward – and cracked the back of his head – on the curb – and died! Just like that! As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish...so is my word...it will not return to me empty! God’s Word works. It works powerfully in the ♥s and lives of those who hear it! You were brought to baptism when you were days old. You have been taught God’s Word – since you were very little. “Jesus loves me this I know!” “I am Jesus’ little lamb!” You have been taught God’s Word in Sunday School – in Mrs. Schmoller’s kindergarten room. You have been taught God’s Word in Church and in Confirmation Class. You know the way to Heaven. Pastor Gartner and I and your parents and grandparents – your sponsors and your fellow believers will pray without ceasing that Jesus keeps you faithful – until you are safe in Heaven – by grace alone, faith alone and Scripture alone. Till we are all gathered home to Heaven to sing forever, “Thank you, Jesus!” Amen!

To God alone all glory!

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Rev. Anthony E. Schatz" in a cursive script.