

Sermon – Luke 18:1-8; Genesis 32:22-31  
David R. Lyle  
Grace Lutheran Church  
19 Pentecost – Year C  
Confirmation Sunday  
19 October 2025

“Hold on for a Blessing”

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. In a Lutheran church not so different from this one, Johnny stood with the rest of his Confirmation class, nervously wondering what question he would be asked during the examination. Anyone here go through that process? Pastor Bjornsen questioned the students, one after the other, drawing forth whole sections of the catechism that the students had dutifully memorized. But Johnny’s mind was blank. He couldn’t tell the Office of the Keys from the Third Article of the Creed. He knew he was going to fail, right there in front of his grandparents and everyone. But fate smiled upon Johnny that day. Pastor Bjornsen looked Johnny in the eye and said, “Name all ten Commandments. In any order will be fine.” Johnny, with newfound confidence returned Pastor’s gaze and said, “Easy. The 8<sup>th</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 4<sup>th</sup>, the 6<sup>th</sup>, the 10<sup>th</sup>, the 1<sup>st</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup>, the 9<sup>th</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the 7<sup>th</sup>.” Maybe you’ve heard that one before. Maybe from me! There are, after all, only so many Confirmation jokes.
2. The Confirmation examination is, blessedly, a thing of the past. So, too, has it been a long time since we relied on rote memorization. Yes, these nine confirmands have spent the last few years building a foundation upon Scripture and Creeds, Confessions and Catechism. But faith is more than what we can recite. Faith, Martin Luther said, “is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain one could stake one’s life on it a thousand times.” Faith is about God, but it’s also about us. About our wrestling with

God like Jacob in the night; our persistent knocking on the door even when it seems God isn't answering. Confirmation is this wonderful journey of discovering how faith is alive in our lives as we say "yes" to the God who has already and forever said "yes" to us. These nine have done something braver than mere memorization, putting their own faith into their own words, shared at last night's Witness Service. As Natalie writes, "I have now realized that a 'good' relationship with God can mean different things for different people." And Natalie, what a gift to see your faith grounded in the call to be Christlike – kind, tenderhearted, forgiving.

3. Our confirmands, wise beyond their years, know that faith is not magic. It does not automatically make everything better or keep us from difficulty. But like Jacob, we are invited to hold on. To hold on for a blessing, whatever form that blessing might take, however long we have to wait. Faith writes, "Moving forward, I will continue to rely on God and always pray to God whenever I am in need of help." Yes, to pray always, as long as it takes. Chris writes of how the life of faith is like being a boat on the water: "It can seem calm and steady, and then one big or little wave can change its entire course." But he continues, "Our belief in God can show us that the change might be for the better." Jackson writes of how his large family can sometimes be challenging, especially as the fifth of sixth siblings, but writes that it is his loving family that has taught him a lot "about patience, forgiveness, and working through frustration." Even more, he writes, "They are constant reminders of God's joy and blessing in my life." And remember, Jackson, being fifth out of six might be challenging, but at least 5-6 is better than 6-7!
4. This living, daring faith calls you into a world that needs God's good news as much as ever. Julia writes, "Jesus challenges us to show love and mercy like God does, and this is what should be guiding us through life." But in living out this challenge, we are not on our own. Sam writes, "Being a Christian is not something you do alone. It's something you do in unity with others." Sam, I'm

so thankful you returned to Confirmation after a time of honest doubt. Our community would miss you. Sophie calls us to go with her and set the world on fire with God's love. She writes, "I believe this means to use the gifts God gave me and use them to make the world a better place. With God's strength and the people God places in my life, I'm ready to do just that." Amen, Sophie. You're all ready to do just that, and we are excited to watch you get to work.

5. Our life of faith is possible because of what Christ has done for us. We can hang on to God because God is always hanging on to us, entering into sin and death for the sake of forgiveness and life. Emily captures this perfectly: "When I see the cross, I think about hope and a new life for the future. Sin and death never get the last word." Grant proclaims, "Jesus Christ lived, died, and was raised so that we can have no fear." Amen and amen. In a world that wants you to be afraid, be bold. Live out your faith in service and love to one another and to this whole world. In the grace of God, you have all that you need.
6. Faith is not always easy, and it does not leave us unchanged. Jacob was left with a new name and a dislocated hip. How about that, CJ? On the day of your Confirmation, we hear of an injury like yours! Friends, you, too, have come into close contact with God. You, too, are not left unchanged. You, too, are given a new name in baptism: Child of God. A name that can never be taken from you. Go, and set the world ablaze with God's love. Go, and know how much we love you. You always have a home here at Grace. As do we all, thanks be to God. Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.