**Romans 15:4-6**

**Where Hope Is Found**

What is the purpose of our school? To the congregation—what is the reason you support the school across the street? To the faculty—what is the reason you teach at that school? To the students—why do you go to school? I’m watching the gears turn in \_\_\_\_ heads around the room, and I’m guessing we have a few different answers circulating. There’s plenty of generic reasons that schools exist, and that’s often where our minds run to. Many of you here may say that you want to provide a good, solid education to the kids of your community. Some may say that they’ve always known and supported the school as a tool of the church. The easy answer for the faculty is they were called to teach, but they also love to help students grow in their knowledge and understanding. Students, it may be that you go to school because mom and dad make you, but it’s also for you to learn and grow alongside your friends in a safe environment. I want you to think about our school this way, today and the days to come. Members of Trinity—you support that school not only to provide standard education, but a Christ-centered education. To the teachers—you don’t just teach math, science, and social studies, but you teach about your Savior. Students—you don’t just grow in your knowledge about the world in which you live, but also the life of the world to come with Jesus. That school is where hope is found.

I’ll admit to you, I’m not a strong historian. I don’t do all that well with dates, names, and the chronology of events. But I can tell you this—history is an incredible teacher. It’s no surprise that history is important for learning about the past, understanding the present, and preparing for the future. Why would the recorded Word of God be any less useful; any less important? The Apostle Paul writes this: **“Indeed, whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that, through patient endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we would have hope.”** Notice, he speaks about all three things that historians use to argue for history’s importance. The past is used as the foundation, a foundation that supports the present, and leads to the future. This is why God gives His Word to you. This is the purpose of God’s written Word; to give you confidence about the past, peace in the present, and hope for the future.

First, the past. The evangelist John writes in his closing statements of his gospel: **“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”** There’re a lot of different angles from which Jesus is looked at in the modern world. He was an incredible teacher. If you take a survey of the parables that Jesus shares and the construction of his words and explanations, you will quickly come to find that he has an incredible gift for teaching foreign, out-of-this-world concepts to people. Some look and see a prophet who was able to predict the future. Some see a physician who was able to heal the fatally ill, cast out demons, and cure the blind. But everything that was written about Jesus; everything that Jesus said; everything that Jesus did was written with a precise purpose. That purpose is so that everyone would see and believe that Jesus was far more than a great teacher, or prophet, or healer, but that he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. As you look into the past, as you read the Scriptures written 2 thousands years ago, you watch as everything God promised to you and to me comes to life in His Son. Christ lived as God promised to Adam and Eve at the beginning of the world. Christ died as the prophets of the Old Testament foretold. Which means that we have confidence that Christ will come again as the Apostles promised. This confidence in your Savior’s life, death, and resurrection now gives you peace in the present.

Have you ever sat down behind the wheel of your car and thought to yourself, “What in the world am I doing?” You are seated in a multi-ton vehicle, with the power to carry thousands of pounds at incredible speeds, and you’re about to go drive it around other people in multi-ton vehicles with the same capabilities. If you think about it, it’s kind of ridiculous! And yet we do so regularly and with confidence. Why? Because 1) People drive all the time, and if they do so properly, they get where they need to go safely. 2) There are instruction courses that everyone needs to take in order to operate those vehicles so everyone’s been trained the same on how the road works. 3) You have bumpers, seatbelts, and airbags all in place to keep you safe on the road if someone else isn’t driving safely. You have all that previous knowledge course through your brain in the moments it takes you to get in your car, and that prior subconscious understanding of safety gives you confidence when you’re out on the road. The same is true when you lean on the reality of your Savior. When you are confident of who Jesus is and what he has done for you, you live at peace in the present. When you are crushed by the shame of a sin you can’t seem to shake, your confidence in the forgiveness of sins is Jesus’ blood gives you peace. When you’re struggling with a relationship and don’t know how to move forward, the perfect relationship Jesus has given you with your heavenly Father gives you peace. When you don’t know how you’re gonna make it to your next paycheck, or how the utilities are gonna be paid, the heavenly home that Jesus has prepared for you gives you peace.

When you’re confident in your Savior and live in the present peace that he provides, you then have hope for the future. And in this we come full-circle. Hope isn’t just a beautiful name. Hope isn’t just a wishful, whimsical feeling that you get when you want something to turn out well but you don’t quite have the confidence to be certain that it’s going to work out how you wanted. That’s how we talk about hope in modern conversation. I hope you start feeling better soon, but you have no idea how soon that might be or if it’ll even happen. I hope you find the job you’re looking for, but that could happen years from now if it happens at all. This is not the kind of hope that Jesus gives to you. Jesus doesn’t tell you to hope that he’s got everything covered. This isn’t a kind of hope that says, “Well, I hope Jesus can forgive me this time,” or, “I hope I did enough to get on God’s good side,” or, “I hope God still loves me enough to bring me to heaven.” NO! Hope speaks much differently than wishful thinking. Hope is built on the confidence of who Christ is and what he has done. Hope is founded in the peace that Jesus won for us sinful people on that splintered cross. Hope is confidence in the promises God makes to us! This is how faith responds to God’s Word and his promises: **Faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced about things we do not see.**

This is the theme for this school year: “We walk by faith and not by sight.” To answer the question we began with: “What is the purpose of our school?” The answer is this: So that those students and their families can say with confidence “We walk by faith and not by sight.” The purpose of that school is **so that, through patient endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we would have hope.** So our students will have hope—so their families will have hope. Not a hope that wonders what God’s got in store for them. Not a hope that wonders if God might be kind enough to let them into heaven. No, the purpose of Trinity Lutheran School is to use God’s Word to give those students confidence in their Savior, in his forgiveness, and the salvation that he promises to them. The Scriptures aren’t simply recorded for the purpose of good stories and wise quips for getting out of sticky situations. The Word of God is written so that we believe in Jesus as our Savior, and share that beautiful message with as many people as God provides us in our life-time. This is what we desire to do through our school. What does that take? It takes teachers to proclaim that message as they believe it, and then to help their students understand how precious their faith is. It takes a congregation to support the function of the school with its offerings of time, talents, and treasures. Most importantly, it takes the ongoing and abundant grace of God in His Word.

Give thanks to God today that he has provided us with every necessity to fulfill the purpose of that School. We have classrooms filled with students. We have teachers to lead those classrooms. We have a congregation that loves and supports the school. We have a God who promises to bless the work of his people. And, we have the Scriptures, the gospel message of Jesus Christ, the never-ending Word of God that will continue to be preached here at Trinity Lutheran Church, and it will continue to be taught in Trinity Lutheran School. And as we continue to operate on that divine Word of God, Trinity Lutheran Church and School will be a place where hope in Jesus is always found. Amen.