**“Precious Thoughts”**

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Psalm 139:1-17

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Acts 2:1-21

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

 Pentecost

From Psalm 139, the last verse: “How **precious to me are Your thoughts, O God!** How vast is the sum of them!

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Precious Thoughts

The final project of our five confirmands was to write and (this weekend) read to the congregation a short version of **their testimony (or witness) of their faith in Jesus Christ**. “**Who is** Jesus?” is the **overall** title but it’s written to be presented in **two parts**. The first is the Gospel **facts**, or the **“Precious Thoughts” of God for the salvation of the world**. The second and **most important part** (what **being** “**confirmed in one’s faith** is all about”) is (**as Psalm 139, verse 17 puts it**) the “**Preciousness** of the Thoughts of God **personally** to us”. Our confirmands were to have told us, both, of the **truth of God in Christ Jesus** (which Satan, even, could do better than us … he knows it; he just isn’t interested in receiving it), but then (for us) the **personal love that each believer has for God because of what Christ has done for their salvation**. Hopefully, we’re hearing of a **joy that our Confirmands have in that** … what’s called **“faith in trust and security / JOY”**. What was **started for them in a** **baptismal** then **nurtured then (taught and strengthened / identified and clarified a bit, this we celebrate this weekend**.

One thing that Satan knows about also (better than we do that’s not just about Jesus and the Heavenly Father) is “**Who we are**” in the mix of things. That (as well) ought to be identified and clarified, living in a world that encourages us to t**hink inaccurately: much too much of ourselves apart without God involved**. What’s encouraged (in society) is the **skipping of an acknowledgement of a need for God**: being **self**-satisfied rather, yet that deception leads to despair once the destiny apart from faith becomes more obvious. That destiny is hopeless eternally … and Satan would prefer all ventured down **that path**.

Scripture says of humans: “**all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**”. We’re (every one, without God’s intervention) “**dead** in our trespasses and sins”. In other words, Satan has us if God doesn’t, with darkness the **absence of** **light** and the “wages of sin, death” but God “wants all saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” … so **He** **intervened**. The Gospel in salvation through Jesus takes-on (in fact) **huge personal meaning** when the “Dry Bones” that Ezekiel saw in his dream we identify as us **until God intervened** (which He did by sending His own Son to sacrifice His flesh upon a cross and purchase the fallen world … redeem it). God (in the sufficiently-effective sacrifice for sin) **clothed** what was (without that) “Dry Bones” and added to it “**sinews**” and “**skin**”, redeemed “Dry Bones” for a fleshly-instead opportunity to return to Him,

“**not with gold or silver**”, as our Confirmands have been learning), “but **with His (Jesus’) holy and precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death that each one of us might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity**”.

Then there’s those who get **blown-upon with the breath of the Gospe**l, receiving God’s promise of baptismal joining to Jesus, believing and gaining “life” as well as a future secured in a “promised land” called Heaven.

Yet, even those not **blown-upon with the breath of the Gospe**l (the **whole world of people**) got **flesh and existence** from the cross of Christ Jesus. From Adam to the last person that’ll be born into the future of this world, **flesh** and **opportunity to return to God** (instead of **settling for permanent death**) was **made possible** by the sacrifice of God’s Son (His dying for the world) on a cross.

Today we celebrate not just that gift of **redemption to the world** (and the **fleshly existence provided because Jesus came and gave of Himself for the world**), but the (so much more) **blowing-upon us (the bestowal) of the BREATH of the Gospel / Holy Spirit, the “Guarantee” in the promise of baptism and through our hearing of God’s Word faithfully prophecied (like in Ezekiel) upon us previously just “sinews” and “skin” but now LIVING and BREATHING IN AND OUT IN COSMIC WAYS**. That **BREATH of the Gospel is the Holy Spirit blown** through baptism and the teaching of its grace in prophetic preaching and teaching in Confirmation settings or any classroom or moments of mutual encouragement among friends on its **Subject in Jesus** or of parents instilling **Him** into their children. **THIS ALL we get to recognize this weekend** in the baptism of a child (Levi) and from the read testimonies of five young men after they’ve studied God’s Words and then the proclamation of our hymns and liturgy. **The Holy Spirit’s blowing by the promise of God … “blowing upon our “skin” and into our flesh** …

Precious to me

… and that Gospel is **recognized as** **received in faith** when (in the Words of Psalm 139) the “**Thoughts of God are precious to us, individually**” … and this is where the Confirming of students is the **Confirmation (voicing of their identified and recognized faith)**. “**How PRECIOUS TO ME are your thoughts, O God!** How vast is the sum of them!” The third paragraph of Ezekiel’s vision shows the **reality of Holy Spirit “BREATH OF GOD” blowing through the Means of Divine Words: “Who is Jesus to me” starts with**

**“I believe** that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but **the Holy Spirit has called ME by the Gospel**, **enlightened ME with His gifts**, **sanctified and brought ME to and kept ME in the true faith**”.

By the Holy Spirit “**blown-over”** of flesh by “prophesy”, “sinews” and “skin” can receive the promise that God says “**I will open YOUR graves**” and “**raise YOU from YOUR graves**. **I will** **bring YOU up to a land I’ve prepared for you**, and **YOU will know that I am the Lord**, and **I will** **put My Spirit within YOU,** and **YOU** **SHALL LIVE**.”

I’m thrilled to hear the **recognized saving faith of our Confirmands**. **They are saying** “how precious **to me** are your thoughts, O God”. This (along with the promises of God at their baptism and that same promise Levi in his … then in his future learning), I’d like us to pray continuance and growth on:

“Lord God, heavenly Father, in Holy Baptism You are beginning Your Good work in Levi and had begun it in the baptismal new births of Brayden and Ian and Anthony and Lucas and Gracin. You have blessed the instruction of these five (trained them in Your Word, Lord God). We ask that You **richly pour out Your Holy Spirit upon their hearts and minds so that they (and us all) will truly love and revere You, confessing the faith always (and in every setting) with joy and boldness, making them constant in their striving to live according to Your commands and will, praising and glorifying You as the God and Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord**. Amen.”

I’ve told our Confirmands that they are **Confirmed in their faith** when the first two words of the Creed are, indeed, **THEIR’S TO SAY**. I ask **you all** to **speak of Your faith** beginning with the words of its “Preciousness to you”. “**I believe**” will be our first words for the content of our hope, so let’s stand and give personal testimony of it using the words of the Nicene Creed (from the back inside cover of our hymnals):