

# “The Case for Christian Confidence”

Acts 2: 23-27



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One of the things I like to do is read church signs. Our friends at Southcrest Baptist Church have displayed one recently that has kept me thinking. It reads, “Humility is confidence properly placed.” What does that mean? For instance, some will say that humility requires that we place confidence in Christ and in nothing or no one else. A particular target seems to be eliminating self-confidence. We have passages in scripture that boldly say that “there is nothing good in me” and “in sin did my mother conceive me.” The first tenet for fundamentalists is “the total depravity of man” – nothing good, nothing God-honoring. “Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.” “I heard an old, old story of a savior came from glory; how he gave his life on Calvary to save a wretch like me.” There are whole traditions in the Christian faith around self-abasement, where there is a constant

emphasis on purging the self, so that Christ can shine through us. But I wonder if sometimes that kind of thinking isn’t what makes us so passive as Christians. Churches talk a lot about how the world around us has silenced the church, but there is nothing new about that. What we haven’t talked about is how we have silenced ourselves. It is to Christians who have allowed their faith to become passive and silent that Jesus says, **“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”** I would like to make the case for a confident Christianity.

Jesus begins with the words,

**“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”**

Jesus made you to be the salt of the earth. He made you as you – your body, your mind and your personality. And from early childhood, there have been people and forces who have tried to make you into somebody else. That’s what peer pressure does. When Paul writes in Romans, “Do not be conformed to the image of this world,” he means “Don’t let the world make you into a secular clone.” But I find in the church similar forces, Christian peer pressure. We know what a Christian looks like. That’s someone who has a certain smile, dresses a certain way, talks a certain way, thinks a certain way and believes a certain way. Behold the Christian clone. You are an individual made in God’s image, redeemed by his blood and filled with His Spirit. We must quit apologizing for who we are as individual Christians and as the Church. The Bible is very clear. There is an “us” that needs purified, a “self” that needs denied, and a mind that we cannot trust. It is the self-centered and selfish us. But there is a higher us and that must be protected and boldly shared. Why should Christians be confident? First, because God has made us to be that way, sharing boldly the Christ in us and allowing others to do the same.

Second, we are confident because God is at work in us. Paul, the one who called himself “the chief of sinners” also said, **“He who began a good work in you will continue it until completion in the day of Christ Jesus.”** The biblical word for humility is the word “meekness.” It is the description of a stallion that has a bit in its mouth, but still functions with all the beauty and strength for which it has been nourished and trained. How I loved to watch a horse like that move, as it gives glory to the God who made it and becomes what he was meant to become. What was really happening with the burning bush with Moses? Here is a fugitive, marked for killing a slave master who was abusing a fellow Hebrew. At the burning

bush the fugitive discovers that God is going to fashion him into a liberator of God's people. God calls us all to our own "burning bush" where we discover God's greater purpose for our lives. God has made us, redeemed us and filled us with His Spirit, so that in partnership with Him we can be high-impact people in our world. Why should we be confident as Christians? God is at work in us. Why should we be confident as St. Luke's Lubbock, because God is at work in us, doing something unique and world-changing that he will do with no one else.

Third, we are confident because God has placed us where we are. Jesus says,

**"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**

Yes, my family and I have chosen to live in Lubbock, Texas, with the assistance of the bishop, but God is also in this mix. Yes, some conference board chose to locate St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Murray Hill and some local church decided to add a southwest campus, but God is also in this mix. God has placed us here for a unique and wonderful work. As Matt and I begin our sixth appointive year with you and Don begins his second, we are confident that this is the place where the three of us in partnership with each other and with you are to let our light so shine. And there are some ways in which we have allowed our light to be hidden as pastors and as a congregation. Expect that to change. The best kept secret in Lubbock, Texas will be that no longer. God has made us. God is at work in us. And God has placed us. It's time for the people of God to strut His stuff.

As you come to the Lord's table, I invite you to reclaim your Christian confidence. The bible says that **"the Christ in you"** is the **"hope of glory."** Take time to thank God for how he has made you. Take time to reconnect with God so He can continue his great work in and through you as your senior partner. Take time to confess to God the ways you have hidden your light and ask God for guidance and strength so that your light shines more than ever. This I know, when Jesus commanded us to "Go, ye into all the world and preach the gospel," he was not saying "Do it with hesitation and do it with a whisper." That, my friends, is confidence properly placed.