

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Easter 7 / Confirmation Day
May 17, 2026
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl
Firm in the faith

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. ⁸ Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

—1 Peter 5:6-11

Welcome to Confirmation Day at Emmanuel Lutheran Church! In our 8:00 a.m. service, nine Christians will be confirmed in their faith, and in our 10:30 a.m. service four Christians will be confirmed in their faith. For those who are communicant members, I'm sure we all have stories to tell of our own confirmations. I remember when I was confirmed in 1991, 35 years ago. Pastor Karl Gurgel asked me to recite for memory all six parts of Luther's Catechism in front of my class. So, either my pastor had it out for me, or he was underscoring what Martin Luther taught. Luther said that these truths are the minimum every Christian ought to know.

In our Lutheran church, confirmation is a momentous time for people. Whether it's a few years or a few months, we stress the importance of knowing God's Word and his teachings before becoming a communicant member of a church. But here's the thing about confirmation. It's not just today. Today isn't the only part of confirmation. Confirmation is about what it says: "confirming our faith." That's something we do for our entire lives. For many of you, that started at a young age. Your parents brought you to the baptismal font where God adopted you into his family. God gave you faith. He created a faith in you that trusts that Jesus is your one and only Savior. That faith was confirmed with your mom and dad teaching you the truths of God's Word. They started with simple hymns. Then they taught the accounts of the Bible. And that confirming will continue all the way until God calls you home to heaven.

So, this is not the end. This is the beginning of the rest of your lives as Christians. And here's why you need that regular confirming of your faith. You have enemies. The unholy enemies are the devil, the world, and your sinful nature. All three are going to regularly attack your faith. Peter hints at all three when he writes: **"Therefore humble yourselves under God's powerful hand so that he may lift you up at the appointed time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Have sound judgment. Be alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him by being firm in the faith."** You know that the same kinds of sufferings are being laid on your brotherhood all over the world. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you. ¹¹ To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen."

Now, Peter doesn't just hint at our archenemy. He comes out and says it. **"Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Resist him by being firm in the faith."**

You see, the Devil is looking for easy prey. He's looking for someone that he can take down and devour spiritually. He wants one thing for you and me. He wants our destruction. He wants to destroy our relationship with Jesus. He's going to use all sorts of different tactics, but he's also going to use his allies to attack you.

And one of his allies is the sinful world. People are going to attack your faith. They are going to attack your beliefs. In the public universities we see this regularly. Some professors openly attack Christians for believing that God created the world in six 24-hour days. They mock the fact that we believe that Jesus, the Son of God who took on flesh, died and was raised to life. You will be attacked. Similar things were happening to the Christians in Peter's Day. That's why he wrote, **"You know that the same kinds of sufferings are being laid on your brotherhood all over the world."**

So, the Devil will attack you. The sinful world will attack you. But here's the real challenge. Of all the people I come in contact with, do you know who gives me the most trouble? I do. I have the most trouble with myself. It's that nasty sinful nature that is a part of me.

Oh, the Devil likes to use our sinful nature. He whispers in our ear, "You're not to blame for your self-centeredness. It's not your fault. Everybody else is your problem." Have you noticed how easy it is to push responsibility off on to someone else?

How easy is it for us to lay blame on others? How easy is it to blame other people for our problems? Peter focuses our attention on how to be **firm in the faith**. And one of the first places we look is at ourselves. Look at what Peter says, **“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”** **Humble yourselves.** You know what that means, don’t you? Don’t think so highly of yourself. You’re not perfect. You have sin, and you are to blame because of your sin. That’s what we admit when we meet in this church. We confess, “I am a horrible, poor, miserable sinner. I have sinned. I am guilty. I am the one to blame. I am the one who deserves hell. I am the one who deserves death. It’s me.”

We need to stop blaming others. Your parents who didn’t love you when you were growing up are not the excuse why you aren’t loving your children. Things can be different. The cold shoulder from your spouse does not excuse your relentless addiction to pornography. Things can be different. The pain you feel in your life because work is hard does not excuse you to numb the pain through a bottle or pills. Things can be different.

Take responsibility for your sins. **“Humble yourselves”** before God. Because when you do that, **“he will lift you up.”** You can’t carry the burden by yourself. That’s why Jesus came to this world. He came to carry your burden for you. That’s what his forgiveness is all about.

So, Peter says, **“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”** The word “anxiety” means “diversion.” It comes from a word that means to divide or separate. It describes a mental state that pulls the mind and heart in different directions, often fracturing a person’s focus away from what truly matters. So, it’s not just about worry. It’s not just about being nervous or anxious. It’s a heavy preoccupation or “care” that consumes your attention, divides your focus, and causes a troubled mind.

I don’t know what those diversions are for you. Maybe it’s a sin. Maybe it’s being too focused on this world. Maybe it’s being too preoccupied with yourself. Whatever it is, do you notice what Peter encourages you to do with it? **“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”** You can mentally do this exercise. Take every care and concern. Take every distraction and diversion and mentally pick them up one by one and stuff them into a bag. And then take that bag and walk up the aisle to the front of this church and stand there as Jesus bends down to you through his called servant and gives you an exchange. He takes your stuffed bag. He takes all those things you stuffed in there and gives you his body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

It’s like having a huge burden taken off you. And you walk away without that stuffed bag. It’s gone. That truth empowers you to leave this table with the right focus. You are God’s forgiven child. And he is going to walk with you through all those diversions and help you stay focused on what really matters: him!

You see, Jesus has battled against every single one of your enemies, and he won! And he’s the Savior who equips you to **“have sound judgment.”**

“Have sound judgment.” What does that mean? To **“have sound judgment”** means to have a clear head. God wants us to remove anything that hampers good judgment. For example, if our mind is cluttered with lustful thoughts, we won’t be prepared to flee from temptation as Joseph did when Potiphar’s wife asked him to sleep with her. If our mind is muddled with materialism, it will be hard to offer our first fruits to God. If our mind is packed with pride, it will be hard to keep from putting other people down so we look good.

Jesus needs to equip us to **“have sound judgment.”** We need to be spiritually alert. That’s how we continue to be **firm in the faith**. It means that we don’t leave our weaknesses exposed to the Devil’s temptations. It was Martin Luther who said that the Devil climbs over the fence where it is the lowest. So, we want to build up the walls of our faith so he can’t climb in.

Well, how can we do that? You know the answer. We build up the walls of our faith when we stand firm in God’s Word. Only then can we be sure that we stand safely outside the lion’s den. You know that stanza from “A Mighty Fortress is our God.” “Though devils all the world should fill all eager to devour us. We tremble not, we fear no ill. They shall not overpower us. This world’s prince may still, scowl fierce as he will. He can harm us none, he’s judged, the deed is done, one little word can fell him.” One little word can knock the Devil to the ground. It’s God’s Word. This is why we memorize Bible passages. This is why we memorize the Enchiridion. The Enchiridion is a handbook or a manual for our lives. Those six parts of the catechism that we studied and memorized are really important for being **firm in the faith**. Keep going back to those truths. Keep refreshing them in your memories. We arm ourselves with the powerful weapon of God’s Word.

And Peter reminds us of what God will do with that **firming of our faith**. **“After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you.”**

Through Christ, the victory is ours. Through Christ, God restores us to the glory God intended people to have before sin entered the world. Through Christ, God has made us strong so we can carry out works that please God. Through Christ, God walks with you through this world until he takes you home to heaven.

As you journey through this life, my friends, humble yourself under God's mighty hand by casting all of your cares on him. Remain watchful, standing firm in the faith, armed with the Word of God. And the God of grace who has called us to eternal glory will keep you safe. Therefore, we proclaim with Peter, **"To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen."**