

**+ Proverbs 30:4-5 + You Know the Answer +  
+ 5th Sunday after Pentecost: Confirmation Sunday + 1 July 2012 +**

Few people among us like to take tests. Now why is that? There's a variety of reasons. What if the questions are too hard? What if I forget what I studied or what if I studied the wrong material? What if I don't finish the test in time or have to rush through it with no time to check my answers? What if I don't know the answers to the questions? That last question is perhaps the biggest reason why so many of us dread taking tests. If you don't know the answers to the questions, you could fail. None of us wants that, but even if we dread that lack of knowledge, we still have to take tests.

After all, testing one's knowledge can be a very good thing. It's a way of showing what you know and understand whether that's taking an exam in school, testing for your driver's license, or showing your proficiency in a particular skill. Megan, it was no different for you as you went through three years of youth confirmation classes. As we studied the basics of God's Word—the 10 Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, and the Ministry of the Keys and Confession—as Megan and every other confirmation student knows very well, we had tests and none bigger than the final examination for confirmation. I would imagine you felt quite relieved when you finished the 170-question test and the interview. I'm sure you're looking forward to getting past the last questions of the Rite of Confirmation too.

Even as we witness the public confession of faith of another young Christian instructed in the Word of God, God himself has a test of sorts for the rest of us. You won't need a #2 pencil for this test, however. In fact, the Lord willingly makes it an open-book test. He has questions for us, important questions, but fear not! **YOU KNOW THE ANSWER.**

Growing up in the home of a pastor, it was common for my father after we got home from church to ask each of us kids what the sermon was about. It was an honest question and he was hoping that we had paid attention to what he had preached from God's Word. Unfortunately, we occasionally ended up giving him a confused look that simply proved we hadn't listen—that is, until our youngest brother blurted out as a little kid, "Jesus...Bible..." It was a simple, general, yet truthful answer. Unfortunately, his obnoxious older siblings later used that answer more often than we should have.

Now it's my hope that you'll get more out of these sermons than just "Jesus...Bible..." Nevertheless, as you hear the Lord's profound questions in verse 4 of our text, isn't the answer just as simple? ***"Who has ascended to heaven and come down?"*** Now can any ordinary human being make such a claim, that he or she has ever gone up to heaven or come down? Of course not! Not a single one of us has such power, yet Jesus himself made such a claim when he said, ***"No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came down from heaven—the Son of Man."*** (John 3:13) As we confess in the Apostles' Creed, Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, came down from heaven when he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. After he died on the cross and was buried, he rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven. No one else has done that and that makes God himself the answer to his own question.

***"Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?"*** In the past week destructive storms have torn through large sections of our country from a tropical storm in Florida to rapidly moving thunderstorms in the mid-Atlantic to a firestorm in Colorado Springs, CO. Seeing images of the destructive force of these storms calls to mind what we heard earlier of Jesus rebuking the wind and the waves of a terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee. The wind and the waves threatened to overcome the boat manned by experienced fishermen, yet the wind and waves meekly obeyed the rebuke of the Son of God, whose nap had been so rudely interrupted. The events of the past week have made it clear that in the face of such destructive storms, human beings can barely hang on to their lives. No human being in his right mind would be so foolish as to think he could control the wind and the waves, yet you know the answer to God's questions, because again he's the only answer.

***"Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!"*** Can any human being possibly claim to be the cause of the world in which we live? To do so would be ridiculous because it's impossible. No human being can make such a claim, but God rightfully has. For good reason he once asked Job, ***"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!"*** (38:4-5) Look at the wondrous detail and design of all creation from the tiniest cell to the grandest mountain. Look at how the human body is designed to grow and do what no other species can do and marvel at God's power and wisdom. Surely you know, because God is the only answer to his own questions.

Those questions remind us how small in knowledge and power we are compared to the all-knowing, almighty God, but they also point us to **“his son”**. Jesus as the Son of God, as true God and true man, is the only answer to all your questions and mine. At the heart and core of each and every one of us is a sinful nature that is so delusional, so self-centered that it wants you to be the answer to all of God’s questions. It wants you to be all-powerful or at least think you are, that is until you’re faced with trouble or disaster or pain or sorrow and are reminded of your own mortality and inability to gather up the wind in your fists or go up to the heavens and come down.

In Jesus, however, you see the real answer to all those questions. In him, you see the One who has come down from heaven and gone back up, the One who has controlled and still controls the wind and the waves, the One who established the ends of the earth with his infinite power, yet even now has love and mercy even greater—love for you that has no boundary and mercy that has no bottom. For our self-centered foolishness, we should be wiped off the planet and sent to an eternity in hell, yet the Son of God set aside his glory and power to come down and live that you might live, to die that you might never die, to rise that you might live forever with him in the glories of heaven. That boundless love and bottomless mercy ultimately showed itself when the Son of God perfectly submitted to his own holy Law and suffered the death that sinners like you and me so greatly deserve.

By God’s grace through the faith his Spirit created in your heart, you know that. There’s no doubt and so there’s nothing to fear when God asks such profound questions. You know the answer because God is the only answer.

...But where do you find that answer? When you take a test, you usually have to spend time studying. Megan, you studied a lot before taking that exam on Friday afternoon. It’s no different for God’s exam either. All the right answers to questions about who the true God is, what he’s done for you, and what that means for your life don’t just come out of thin air or in a dream. No, they come from the Word of God, which has been tested and proven to be true. **“Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”** It’s as if every word of God, every promise, every statement has been tested like a goldsmith subjecting precious metals to extreme heat to determine their purity. Our God has done that with his Word as he makes promise after promise in his Word and then keeps every one of those promises. From **“In the beginning...”** in Genesis (1:1) to **“Amen”** in Revelation (22:21), the Word of God is proven true and authentic and reliable.

That’s vitally important for your Christian life, but unfortunately, far too often, you and I live as if God’s Word isn’t that big of a deal. A great temptation after confirmation, whether as a youth or as an adult, is to think you’ve learned everything you need to know from God’s Word so you can put your Bible and your Catechism on the shelf and let them gather dust. Perhaps a greater temptation is to take God’s Word and choose to ignore or forget what you don’t like or what’s inconvenient for you at the time—the command to act and speak like a child of God, the encouragement to give your best offerings to him, the call to feed and nourish your faith through regular study of his Word. For such disregard we deserve nothing, but God’s judgment, yet in mercy he comes to you and me through his Word.

Studying God’s Word doesn’t end with confirmation. It’s just the beginning! God’s Word has all the right answers to the questions that matter most for your life right now and for the life to come, because that Word points you to Jesus—your Shield and your Refuge. Every one of us needs that from little babies recently baptized to the oldest adults. For there in God’s Word, you see your God and know his saving name. There you see your God and know his Son. There you see how limitless his wisdom and might and how boundless his love and mercy. There you see that with God nothing is impossible even when all the evidence around you seems to the contrary, for **“he is a shield to those who take refuge in him”** and in his promises that cannot fail, promises made and fulfilled and found only in his Word.

God has given you an open-book test. All you need is his Word and it has all the answers, especially the big one about Jesus. So what are you going to do with it? Don’t put it back on the shelf. No, use it. Study it. Inwardly digest it. Make it part of the air you breathe, the food you eat, and the water you drink. Taste and see that the Lord is good and his promises will never fail, and when the Lord allows the tests of this life to get harder, take heart! You will always have God’s help. God’s Word guarantees it. Amen.