

Confirmation of Amanda Hubbard/Baptism of Corbin Ray Brett

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed, *and especially you, Amanda, our confirmand,*

A few weeks ago, as I was preparing the sermon for Pastor Peter Bockoven's ordination last Friday, I looked ahead to this Sunday's text.

How fitting, I pointed out to him, that he would preach on the calling of St. Peter as his first sermon to his congregation.

But this text is not just for people named Peter who are considering becoming a pastor.

It is for all of us to hear and learn of our Savior as He calls each of us to follow Him in repentance and faith.

And what a fitting text for you, Amanda, as you publicly confirm your baptismal faith, confessing the Triune God and Jesus Christ as your Savior.

We read a portion of the Gospel, as follows in Jesus' name:

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

It wasn't a fluke that Jesus came and taught from St. Peter's boat that day.

The crowd pressing in on Jesus...

The 2 boats sitting empty right there on the shore...

Peter, Andrew, James and John all washing their nets after a night's work...

the night's less-than-profitable catch...

All these were arranged so that they would bring in the catch that the Lord willed and desired.

As St. Peter sat there listening to Jesus preach, do you think that he thought

about how fortunate he was to be able to sit and listen to Jesus while also cleaning his nets.

I suppose for many of us, we are able to do this sort of thing all the time.

I know I enjoy sanctifying my mowing the lawn or woodworking with the Word of God, listening to Christian podcasts.

But I wonder if St. Peter was sitting there thinking about how blessed he was.

He had just come out of the boat after a full night's work... with nothing to show for it.

I wouldn't doubt that he was perhaps frustrated... and tired... and found himself only half-listening, while also thinking about the loss of income, or all that physical exertion for nothing, yet still having to clean and care for the nets.

I suppose that you have had such days like St. Peter and can sympathize with him.

I wonder if St. Peter was actually thinking that this wasn't the best day for Jesus to sit in his boat.

His was tired, after his nets were cleaned, he just wanted to go home and sleep,

but with Jesus using his boat, he would need to stick around until everything was taken care of.

Of course, we're speculating here, but what might have been going through his mind when Jesus had the bright idea of sending him out to fish again at the wrong time of day, and in the wrong depth of water?

It was crazy talk! And that, after he had toiled all night in the right depth and came up with nothing. This would be like going fishing without any bait on your hook.

But we see that regardless of his own thoughts, he responds to Jesus, "**but at Your word...**"

People, this is the response of faith that only the Holy Spirit can work in a heart.

It made no sense to do what Jesus said, but because he respected Jesus, he did as was requested...

And what happened next was equally unbelievable for him....

The catch of fish was more than he and his partner could handle.

The catch was so great that the nets were breaking, they were starting to sink and they had to call the other boat out to help them bring it all in. And yet, there it was before his eyes... he couldn't deny the catch.

At this great wonder, and probably also in no small part due to his own skepticism at Jesus' command, St. Peter responds in fear, "**Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**"

He came head-to-head with the reality that he was in the presence of the Son of God.

...Now, St. Peter had known this before.

It was what Andrew had told him when he first invited Peter to see Jesus.

But this impressive display of omnipotence...

and probably the consideration that they were sinking and could possibly be in mortal danger, and perhaps feeling guilty for being so distracted with his lack of fish during Jesus' preaching... it all culminated in his reaction — his desire not to be in the presence of the righteous God, the all-knowing and all-powerful Judge of heaven and earth.

And yet... all of this was by God's design.

The crowd pressing in on Jesus... the 2 boats sitting empty right there on the shore...

Peter, washing his nets after a night's unproductive work...

And the too-great a catch of fish...

It was all designed to prepare St. Peter for the next words of Jesus, "**Do not be afraid.**"

Imagine the relief, even the joy, when St. Peter realized that Jesus wasn't there to condemn and destroy, but to save and give him life, even a new life.

But you don't have to imagine, do you?

You know what it is like to be distracted while listening to a sermon; concerned about the earthly things that have been plaguing your mind, overwhelmed with feelings of anxiety or depression or even despair, being tired or frustrated, or wishing you were somewhere else completely. even... not wanting to be in the Lord's presence for fear of His wrath.

I am sure you also know what it is like to be in utter terror or fear of your life,
whether because of something that has just happened, from which you were spared,
or perhaps considering the possibilities of something like a virus taking hold of you,
or maybe contemplating the fact of your own mortality as your body ages and doesn't heal.
But this terror can also happen as your conscience recognizes its sin before the Lord,
and seizes you to the point of declaring as St. Peter did,
"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

But neither do you need to imagine what it is like to be relieved of your terror and burden,
because the same Jesus who proclaimed **"Do not be afraid,"** to St. Peter,
is the same that says, **"Do not be afraid,"** to you.
Jesus has not come to condemn and destroy you, but to forgive you and give you life.
During this time of grace, He draws you into His presence to speak words of comfort and joy to you.
He knows your fears, anxieties, your frustrations, and feelings.
He knows the thoughts that plague you and keep you up all night with nothing to show for it.
The things that distract you from the sermon or keep your mind wandering during your devotions.
He knows them, not just because He is omniscient (all-knowing)
but because He suffered and died for them all.
And in their place, He desires to reign in your heart, having cleansed you from all your sin.

For Peter, that night of frustration was changed in an instant with a catch too large for him and his nets.
The take from that one catch would take care of his family and the families of his partners for a while.
Do you suppose that St. Peter reasoned that if Jesus could take care of this one concern so easily,
then St. Peter would never have to be let such concerns rule over him, causing him such fears again?
Of course, while he remained in his corrupted flesh, such concerns and fears would always plague him,
but he had a Lord who could take care of that, too.

And so when Jesus called him to become a fisher of men, a pastor, a missionary, an evangelist to others,
he **left everything and followed Him.**

Dear fellow redeemed,
It is never a fluke when God reveals Himself to you in your life.
The Lord does not do anything by accident.
Those situations that cause you to fear for your life, the burdens that lead you to look for relief,
the conscience that drives you to seek a Savior,
or the baptism of an infant family member or friend,
these are all put in your life by a loving God to prepare you to receive the powerful
and comforting words of your Savior, Jesus Christ, **"Do not be afraid."**

And He has put common, ordinary people in your life who, by their confession and life,
have led you to hear these words of Jesus:
parents or other family members that bring or brought you into His presence;
perhaps a co-worker or a next door neighbor who comforted you during a difficult time;
maybe it was even a pastor who first relieved your conscience, declaring you forgiven in Jesus' name.
While not everyone is called to be a fisher of men, as St. Peter was,

all Christians are given the blessing and privilege that St. Peter wrote of in today's Epistle:
**in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense
to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;
yet do it with gentleness and respect.**

What is this but to confess your Savior to others, as the Lord gives you opportunity
so that they too may share your joy, relief, and certainty in their salvation.
so that they too may hear Jesus speak to them, "**Do not be afraid.**"

He is the only true God, who alone is able to relieve their consciences and care for them
both here in time and in eternity.

In Jesus' Name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria