

"Says God"

Text: Acts 11:1-18

God grant to each of us this one gift – that we learn, at all times and in every situation, to trust our God, who continues to speak only truth to us through his Word. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Children absolutely need to learn, from little on, not only to respect authority, but to obey – no questions asked. There will be plenty of opportunities in their teenage years to learn the why, but that process only really works when they first learn to simply obey – no objection, no questions, no bargaining, no delay, no complaining. Just immediate obedience.

I'm not sure it is possible to overemphasize the importance of learning this sort of compliance from little on. Not only is an obedient child pleasant to be around and a joy to parents, learning obedience is vital training that will serve them well for an entire lifetime, and beyond. Unfortunately, most children in our society are being raised by parents who never themselves learned obedience, who grew up believing that every command and rule was negotiable, every threat of punishment hollow, and every act of disobedience or rebellion "just what kids do." The result is the "counting parent" ("I'm going to count to ten..." – which more or less teaches 90% disobedience), the "bribing parent" ("If you clean your room I'll give you some ice-cream"), and the "bargaining parent" (those who treat every command as a starting point for protracted negotiations.) The whole mess has deteriorated to the point that most parents not only fail to teach obedience, they believe it to be unattainable, and naïve for parents to even try.

This is actually a far broader topic than just the parent-child relationship. Our text for this morning provides divine encouragement and guidance no matter what your age or station in life. All can benefit because all who fail to learn the lesson of simple, unquestioning obedience will suffer. Our text is God's Word recorded in the Book of Acts, the 11th Chapter:

ESV Acts 11:1-18 *Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ³ "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." ⁴ But Peter began and explained it to them in order: ⁵ "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision,*

something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸ But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' ¹⁵ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

This is the Word of God. It is, therefore, perfect, from first to last. In this uncertain world, how rare and wonderful it is to have something completely and utterly reliable. That our God would richly bless us through the study of his perfect Word this morning, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by the truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!"** Amen.

Clearly here we must step carefully, since I am not sure there exists a more dangerous minefield than a discussion of what, exactly, qualifies as "a good parent" – a "good mom" or a "good dad." Most parents claim the title for themselves. In fact things would have to be pretty awful before anyone in our society would admit to being a bad mom or dad. As in all things, God's is the only opinion that matters. But that doesn't stop us from making our own judgments.

Here's an example – my own personal *mea culpa*. I'm not good at guessing ages, but I guessed the little guy being ushered into the store by his mom to be about 5 years old. Mom held one of his hands, while in the other he held a phone – to which he was absolutely glued. A

Commanche war party could have been attacking the store and I doubt he would have noticed. Based only on that briefest of interactions, I found myself wondering what kind of mom would do that to a child.

Do you understand the “minefield” analogy, and the problem? “Minefield” because there may be a dozen moms here who do or have done the same thing and see nothing wrong with it. “Problem” in that one 5-second interaction doesn’t qualify anyone to affix the “bad mom” label. Maybe he was a special needs kid. For all I know he could have been fixating on a Bible app for children. Though the evidence of the mental, emotional, and social damage that screens are doing to children is both overwhelming and alarming, maybe public outings are the only time this particular child was ever allowed to see one.

The point is that parents answer to God alone and he has provided direction. His general mandate is that parents are to **“bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”** A significant element of that instruction is teaching them obedience. As in virtually every area of Christian living, balance is critical also here. That same passage that tells parents to **“bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”** also tells fathers to **“not provoke your children to anger.”** That means there’s more to it than forcing rigid obedience. Pretty much any adult can terrify a child into outward compliance. God is interested in the training of the heart. He wants to see obedience that flows naturally from a heart filled with faith, respect, and gratitude.

That means, in part, that parents shouldn’t run from the dreaded and much maligned *“Because I said so.”*

Many of you probably heard that from your own parents when you had the audacity to question a command with a plaintive, *“Whyyy?”* Children need to learn that parental authority is really God’s authority, because it was God himself who gave it to them, God who *demand*s it of them. That means that to rebel against parents is to rebel against God, which is also how and why this mandatory training goes way beyond children in their youth. It is the start, the foundation or basis, of training Christians to be obedient children of God.

Our text provides insight as to how this applies to Christians of every age and station. You may recall the setting. Peter had baptized non-Jews (Gentiles) in Caesarea, and he was summoned by the church in Jerusalem to give an explanation. Our text represents his defense of his actions, given to his Christian brothers in Jerusalem. Clearly the men in Jerusalem were missing the forest for the trees. We have no record that they rejoiced that

also non-Jews were saved. They did not immediately celebrate the fact that human beings— who happened to have something other than Jewish blood circulating in their veins – were being rescued from the eternal torments of hell. They were instead obsessed with protocol, procedure, and custom – with what *they* had come to regard as obedience. In their minds, Peter was being disobedient.

Peter actually condemned himself as just that, as disobedient for a time, when he gave his defense. But his disobedience was very different from what his critics were accusing him of. Consider the audacity of Peter. When in a vision God told him to do something, Peter didn’t just response with a *“Why?”* but went right to *“No way, Lord.”* And our text says that this happened three times. Clearly he would defend his reaction on the basis of God’s previous prohibition against eating ceremonially unclean animals. His was probably the same defense the **“circumcision party”** would have given in Jerusalem: *“God says so.”* Sounds fairly reasonable, except for the fact that Peter was having his conversation with the Lord himself. He obviously acknowledged this fact by saying, **“By no means, Lord!”** You can’t really use *“God said so”* as your excuse when it is *God himself* who is telling you to do something else.

The point that God was making to Peter was that the time of transition had come to God’s Church. It was time for them to move from Old Testament to New. Part of that transition was learning that all of the Old Testament ceremonies and sacrifices became obsolete the moment Jesus said **“It is finished!”** on the cross of Calvary. All of those ceremonies and customs pointed ahead to Christ. Once Christ came, as he had, their usefulness ended. Think of it this way. Have you ever received an invitation to some special event, only to forget about that event until you happened to find that invitation tucked away in an organizer or drawer weeks later? Does the invitation still apply? Does it hold any real value? Obviously not. All it does is remind you of what you of an event that has already passed.

The problem was that these men had come to regard the Old Testament rules, ceremonies, and sacrifices as an end unto themselves, rather than as that which pointed to the event itself. In fact they were so adamant in this that when the event arrived – when the Promised One finally came – they discarded *him* instead of the outdated invitation.

So Peter, finally convinced by God the Holy Spirit that things had indeed changed, made his case to his brothers in Jerusalem. Their

reaction was most interesting. Our text says, ***"When they heard these things they fell silent..."*** Why silent? Because they were temporarily at a loss. They couldn't condemn what Peter had done as disobedience to God, not when God himself had told Peter to do what he did. Their challenge to Peter had been one long *"Says who?"* Peter's entire defense of why he did what he did was one big, long, *"Says God."*

The Bible is full of examples of man challenging God, human beings who thought they knew better than their Creator God. Jonah said no to God's command to go to Nineveh. Sarah and Zechariah both laughed at God when he told them they would be given children in their old age. Thomas denied both the promise of his Savior and the witness of his fellow disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. Ananias challenged God's command to visit Paul after his conversion. The disciples objected to Jesus' command to let down their nets on the other side of the boat. All, in their own way, resisted the irresistible *"Says God."* All were proved wrong.

You and I need to learn that same acceptance based on nothing more than *"Says God."* That is, in fact, the basis of our entire hope and confidence. You and I are forgiven sinners. Why? Because God said so. He said so with the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He said so in his Word, repeatedly, in passages like Psalm 103:11-12: ***"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."*** And again in Romans 8:1: ***"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in (who believe in) Christ Jesus."*** You and I are forgiven sinners. God himself said so. We need no further proof or evidence.

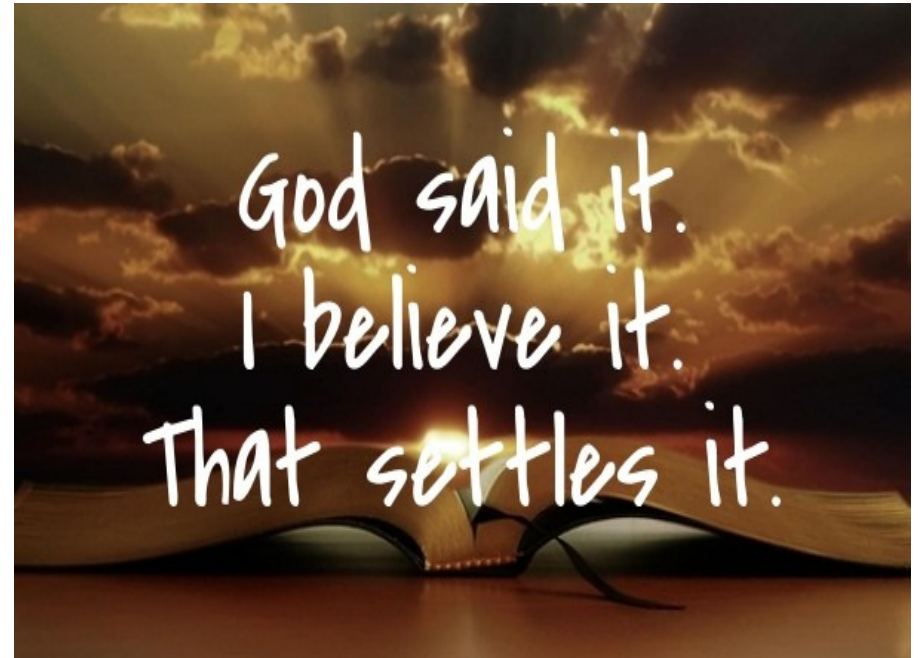
Life then becomes relatively simple for God's washed, cleansed, forgiven children. What are we supposed to do? Whatever God says. Why? Because God says so. This is the rare joy and privilege that is ours – to have a God that we can trust to tell us always and only not only what is true but what is best for us. This is the joy and comfort of having a God that not only loved us in the past so much that he sacrificed his own dear Son to pay for what we owed, but who also loves us so much today that he will not allow Satan to remove us from that good, perfect place to which he has brought us.

How do you know that God loves you? Because God said so. How do you know that when you die you will be carried to your Savior's waiting arms? Because God said so. Who says you can spend your life in God's service and will not need to worry about whether your earthly needs will be supplied? Says God. God help us to master the obedience of faith. Amen.

ESV **Revelation 21:1-7** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ ¶ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

ESV **John 13:31-35** When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

ESV **Acts 11:1-18** Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ³ "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." ⁴ But Peter began and explained it to them in order: ⁵ "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸ But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' ¹⁵ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" ¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."



ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Fourth Sunday after Easter – May 18, 2025

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 435 (Stanzas 1-3) (Blue Hymnal)

"Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 1ff. (Blue Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Revelation 21:1-7) It is important, when reading in the Book of Revelation, to remember that John is describing a vision. The images in that vision symbolized truth that God wanted to convey to the Church. In our first reading we see an image of heaven – the New Jerusalem. For mortal man, just exactly what heaven will be like is infinitely beyond our ability to fully comprehend, so God used pictures that we can somewhat grasp. The heaven that we will one day experience will actually exceed our wildest expectations. Thank you, Jesus!

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 66 (Blue Hymnal Page 77)

The Second Lesson: (John 13:31-35) Jesus here tells his followers that no one can follow him. Clearly he means that the cross is for him alone. Jesus paid the penalty for sin all by himself, for he alone was worthy. One way that you and I publicly state our allegiance to Jesus is by the love we show to our neighbor. Not only is this love something other than an emotion, it is also anything but permissive. It is an outward directed love based on the truth of God's Word. True love includes bringing to our neighbor's attention both what our God promotes and what he condemns.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed (Blue Hymnal page 5)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 444 (Stanzas 1-2, 5-6) (Blue Hymnal)

"Salvation Unto Us Has Come"

The Sermon – Text: Acts 11:1-18 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Says God"

The Offertory – (Blue Hymnal page 7)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 450 (Stanzas 1-4) (Blue Hymnal)

"By Grace I'm Saved"

The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 435 (Stanza 4) (Blue Hymnal)

"Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (38) Average (40)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Monday	-6:00 p.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Tues-Thurs	-10:00 a.m.	– WCDC in Jamestown
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Aaron Ude has returned the call to Faith Lutheran of Manchester, MO. That congregation has now called Pastor Frank Gantt. Pastor Wayne Eichstadt has returned the call to Messiah of Eau Claire, WI.

West Central Delegate Conference – The annual spring West Central Delegate Conference is scheduled for Tuesday-Thursday of this week in Jamestown. In addition to Pastor Roehl, St Paul will be represented by Mark and Mick Johnson.

End of Year Events at ILC – Friday, May 23, is the final day of classes, with Class Day activities at 2:30 pm, and a 7:00 pm concert at Messiah Lutheran Church. Graduation is Saturday at 10am in the ILC Fieldhouse. This year one member of St Paul, Aidan Pfennig, will graduate from the high school department.

Summer Schedule Begins – This week we begin our summer schedule. Midweek classes, Sunday morning Bible Class, and Sunday school are suspended until after Labor Day.

Branches Magazine – Subscriptions are due for the CLC Women's publication *The Branches*. Please see the sheet on the mailbox table if you would like to renew or begin a subscription.