

## Sermon followed by Service

January 28, 2024

Philippians 4

How do you raise a child to be strong? We start with hugs and kisses. Why? We want our babies to know they're loved and safe and special. Then we play "so big." We want our babies to stretch into strong. And when they start walking, then what? We hold out our arms and smile. Then when junior takes a step toward us, we step back. We want our toddlers to stretch some more - "I'm safe; I'm loved; and I can do this." Then we get the book out, the good book: *The Little Engine That Could*. We read how that little engine pulled the big train up the mountain: "I think I can; I think I can; I think I can." We teach our little ones to think big. Just because something looks hard doesn't mean we can't. Just because something is hard doesn't mean we have to give up. We get to live life can-do strong.

Then at some point we hear voices. Voices that say: "Just do it!" Voices that say: "You can do whatever you want." And when we hear those voices, there's a part of us that says: "Amen. It's my life. I can do whatever I want." We might not be potty-trained, we might not be able to keep ourselves clean and dry, we might not be able to walk or say much more than "momma" and "dadda" and "no," but there's a part of us that thinks "I can do whatever I want." And as mommas and daddas and teachers and pastors, we're not sure whether to laugh or cry. Why would we cry? Because we know that our children are in for a life-time of fighting. Just as we are. Fighting within our self; fighting with the world, fighting with God. Part of us demanding, with the

world cheering us on: “I can do whatever I want.” Part of us crying or cringing (with the world piling on): “Why can’t I get anything right?” And then there’s that fight with God. We say: “It’s my life; I can do what I want.” And God says: “No, you can’t.” From Mt. Sinai, thundering and shaking, God lays down his Law: “Thou shalt not.” And in our every day lives, as colds and cancer knock us down, as age and arthritis slow us down, as our simple bone-headedness trips us up, God keeps insisting: “No, you can’t do whatever you want.”

“No, you can’t do whatever you want.” Why does God keep pounding that into me? Doesn’t he want me to be strong? Yes. And he wants you to be strong. Not just today. And not just for a day. Not just chugging up this mountain or that. Not just strong to get our way here and now. No, God wants us to be strong, and safe. God doesn’t want us lost to the lies of Satan: “You can do whatever you want.” He doesn’t want us lost to hell. But God wants you to be strong with him, strong in the forever and ever joy of heaven. The God who created this world with the Word of Jesus ... the Jesus who walked on water ... the Jesus who healed the sick and raised the dead - He wants you to know that you have can-do power with him. He wants you to be able to say: **“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”** Or better - **“I am strong for anything through Christ who makes me strong.”**

Christ is able to make us strong for anything. So why is math and memory work so hard? Or here’s a tougher question. I find myself asking this question myself: “If God is all-powerful (and I know he is), and he wants me to have life with him (and

that's what he says), then why is life so hard? Why doesn't God make life easier? Why doesn't God make me stronger so that life isn't so hard?" And the question isn't just: "Why is life so hard with sickness and trouble?" I also want to know: "Why is it so hard to be a Christian?" If God is all-powerful and he can make me strong, why doesn't he just make me strong?

That can be a tough one. So why? God doesn't want me thinking with the devil: "I can do whatever I want." God doesn't want me thinking with the world that I make myself strong. Thinking like that is a sure way to hurt, heartache, and hell. Instead, God wants me to think this way every day - Jesus makes me strong. I need Jesus to make me strong. I have Jesus to make me strong. I need Jesus to make me strong. I have Jesus to make me strong. I have Jesus to make me strong when I want to give up on my math and memory work. I have Jesus to make me strong when I want to give up on life. I have Jesus to make me strong when I want to give up on God. I have Jesus to make me strong. You have Jesus to make you strong.

How does Jesus make us strong? Math! Or at least addition and subtraction. Jesus takes away the guilt that cuts us off from God's power. He takes away the guilt that weakens us, tears us up, that makes us feel small. Whenever we feel that sin and guilt are overpowering us - "Why can't I get anything right? Why should I even bother?" - we get to remember - Jesus took our sin and guilt as his own and he paid for it at the cross. I don't have to carry it; we don't need to be kicking ourselves and beating ourselves up. And we don't need to live in fear of God, holding back from God, waiting for God to judge us. We don't

have to live in fear of God judging us wrong because Jesus has taken our wrong away. That's the subtraction.

And here's the addition. In baptism, God adds Jesus to you and your life. In baptism, God covers you with Jesus. Covered with Jesus, God sees you right by him. With Jesus, God sees you as someone special - as family together with him - as someone he wants to back up, hold up, power up. What does that mean for us? With Jesus, you have God working his power for you; and you have God in you to work his power in you.

Some days I wish he'd work his power in me with a snap of his fingers. Just like that I'd be strong for whatever comes my way. Jesus has a different way to make us strong with his strength. Do you remember how we help little children to be strong to walk? We walk with them and hold their hand. We set down in front of them with a smile on our face and our arms stretched out. That's what Jesus does for us. He walks with us and holds us. He holds his promise out in front of us - **“you know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him”** - and as we reach for his promise, he makes us strong. He holds his promise out in front of us - **“I know the plans I have for you ...”** - and as we reach for that promise, he makes us strong. He holds his promise out in front us, and as we reach for his promise, he makes us strong.

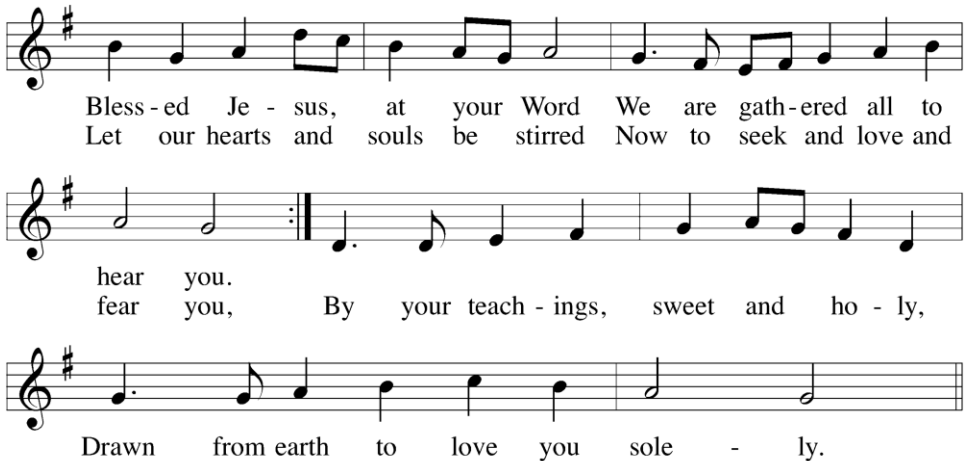
Strong to say: “I can do whatever I want”? No, strong in a far, far better way, strong to say: **“I can do all things ... I am strong for all things through him who gives me strength.”** Amen.

## GATHERING RITE ON THE WORD OF GOD

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we celebrate Lutheran School Sunday! Our School theme verse this year gives us comfort and encouragement in the strength Christ works for us - "I am made strong for all things through Christ who gives me strength!"

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**



Bless - ed Je - sus, at your Word We are gath - ered all to  
Let our hearts and souls be stirred Now to seek and love and  
hear you.  
fear you, By your teach - ings, sweet and ho - ly,  
Drawn from earth to love you sole - ly.

M: Oh, how I love your law!

C: **I meditate on it all day long.**

M: Your commands make me wiser than my enemies,

C: **for they are ever with me.**

M: I have more insight than all my teachers,

C: **for I meditate on your statutes.**

M: How sweet are your words to my taste,

C: **sweeter than honey to my mouth!**

All our knowl - edge, sense, and sight Lie in deep - est dark-ness  
Till your Spir - it breaks our night With the beams of truth un -  
shroud - ed  
cloud - ed. You a - lone to God can win us;  
You must work all good with - in us.

- M: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
- C: **so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**
- M: Yet so often we have despised God's Word and failed to gladly hear and learn it.  
For this and all our sins, we bow before God and humbly ask his forgiveness.
- C: **Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

Gra-cious Sav - ior, good and kind, Light from Light, from God pro -  
 O - pen now our heart and mind; Help us by your Spir-it's  
 ceed - ing,  
 plead - ing. Hear the cry your peo - ple rais - es;  
 Hear and bless our prayers and prais - es.

M: God gave his Word so “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (*John 20:31*). The Scriptures testify about Jesus, who lived a perfect life for you, died on the cross to pay for all your sins, and rose again to assure you of your salvation. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost, Praise to you and ad - o -  
 Grant that we your Word may trust, Con - fi - dent of our sal -  
 ra - tion!  
 va - tion, While we here be - low must wan - der,  
 Till we sing your prais - es yon - der.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

**Almighty God, you have committed to your Church the task of making disciples of all nations. Enlighten with your wisdom those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, they may worship and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## FIRST LESSON

**Isaiah 40:28-31**

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## A MEDLEY OF SCHOOL THEME VERSES

M: Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

C: **They will soar on wings like eagles;**

M: they will run and not grow weary,

C: **they will walk and not be faint.** (Isaiah 40:31~ 2021-2022)

M: Be kind and compassionate to one another,

C: **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**  
(Ephesians 4:32 ~ 2015-2016)

M: Do not be anxious about anything,

C: **but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** (Philippians 4:6 ~ 2016-2017)



SCHOOL CHILDREN SING

*"Father Welcomes"*

Hymn 684

*Father welcomes all his children to his fam'ly through his Son.  
Father giving his salvation, life forever has been won.*

*Little children, come to me, for my kingdom is of these.  
Life and love I have to give, mercy for your sin. Refrain*

*In the water, in the Word, in his promise, be assured:  
those who are baptized and believe shall be born again. Refrain*

*Let us daily die to sin; let us daily rise with him,  
walk in the love of Christ our Lord, live in the peace of God. Refrain*

M: I have told you these things,

C: **so that in me you may have peace.**

M: In this world you will have trouble.

C: **But take heart! I have overcome the world.** (John 16:33 ~ 2017-2018)

M: So do not fear, for I am with you;

C: **do not be dismayed, for I am your God.**

M: I will strengthen you and help you;

C: **I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.** (Isaiah 41:10 ~ 2018-2019)

M: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,

C: **and I will give you rest."** (Matthew 11:28 ~ 2019-2020)

M: "I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,

C: **"plans to prosper you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future."** (Jeremiah 29:11~ 2020-2021)

M: Therefore go and gather disciples from all nations

C: **by baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit.** (Matthew 28:19 ~ 2022-2023)

M: I can do all things

C: **through Christ who strengthens me.**

(Philippians 4:13 ~ 2023-2024)

SCHOOL CHILDREN SING

*“By Faith”*

**Hymn 868 vs. 1, 3, & 5**

*By faith we see the hand of God in the light of creation’s grand design,  
in the lives of those who prove his faithfulness, who walk by faith and not by sight.*

***Refrain***

*We will stand as children of the promise;*

*we will fix our eyes on him, our soul’s reward.*

*Till the race is finished and the work is done, we’ll walk by faith and not by sight.*

*By faith the prophets saw a day when the longed-for Messiah would appear  
with the pow’r to break the chains of sin and death  
and rise triumphant from the grave.*

*By faith this mountain shall be moved and the pow’r of the gospel shall prevail,  
for we know in Christ all things are possible for all who call upon his name.*

***Refrain***

EPISTLE LESSON

**2 Timothy 3:14-17**

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## CHOIR

## *“Christ Is All In All”*

*Sons and daughters of the King Rise up and sing  
That Christ is all in all Praise the glories of His name  
Together proclaim That Christ is all in all*

*Brothers, sisters built upon This cornerstone  
For Christ is all in all Worship Him with hearts renewed  
In spirit and truth For Christ is all in all*

### ***Refrain***

*See how He loves us Children of God  
Now let us love each other If He has called us  
Children of God That's who we are  
His chosen and beloved*

*Bound together by His blood Rooted in love  
Where Christ is all in all Standing in one Faith, one Lord  
One holy accord Where Christ is all in all*

### ***Refrain***

*Look at what the Lord has done Made us one by the blood of Jesus  
Look at what the Lord has done Now we love with the love of Jesus*

*Look at what the Lord has done Made us one by the blood of Jesus  
Look at what the Lord has done Now we love with the love of Jesus*

### ***Refrain***

*Sons and daughters of the King Rise up and sing That Christ is all in all*

## VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Your words became a joy to me  
and the delight of my heart. Alleluia.

## GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-12

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:  
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."  
Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.  
Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

## APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## HYMN

## *"In Christ Alone"*

### Hymn 510

In Christ alone my hope is found; he is my light, my strength, my song;  
this cornerstone, this solid ground,  
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My comforter, my all in all; here in the love of Christ I stand.

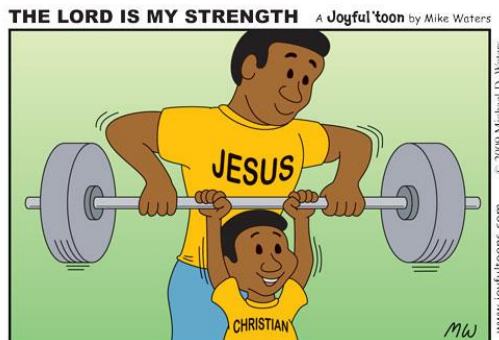
In Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe;  
this gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones he came to save.  
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied;  
for ev'ry sin on him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground his body lay, light of the world by darkness slain;  
then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave he rose again!  
And as he stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me;  
for I am his and he is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the pow'r of Christ in me;  
from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.  
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand;  
till he returns or calls me home, here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

## SERMON

## Philippians 4:13



I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

- PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NIV

Gracious Savior, gentle Shepherd, children all are dear to you;  
may your loving arms enfold them in your care their whole life through.  
By your tending and protecting keep them safe in all they do.

Tender Shepherd, never leave them, never let them go astray;  
by your warning love directed, may they walk the narrow way.  
Thus direct them, thus defend them lest they fall an easy prey.

By your holy Word instruct them, fill their minds with heav'nly light;  
by your pow'rful grace convince them always to approve what's right.  
Let them feel your yoke is easy, let them find your burden light.

Taught to love the holy praises which on earth your children sing,  
with their lips and hearts, sincerely, glad thank-off'rings may they bring,  
then with all the saints in glory join to praise their Lord and King.

**PRAYER**

*Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.*

Eternal Father, your Word is a lamp for our feet and a light to our path. You inspired the Scriptures for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that your servants might be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**Lead us to love your Word more and more and to receive your message with great eagerness.**

You have given us your Word that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name. Enable us to see the wonders of your love in Christ from the beginning to the end of your holy book.

**Help us to see Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.**

Work in all your people, especially in parents, the resolve and patience to teach children the simple truths about the Savior who loves them. Walk with us as we take our children to the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb. Help them see Jesus in the Bible stories, songs, and prayers we teach. **Move us to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord.**

Provide wisdom and commitment to teachers who train our young people in our school, in Sunday Schools, and youth Bible classes. Deepen their knowledge of your Word as they prepare and share the lessons they teach. Move them to model a sincere devotion to the Scriptures.

**Lead us to plan for and support the Christian training of children.**

We thank you for enabling our congregation to provide elementary (and high school) education for our children. We know our schools are your special blessing, and we pray for the resolve to establish and maintain standards of excellence in all aspects of education. Move us to be generous in our offerings so that teachers may teach and students may learn in fitting surroundings.

**Lead us to provide Christian schools that reflect the immensity of your love.**

Bless the schools and teachers who prepare public ministers of the gospel for service in our churches and around the world. Lead teachers and professors to be faithful to your Word and provide insights that enable them to pass on your truth to their students. Ignite the zeal of young men and women to be willing and eager to share the truths of Scripture with others. Move us to support with our prayers and gifts the schools our synod has established.

**We pray that you send workers in your harvest fields.**

Work in us that we may find the lasting value of growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Lead us to be faithful in our own personal study of the Scriptures and in participating in regular Bible classes.

Rid us of all thoughts that Christian education ends in our youth. Make us life-long students of your precious Word.

**Lead us to believe that at every age your Word remains a lamp for our feet and a light to our path.**

How can the young keep their path pure? By living according to your Word. Even when we are old and gray, lead us to meditate on your decrees that we may delight in your wonderful deeds.

**Do good to your servants, Lord, according to your Word. Amen.**

#### **LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

**M:** Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen!**

#### **BLESSING**

**M:** Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace. **Amen.**



CLOSING HYMN

*“Ready, Lord”*

**Let All the People Praise You - A Songbook**

Ready, Lord, I’m ready, Lord, to follow where you lead;  
Oh, show me, Lord, just show me, Lord, the service you will need.  
Ready, Lord, I’m ready, Lord, I’m ready, come what may,  
So call me, Lord, just call me, Lord, and I’ll be on your way.

Feed your lambs, I’ll feed your lambs, and first of all with food;  
Give them drink and comfort them and build their fortitude.  
Then I’ll feed them with the Word you fed me with until  
They’re ready, Lord, so ready, Lord, to go and do your will.

More than words, yes, more than words I know you want from me;  
Moving, Lord, I’m moving, Lord, I’m moving eagerly.  
Take my heart and take my hands, my feet, my life, my all;  
I’m ready, Lord, yes, ready, Lord, to follow till I fall.

If today’s my final day, my final day on earth,  
Thank you, Lord, oh, thank you, Lord, for life, for breath, for birth.  
If this town is gonna be my final resting place,  
I’m ready, Lord, yes, ready Lord, to meet you face- to- face.

Feed your lambs, I’ll feed your lambs your words of truth alone;  
Fill their hearts with saving faith and claim them as your own.  
Let me feed them with the Word you fed me with until  
They’re ready, Lord, so ready, Lord, to go and do your will.

**OFFERING** (Please fill out friendship pads on the pews)

*If you prefer online giving, you may scan  
this code with your mobile device.*



*You heard our school children sing today.  
Tuition Grant Fund envelopes are available in the pew rack to  
support affordable tuition for our school.)*

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I CAN DO ALL THINGS  
THROUGH CHRIST WHO  
STRENGTHENS ME!  
-PHIL 4:1



WHAT WE THINK

I CAN DO ALL THINGS  
THROUGH CHRIST WHO  
STRENGTHENS ME!  
-PHIL 4:1



WHAT PAUL MEANT

SKYE JETHANI