

## 12th Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 16:13-20

LSB HYMNS: 818, 645, 909, 576, 628, 644.

### INTROIT: Psalm 138

P I shall give thanks to You with all my heart;

**C before the gods I shall sing praise to You.**

P I shall bow down toward Your holy temple, and I shall give thanks to Your name, because of Your mercy and because of Your truth.

**C For You have made Your name and Your Promise greater than everything else.**

P On the day when I called, You answered me.

**C You used strength to make me confident in my soul.**

P All the kings of the earth will give You thanks, O LORD,

**C because they have heard the Words of Your mouth.**

P May they sing about the Ways of the LORD!

**C For the glory of the LORD is great.**

P For, although the LORD is high, He regards lowly people.

**C Yet He knows the haughty person from afar.**

P Although I walk in the middle of trouble, You will keep me alive.

**C You will stretch out Your hand against the anger of my enemies and Your right hand will save me.**

P The LORD will fulfil His purpose to protect me.

**All: Your mercy, O LORD, endures for ever. Do not forsake the works of Your hands!**

**COLLECT:** Almighty God, whom to know is everlasting life, grant us to know Your Son, Jesus, to be the way, the truth, and the life that we may boldly confess Him to be the Christ and steadfastly walk in the way that leads to life eternal; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### Readings

**Old Testament: Isaiah 51:1-6**

**Epistle: Romans 11:33-12:18**

**Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all Amen.

The text for our sermon for this Sunday is written in the book of Matt 16:13-20 which was our gospel reading before

**13** When Jesus came to the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

**14** They answered, “Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”

**15** He asked them, “You, however, who do you say I am?”

**16** Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

**17** Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but My Father, who is in heaven. **18** I also tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I shall build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. **19** I shall give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you tie up on earth will be tied up in heaven; and whatever you untie on earth will be untied in heaven.” **20** Then He warned the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ.

Lord God, Heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. **Amen.**

Dear friends in Christ,  
Peace be with you

The Gospel for this day contains a great deal that was crucial for the Reformation in Martin Luther's day. One of the challenges in preaching today's Gospel is that a lot of the controversy does not come out in the English translation of this reading. This is one of those times when we really need to dabble a little bit in the original Greek in order to understand what all the fuss is about. I will do my best to make this as painless as possible.

The problem is in the Greek name for Peter and the Greek word for rock. If I substitute those words from the original Greek, I think you'll get the point. Jesus answered, "... I tell you, you are Πέτρος, [*Petros, Peter,*] and on this πέτρα [*petra, rock,*] I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Did you hear that? Between Πέτρος [*Peter,*] and πέτρα [*rock,*] - there's not a lot of difference in the sound of those two words. In fact, it doesn't take much of a stretch to change Peter's name to Rocky.

There were a lot of people in Luther's day who were willing to say, "Πέτρος, πέτρα, To-MAY-to, To-MAH-to, Po-TAY-to, Po-TAH-to, let's call the whole thing off. Many insisted that when Jesus said He would build the house on the πέτρα, He meant Peter as the first pope. Many point to this verse as the founding of the Papacy with Peter as the first pope. Hopefully, you can now see why this verse was important to the reformation of Martin Luther's time.

Let's take a closer look at the difference between the words Πέτρος (Peter) and πέτρα (rock). When you hear an "AH" ending on a word, think feminine - for example: Robert / Roberta; Marcus / Marcia; Paul / Paula; Andrew / Andrea; and so forth. The "AH" sound at the end of the word πέτρα means that it is a feminine form of the word for rock - sort of like the mother of all rocks, like \*Mt Augustus in Western Australia or Gibraltar at the entrance to the Mediterranean. Peter's name, Πέτρος, is very definitely masculine and so the two words don't go together. The grammar of the sentence forces us to look away from Peter as the rock upon which Jesus promised to build His church. We need to find something in today's Gospel that might be symbolized by a feminine form of the word rock.

Now, it so happens that the Greek word for confession, ὁμολογία, [*homologia: an agreement, confession,*] is a feminine noun. And it just so happens that we have Peter's confession, "*Petros' homologia,*" "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,**" in today's Gospel. We also see that Jesus made a big deal out of the fact that Peter could not know this all by himself, but that God the Father had supplied this confession to Peter. Jesus even stated that Peter was blessed because of this confession. Both the context and the grammar indicate that Jesus did not say that He would build His church on Peter. Instead, Jesus stated that He would build His church on Peter's confession, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**"

John the Evangelist incorporated this confession in the theme verse for his Gospel. He wrote, "**Jesus also performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which have not been written in this book.** <sup>31</sup> **However, these things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you may have life in His name.**" [John 20:30-31.] These words teach us that faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is the faith that receives eternal life in Jesus' name. When Peter confessed, "You are the Christ ..." he's saying that Jesus is the anointed one, the Christ, the Messiah.

The anointed offices of Israel are prophet, priest, and king. In Jesus, we have the perfect fulfillment of all three. As the king He not only established the law, but He keeps it perfectly. As the prophet He not only speaks for God, but He also fulfills all the words God spoke through His prophets. As the priest He not only offers up the sacrifice for sin, but He Himself is the sacrifice for sin.

It's at the cross that we see what it means to be the Christ. There on the cross is the Christ sacrificing Himself for the sins of the world. There is the Christ, the rock on which the church is built.

With His suffering and death on the cross, Christ has overcome sin. Since death is the result of sin, Christ has also defeated death. Resurrection must follow the victory that Christ won for us on the cross. It's with His resurrection from the grave that Jesus finished showing the disciples and us what it means to be the Christ. It is after the resurrection that **"Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what Scripture has said: 'The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day;"** [Luke 24:45-46.]

It's with the complete picture of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection that we have a complete picture of what it means to be the Christ. It's with this complete picture that we begin to understand Peter's confession, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**

We cannot make this confession in our own flesh and blood. It is not something we will develop through our own speculation. It must come from outside of us. The Father sends the Holy Spirit to do just that. The Holy Spirit works in us through word and sacrament to establish and maintain our faith. It's only by that faith that we can truly make this confession.

The interesting thing is that Peter himself did not understand his own confession. Peter and most of the people who waited for the Messiah were waiting for someone who would re-establish the Kingdom of Israel as it had once been under King David. They were waiting for a saviour from the oppression of the Roman occupation. Even those who looked for a saviour from sin were expecting a display of power - a glorious victory over evil. The idea of victory through humility, suffering, and death was not part of their thinking.

Even today a lot of people don't understand the true meaning of the Christ. Some say Jesus was a great moral teacher, but nothing more. Others see Him as a life coach. Still others see Him as an example. Some people get really cosmic and say that there is a Christ consciousness inside each of us. *[A bit like the Buddhist'.]*

Jesus Christ still asks the question, **"Who do you say that I am?"** There are many who still don't understand the true meaning of the Christ, but the truth never changes. Peter's confession, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,"** is still the right answer to that question. It's on that confession that Jesus is building His church.

Because none of the disciples understood Peter's confession, Jesus ordered them to keep it to themselves for the time being. When the time was right - after Jesus rose from the dead and showed Himself to the disciples - after the Holy Spirit changed everything on Pentecost - after the disciples were able to give an eye witness testimony of the true Christ - Peter and all the other disciples proclaimed Jesus as the Christ from the western end of the Mediterranean Sea to the borders of India in the east.

Today we heard Peter's confession as it's recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew. We can proclaim this confession in our words and in our songs. We can proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Since we live after the resurrection, we can know that the Christ is the one who lived a perfect life for us, carried our sins to death on a cross, and rose from the dead to in order to take away our sin and give us His righteousness.

We who have this faith in Jesus as the Christ have a relationship with God that will last forever. Jesus promised that He would always dwell with us while we lived on this earth. He has also promised that we who believe will live with Him forever when we leave this world. The blessing of this confession is way

better than anything our speculation can provide. And because it comes from God the Father Almighty, we know it is the truth. Amen

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.

**C Amen**

**3rd Hymn: 909,**

\* Mount Augustus National Park is located 852 km north of Perth, 490 km by road east of Carnarvon and 390 km northwest of Meekatharra, in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia.

### **Prayer of the Church 12th Sunday after Pentecost**

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

*Brief silence*

P Heavenly Father, You revealed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ and Your beloved Son. Bless the Church, that we always confess this, even in the midst of persecution and hostility. Do not let our faith grow faint, but renew our minds, that we be not conformed to this world. Help us to test what we see and hear, that we may discern Your will and rejoice in all that is good and acceptable and perfect. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Almighty God, we ask that You would grant health and wisdom to those in authority, that they may carry out their duties according to Your will, protecting us from violence and evil and maintaining peace and righteousness. Let our land be filled with citizens who love You with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, and who love their neighbours as themselves. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P God of Abraham, he was only one when You called him, but You blessed and multiplied him. So bless and multiply us with children. Protect mothers with child, and equip fathers, that they may lead and raise their households in the fear and love of You. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Kind Master, remember all who cry out to You in their time of need [*especially:*

]. Grant each one Your peace, Your healing

and Your comfort. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Merciful Lord, Your salvation goes out, and Your righteousness draws near to us here in this supper we are about to receive. Let us eat and drink worthily, trusting in Your promises, that as we depart, we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to You. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Ever-living One, receive our thanks for all who have departed this life in Your faith and friendship. Bring us with them to the feast of joy that has no end, in the kingdom of Your Son. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**4th Hymn: 576,**