

INVOCATION

P: In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

OPENING SENTENCES Psalm 18:46-50

P: The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock!

C: Exalted be God my Savior!

P: He is the God who avenges me,

**C: who subdues nations under me,
who saves me from my enemies.**

**P: You exalted me above my foes;
from a violent man You rescued me.**

**C: Therefore I will praise you, LORD, among the nations;
I will sing the praises of Your name.**

P: He gives His king great victories;

**C: He shows unfailing love to His anointed,
to David and to His descendants forever.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

(Time of Reflection to repent before God our waywardness and rebellious nature)

P: Our Father in heaven,

C: we admit that we do not live up to the family name into which You have brought us. We are more ready to resent than to forgive, more ready to manipulate than to serve, more ready to fear than to love, more ready to keep our distance than to welcome, more ready to compete than to help. At the root of this behavior is mistrust. We do not love one another as we should, because we do not believe that You love us as you do.

Forgive us our cold unbelief. And make more vivid to us the meaning and depth of Your love at the cross. Show us what it cost You to give up your Son that we might receive joyfully and thankfully the precious gift of adoption into Your beloved family. We ask this in the name of Jesus our righteousness. Amen.

P: Jesus said to Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Having confessed your sins and lifted your eyes in faith to the cross of Jesus, where God paid the debt of sin for the world, receive now the benefits of His holy cross. Your sins, though they are many, are forgiven; in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: God has opened the door of the kingdom to you through Christ. As we journey toward that door, let extend to others the grace and mercy God has shown us. And with the Psalmist proclaim:

C: "The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock!
Exalted be God my Savior!

SHARING THE PEACE

SONG OF PRAISE

"How Great is Our God"

Pastor Vern and Marty Lintvedt

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

Almighty God, You inspired Peter to confess Jesus as the Christ, Your living Son. Keep Your Church firm on the rock of this faith, that in unity and peace the Savior will be proclaimed throughout the world until the end of time as the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Your people. This we ask through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING *Isaiah 51:1–6*
(The salvation of the Lord will be forever.)

**“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,
you who seek the LORD:
look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.
Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
that I might bless him and multiply him.
For the LORD comforts Zion;
he comforts all her waste places
and makes her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the LORD;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.**

**“Give attention to me, my people,
and give ear to me, my nation;
for a law will go out from me,
and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.
My righteousness draws near,
my salvation has gone out,
and my arms will judge the peoples;
the coastlands hope for me,
and for my arm they wait.
Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;
but my salvation will be forever,
and my righteousness will never be dismayed.**

L: This is the Word of the Lord.
C: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE *Romans 11:33–12:8* (We are one Body in Christ.)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

**“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”**

**“Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”**

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

VERSE *Ephesians 2:19b–20*

**P: Alleluia. You are fellow citizens with the saints
and members of the household of God,**

**C: built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone. Alleluia.**

HOLY GOSPEL *Matthew 16:13–20*

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixteenth chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord. C: Praise to You, O Christ.

HYMN No. 761 Rock of Ages

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood, From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure: Cleanse me from its guilt and pow’r.

Not the labors of my hands Can fulfill Thy Law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling.
Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath, When mine eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown, See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.

SERMON

“Upon This Rock!”

Pastor Vern

Matthew 16:13-20

The 1st Century A.D. in the year of our Lord, was a time of great confusion. Like today there were competing ideas about religion, about God, about the Scriptures that were being debated leaving the people in a continual state of confusion.

Jesus brings attention to that confusion when he was with His disciples in the region of Caesarea Philippi, just above the northern border of ancient Israel, when he asked his disciples this question: “Who do the people say that I am?” It seems like a game of Family Feud when the disciples immediately came up with answers: John the Baptist came the first reply. And the Survey says: John the Baptist, the number one answer. Why?

Certainly John’s recent execution at the hands of King Herod was fresh on the people’s minds. John had a strong and strange magnetism preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand combined to a strong appeal to repent. Jesus’ message was similar. John’s clothing, diet and lifestyle were reminiscent of the prophet Elijah, who was the second on the survey. But why Elijah?

Isaiah 40:3–4 spoke of a voice crying out to prepare the way of the Lord in the desert which is who John identified with when asked if he was the Messiah;

Malachi 3:1 also prophesied of a messenger preparing God’s way. But then in

Malachi 4:5–6, God sends the prophet Elijah before the “great and awesome day of the Lord comes.”

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

Based on this passage and also on the fact that Elijah did not die but was taken up to heaven directly (2 Kings 2:9–12), Jewish tradition spoke often of the future return of Elijah.

The third name on the survey was Jeremiah (or one of the prophets). So others were speculating that Jesus was not John, nor Elijah but Jeremiah – Why? Perhaps because both preached judgment and had hard words concerning people’s trust in the Temple. And finally, their tag “Jeremiah or one of the prophets” in general, ends the list of guesses.

Then Jesus turns to his disciples asks, “Who do YOU say that I am.” They had all been with Jesus during His ministry of preaching, healing and doing things no mortal man could do. But it is the impulsive disciple Peter who blurts out, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” That seemed to stop the rest of them dead in their tracks. It’s easy for us to think, why of course this is who Jesus is, because we have read the book. We know the end of the story. They had not. Truth is, the disciples were probably just as confused as any of the people they had surveyed. Whether they agreed or disagreed they would wait to hear Jesus’ response to Peter’s extraordinary confession. How did He respond?

“Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah.” We’re used to hearing our full name when we’re in trouble. Not this time. Blessed are you! Jesus says to Peter affirming his answer to the question, Who do you think that I am.

He explains, “For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you...” This wasn’t something Peter had read in the weekly Jerusalem Journal. Certainly the Pharisees and Priests, and Scribes didn’t refer to Jesus this way. Jesus continues, it wasn’t a human being who told you this “but my Father in heaven.” God the Father communicated to Simon Peter through the Word. What word? The Word made flesh who had been dwelling among them. God enabled Peter to see the deity hidden behind Jesus’ humanity and simply confessed what God had shown him.

Peter was a simple fisherman – no theological training to speak of. Only what he had learned from Jesus’ preaching, teaching and signs and wonders which He performed every day. It appears that none of the other disciples were prepared to make that kind of confession at that point. But to Peter, it seemed obvious!

Now here’s an important point. Peter had no grounds for boasting. God had given him eyes to see. God the Father uncovered the human veil that hid Jesus’ divine majesty. He had absolutely no grounds for boasting. God chose to reveal His Son to Peter who was the recipient of the revelation. And now, through Peter’s confession, all the disciples were privy to that insight.

In what follows Jesus makes use of a play on words to reveal the plan of salvation for the world.

He continues, “You are Peter and upon THIS ROCK, I will build my church... More confusion I’m sure! WAIT JESUS! You’re the Christ, the Son of the living God and you’re going to build Your church on PETER? You’ve got to be kidding!

They don’t express this but they surely had to be thinking it. And for once they got this part right. This is certainly speculation and not in the text, but think about it. Peter is the kind of guy who talks before He thinks, He acts before his brain is engaged. I can identify. Watch how quickly the Lord goes from Blessing him to rebuking him.

In the scene immediate after the text for today, vss 21-23. Just after Peter’s great Confession Jesus began to talk about His journey – He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the 3rd day be raised.

Peter must have been feeling pretty important after his promotion to becoming the person upon whom Christ would build His church, because He immediately took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This SHALL NEVER happen to you!

But Jesus turns to Peter and says, “Get behind me Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man!”

You see, as quickly as Jesus blesses Peter for seeing and confessing what God had revealed to him regarding Jesus, now Jesus is calling him Satan and a Hindrance! Wow! How does that happen.

Jesus is gifted with wisdom in His words and the play on words he used is no accident.

So what does he mean when he says, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.” If not on Peter the man, upon who or what will He build His church?

I need to take you to Greek class for a moment. This isn't rocket science. These are words even the untrained can identify and understand. The word Jesus used for Peter's nickname in the Greek language is "Petros." Petros is a masculine noun which means rock or stone and it refers to a stone that you might pick up to throw on a smooth lake to watch it skip on the water. It is small, moveable, it rolls about.

I mentioned it was a masculine noun. Unlike our English language many other languages use what is called a "Gramatical Gender." Nouns have a gender regardless of whether they are male or female or neither. I am always amused that in the German tongue, a spoon (der Loeffle) is masculine, while a fork (die Gabel) is feminine and a knife (das Messer) is neuter. So while Jesus refers to Peter as the Petros, He uses similar word with a different gender to describe the "rock upon which he would build His church" The feminine word is "Petra" meaning a protruding rock from a mountain, immovable, large, stable. This is really important to understanding this verse.

Jesus wasn't saying He was going to build the church on Peter (Petros) this small, movable, unstable and rolling rock. He was going to build it on the Rock (Petra). Who is the ROCK? Peter already said it: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, a monolithic figure, strong, immovable, and stable.

Peter himself applies a prophecy to Christ, listen carefully to his words in 1 Peter 2:6

[6] For it stands in Scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." (ESV)

The Apostle Paul helps us further. He points to the Israelites who were rescued by God from bondage to Egypt. But listen carefully to his interpretation of that event in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

[1] For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, [2] and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [3] and all ate the same spiritual food, [4] and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (ESV)

Do you see, Peter was blessed not because He had figured everything out and discovered the secret of Christ's nature. He was blessed because God revealed to him who Christ was and even gave him the words to confess Jesus as the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. Christ is the foundation stone of the church. Jesus is the Mt. Everest of upon whom He will build his church.

This revelation, this confession of faith is so powerful, Jesus says, "and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. Hades in Scripture is the Realm of the dead. If the gates of Hades or Hell cannot prevail against the truth of this confession. Look out folks! This means death itself will not prevail over our faith in Jesus the Christ, our ROCK!

Remember when Lazarus had died in John 11, and Jesus was comforting Martha through this tragedy. ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.^[a] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

It must have been an OMG moment when Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb and out of the tomb wrapped in burial cloths walked their loved one. And the One who called forth his friend out of the realm of the dead is the same One who will call you and me and everyone who holds this confession of faith. UPON THIS ROCK (Petra), and no other, I will build my church and gates of Hell will not prevail against it. AMEN!

CONFESSION OF FAITH THE APOSTLES' CREED *stand*

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

And 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 sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence 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.

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

LORD'S PRAYER (*Matthew 6:9-13*)

P: Remember us in Your kingdom, Lord, and teach us to pray:

All: 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.

BLESSING OF THE LORD *Numbers 6:24–26*

P The LORD bless you and keep you.
The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The LORD look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

C: Amen.

SENDING

P: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

CLOSING SONG “Build Your Kingdom Here” by Rend Collection