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St. John Lutheran Church
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“On This Rock I Will Build My Church”

God’s PEACE is ALWAYS YOURS in Jesus.

Hear the Word of God from Matthew 16,

“When Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do the people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, ‘Some say ‘John the Baptist’, others say ‘Elijah’, and still others say ‘Jeremiah’, or ‘one of the prophets’.

‘But what about you?’ He asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’

Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ! The Son of the living God!’

Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon, Son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and upon this Rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.’

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

So Who is Jesus? That’s the question that everyone has to deal with, and if you don’t deal with it; that question will end up dealing with you. So Who is Jesus? It’s a question that everyone has to answer, and salvation itself hangs on the answer!

Jesus asked His disciples two questions: "**Who do people say that I am?**" and "**Who do you say that I am?**" Now one thing I think is interesting is that Jesus popped this question in Caesaria Philippi. Caesarea Philippi was a place where Baal had been worshipped hundreds of years earlier by the locals. Then the Greek god 'Pan' was worshiped here. Then Herod the Great built a marble temple to Caesar in this place, and all the people were to confess: "*Caesar Is Lord*", on pain of death. It's this same place where Jesus now says to His disciples "***Who do people say that I am?***" That's the question that everyone has to deal with, and if you don't deal with it, that question will end up dealing with you.

The answers were varied and predictable. '*Some say John the Baptizer, returned from the dead. Some say Elijah, who was supposed to appear before the Messiah. Some say Jeremiah or one of the prophets*'. In other words, the people in Jesus' day, were doing just like most people try to do today, when they want to keep Jesus at a comfortable distance. Many people today will say something nice about Jesus, without going all the way, and saying: "***He is the only Savior we've got! He is the only way back from the dead! He is the only way out of hell! Only His blood forgives our sins.***" So a lot of people today will say nice things about Jesus, "Well, I think Jesus was a great teacher". Others will say, "I think Jesus was a great moral example." Some will say, "I think Jesus is a buddy." All of it's nice, of course; even true. But it's not even close to WHO Jesus said He was!

For example, Jesus said in John 3, "***Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; but whoever rejects the Son will not see life.***" Now do you see how you're not going to 'get off' by just saying something nice about Jesus? It's all or nothing. Now Jesus made some outrageous claims. He said, "I'm God!" He said, "I'm the Son of God." He said, "***I'm the way, the truth, and the life; and no one comes to my Father in heaven, except through me.***" He said, "***I'm the Resurrection and the Life, and whoever believes in Me will live forever, even if they die.***" C.S. Lewis once wrote about all the things Jesus claimed, and he concluded, by saying, "Either Jesus is a liar, or He's a lunatic, or He's the only Lord and Savior you've got. And there is no neutral ground.' No happy agnostic, "Gee I just don't know". Either Jesus is Lord and Savior, or He isn't. The resurrection of Jesus says that He is. So you're going to have to deal with the resurrection of Jesus, or the resurrection will deal with you.

So Jesus says, "***Who do you say that I am?***" Never mind what the polls say, what about you? Simon Peter speaks up. He always does. He's like the pesky kid in class who has all the answers. "***You are the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the living God.***" Now Peter is exactly right, at least on paper. Jesus is the Christ. He is the Messiah. He is the fulfillment of all God promises. He is the Savior, come to Save you. You couldn't get a more correct answer than Peter's. So Jesus says, "***Blessed are you, Simon. For you didn't think this up on your own. This was given to you by my Father in heaven.***" No merit badges here. Luther says, the greatest miracle God ever gave us was when He brought us to faith in Jesus. To be able to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, is a gift. Remember your catechism, "***I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him.***" I Corinthians 12, "***No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.***"

Notice: as long as Simon is confessing Jesus as the Christ, and the Son of God, Simon is rock solid. In fact, Jesus even changes Simon's name and says, "***I tell you that you are Peter (the name Peter means Rock) and upon this Rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.***" But now we have to deal with a critical point. When Jesus says, "***I tell you that you are Peter and upon this Rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.***" What is the "ROCK" that Jesus is going to build His church upon? The Catholics would say that the ROCK that Jesus is going to build His church upon is Peter, and all the popes that followed Peter; the Lutherans say that the ROCK is Jesus Christ, that Peter just confessed. We Lutherans believe that the ROCK is Peter's confession of Christ, not Peter Himself. Now let me make my case "WHY" we say that.

First of all, there's nothing solid about Peter, except when He's confessing Christ. Other than that, Peter's getting everything wrong. Sometimes Peter is rock solid. When Jesus asks him, "***Who do you say I am?***" And Peter says, "***You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.***" Right there, he's rock solid. But as soon as Jesus tells Peter, that He has to go to the cross, and bleed and die to forgive us our sins, we're told that Peter actually "***took Jesus aside, and began to scold Him. So Jesus rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, satan, for you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'***" So much for Papal infallibility. Peter is not the rock the church is built upon. The crucified and risen Savior is! **Page 3**

In Matthew 14, the disciples are caught out in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. At first Peter boldly takes Jesus at His Word, gets out of the boat, and walks on the water. That's rock-solid faith. But then Peter takes His eyes off of Jesus, and looks at the storm, and begins to sink like a rock. So He cries out, "**Lord, save me.**" And we're told, "**Immediately, Jesus reached down, and caught Him.**" So who's the rock the church is built upon? Peter, who is sinking? Or Jesus, Who walks on water, and holds Peter safe in the storm? Are you sure you want the church built on Peter?

In Matthew 26, Jesus predicts that one of the apostles will betray Him to death. And for a moment, Peter is rock solid and says, '*Even if everyone else denies You, Lord, I will never deny you.*' And yet that very night, "*before the cock crowed twice, Peter denied Jesus three times,*' to save his skin; while at the same time, Jesus, "*Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at God's right hand – Victoriously!*" Are you sure you want the church to be built on Peter, rather than the Savior that Peter confessed?

In Acts 4, Peter is arrested for boldly proclaiming Christ Crucified, and Christ Risen as the ONLY Savior! At times Peter can be rock solid. This was like hitting a Grand Slam. Peter said in Acts 4, "*There is no other name, under the heavens, by which we must be saved (but that of Jesus)*'. And yet, it wasn't long after that, that Peter started to teach that one's salvation partly rests on our own works. And when Peter did that, Paul took Peter aside in Galatians 2, and gave Peter a "chewing out" for teaching false doctrine. Are you sure Peter is the Rock you want the church built upon? Jesus is the One Who is always Rock-Solid, and we're told, "*He was always faithful, even unto death, even death on a cross.*" There's your Rock; not Peter.

In fact, there's another way that we can show, that the Rock that the Lord is going to build His church upon is Jesus, and the confession of Jesus as Savior; and not Peter. Because whenever the Bible uses the Word or Phrase "ROCK", for a person, outside of Matthew 16 - it's almost always referring to Jesus or the Lord; and the few exceptions are when it's referring to false idols, as little rocks that crumble. Otherwise, it's always the Lord.

Deuteronomy 32:4, ***“The Lord is the Rock. His works are perfect.”***

2 Samuel 22:2, ***‘The Lord is my Rock, my fortress, and my deliverer. My God is my rock, in Whom I take refuge.’***

2 Samuel 22:32, ***“Who is God besides the Lord? And who is The Rock, except our God?”***

Psalms 66:1-2, ***“My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him alone. He alone is my Rock, and my salvation. He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”***

And we could go on and on. The Scriptures refer to the Lord as our “ROCK” in almost 50 different places.

As long as Peter confesses Jesus correctly, then Jesus says Peter is a Rock, because his faith is rock-solid; but as soon as Peter gets Jesus wrong, and tries to keep Jesus from going to the cross, then Jesus says to Peter, in no uncertain terms, ***“Get behind me, satan.”*** Notice, once Peter takes His eyes off of Jesus as the Savior who dies to forgive us, then the gates of hell do conquer Him. ***“Get behind me, Satan!”*** When you let go of crucified and risen Jesus, as our only Savior, then you’re not rock solid any more. Those who would flatter Jesus by saying nice things about Him, but refuse that we are only saved by Christ’s bloody death on Calvary, are on sinking sand. And if you try to deny Christ Crucified and Christ Risen, as your only Savior, Jesus will say the same thing to you: ***“Get behind me Satan!”***

There is nothing in all of life more rock solid than Jesus. When the church is built upon our Rock Solid, Savior, Whose blood has totally satisfied God’s anger against us; Who swallowed up death forever; Who took our place in hell and paid it all; and Who check back out of His grave alive, and unlocked heaven’s doors for us; then we can be confident, that not even the gates of hell will prevail against us!

Talk about a rock solid Savior! ***“He was tempted in every way we are, but did not sin.”*** Where we got life wrong, He got life right, so He could give us His righteousness. Romans 3, ***“This righteousness from God, come through faith in Jesus to all who believe.”***

Talk about a rock solid Savior! Jesus went to hell and back to save you. He went through Hell and High Water to redeem you. When He cried out, ***“My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?”*** at that moment He was suffering and paying your hell; so that you would never have to say those words yourself, in Christ!

Talk about a rock solid Savior! Even though Jesus went all the way down to hell for us; He made it back out alive, and He gave proof of it, when He rose again on Easter morning. And because the gates of hell were not able to conquer Christ, Jesus promises those who are baptized into Him, and trust in Him, ***“The gates of hell will not prevail against my church.”***

Talk about a rock solid Savior! We have a Savior that not even tombstones and rock graves can hold. Psalm 18 says, ***“The Lord lives! Praise be to My Rock!”*** Jesus man-handled death, and walked right out of His stone cold grave on Easter morning. The angels didn't roll away the stone to let Christ out. He was already gone. The angels rolled away the stone to let you in, on the greatest news the world has ever received, ***‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even if he dies.’***

And finally, not only is Christ crucified and Christ risen the ROCK of our salvation, but as you hold onto Jesus, your life in Christ is also ROCK SOLID. 1 Peter 2, ***“As you come to Him, the living stone – rejected by men, but chosen by God – you also, like living stones are being built into a spiritual house...and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”*** On that ROCK, crucified and risen Jesus, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it! Amen.

And now may the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the one true faith unto life everlasting. AMEN!