



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon for the Twelfth Sunday of Pentecost 2017

*The Rock on which Christ builds His  
church!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 16, 13-20:

- 13 And when Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea of Philip, he began to ask his disciples, saying, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some [say that the Son of Man is] John the Baptist, but others [say that the Son of Man is] Elijah, and still others [say that the Son of Man is] Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
- 15 He did say to them, “But *you*—who do you say me that I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered and said, “*You* are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- 17 Jesus answered and said to him, “You are *blessed*, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal [this] to you, but my Father in heaven [revealed it].
- 18 And I also say to you that *you* are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and Hades’ gates will not win the victory over it.
- 19 I will give to you the keys of the reign of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.”
- 20 Then he ordered his disciples that they tell no one that he himself was the Christ.
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts for Your Words of Life so that our mouths will confess steadfastly the Truth of Christ Jesus. Amen.*

### • **Dear Beloved of God!**

- “*Who do people say that the Son of Man is*” Jesus wanted to know from His twelve disciples. We would say: Who do people say Jesus is? Who is Jesus? This is the question. And, after all these years, this is *still* the question!
- So, what are people saying? We know what they are saying: Most other religions say, He is a prophet. Others are saying, a man who taught a high moral standard and managed to follow it. Still others are saying that Jesus is a teacher, a life-couch, a motivational speaker, a good example. Then there are others who claim that they don’t know if He even existed. Then there is this very popular answer, how can one be certain to confess, to declare to say He IS ...
- And Jesus hit closer to home, when He directly asked His disciples, when He

asks us this morning, *“But who do you say that I am?”*

- We cannot avoid this question! Jesus wants to hear our confession whilst still alive on this earth, which is perishing away!
- Now for those of you, who have already given that confession this passage will reveal how did we get to make the right confession and continue to do so! How is it possible that we believe, teach and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? This, in a time, where the whole world is sceptical that one can know anything for certain. The hippest thing of our days is to claim, I am still searching for the truth, I don't know! It is considered one of the greatest evils is to say “I know”- immediately you are placed in the fundamentalist corner.
- Where does this confession come from? To get some light onto this, we need to go back to the origin of the confession.
- There we find Jesus and His twelve disciples, in Cæsarea of Phillip, a town far removed from the place which was the considered the center of Israël, namely Jerusalem. Right there, for the first time, the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, was spoken by a human being, namely by Simon, the son of John.
- But, very important, immediately after Simon confessed the truth of Jesus Christ, Jesus answered him!! Simon had confessed: *“You are the Christ ...”* “Jesus responded with a confession, [17] *“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonab! ...”* And then comes the reason for the blessing, *“For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”* Simon is not praised for his own great insight; he is pronounced blessed because God the Father has revealed the Son to him. Flesh and blood did not reveal this to Peter. It was definitely not his decision, but God's Confession given to him. It was the Father speaking through Simon! God used Simon like a prophet. It was inspired speech.
- And now Jesus says to Simon who he, Simon is- Jesus gives him a new name which signifies the foundation of Jesus' assembly or church, namely *“you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ...”*
- On this confessional person Jesus will build His church. Jesus had asked all disciples ‘who do you (plural) say that I am’ and Simon Peter, who definitely acted

as a kind of a spokesperson on behalf of the Twelve disciples gave the right confession, inspired by God the Father.

- And we know that this is what Jesus started doing, later after His death and resurrection, when He sent all eleven disciples out to make disciples of all nations by baptising them and teaching them all that He, Christ, had commanded them. That is how Jesus is building His church.

- With the Twelve Christ had called and taught He was laying the foundation and we see, they had become channels of God's revelation, especially with regard to the specific confession of who Jesus is!

- Let us focus on the first part of Simon Peter's confession, that Jesus is the Christ, because at the end of the passage Jesus specifically charged His disciples not to tell anyone that He is the Christ.

- What exactly was so new about this declaration? On a previous occasion, when Peter wanted to walk on water, they had all worshipped Him saying, "*Truly You are the Son of God*".

- The shocking new truth revealed to Simon by God the Father is, that God's own beloved Son is the Messiah, is the anointed Christ. The One on whom all of Israel was counting to fulfil the promises of the OT prophecies has already arrived- the Son of God Himself is the Messiah!

- Yet, here He is far removed from Jerusalem. And who realised the truth? Not the leaders of national Israel, the Pharisees and scribes of the temple. No. The poor in the Spirit, those of little faith know it and now for the first time confess it. But, where- so far removed from the center stage! This seems to be turning out into a huge disaster! How will this turn out? How would all the people know about this? Was God's plan going wrong?

- That cannot be, because Jesus strictly charged them NOT to tell anyone the very new thing that had been revealed to them! So, there was more going on, more going to come!

- In the very next sentence it says that [16,21], "*Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*" There we have God's answer in a nutshell. The Messiah, anointed by God, namely God's'

own Son was not the type of messiah the teachings of the Pharisees and scribes had in mind. He would be enthroned by suffering and dying. He would bind satan and all evil forces, all sin and even death, by being bound to the Cross and death on Golgotha. He would loosen up all people bound to the wrong teaching of the messiah, through the proclamation of the Word of the Cross.

- This proclamation of Jesus death and resurrection would function as the keys of the kingdom of heaven. These keys were given to Peter, the rock, on behalf of the Twelve. And all the next generations of pastors and teachers who were going to confess together with the Twelve will also bind or loose on earth by saying the same as they did.

- So, we come back to the question, who do you say Jesus IS? Those who have confessed together with the Twelve, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God know now where this confession comes from. It comes all the way from the Father, through the Son and then through the Apostles, and all the way through the generations of pastors in the one holy Christian church and by the Holy Spirit we believe, teach and confess that Jesus IS for certain, more certain than any scientific argument, more certain than anything in the world, that Jesus IS the Christ, the Son of the living God.

- The proclaimed Word of Jesus binds Satan, death, hell and our old Adam for us, so that we as His newborn disciples are free to believe, teach and confess with certainty, even if the gates of hell seem to prevail against us. We know, its a lie that the gates of hell overcomes us, its fake news. The gates of hell shall never prevail against the confessing disciple, who confesses together with Peter and the Twelve because Jesus has built you into His church. You are a member of the living Christ, the one organism which can never be destroyed.

- Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but the Father who is in heaven.

- Those who haven't made the confession and those who have drifted away from this confession, here you see the Way forward, by receiving Baptism or returning to Baptism and hearing the teaching of Christ's Word, the Truth of all truths will be revealed to you and you will also become a confessing Peter! Amen.

- *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor 13, 14).*