

The Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles  
St. Matthew 16:13-20  
June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Thou Art the Christ

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Sermon Text:**

“He saith unto them, ‘But who say ye that I am?’ And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”

**Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dearly beloved friends, today we celebrate our Feast of Title, the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles. These two saints are our namesakes. St. Paul not only wrote most of the New Testament. He was also influential in establishing the Christian Church in the Gentile world. It is because of St. Paul that we are Christians and not pagans. If he did not do his missionary work to the Gentiles, the Christian Church would only be for the Jews. We give St. Paul thanks that he heeded the voice of our Lord + Jesus Christ, so that the Christian Church could be established throughout the whole world. The same influence on the Christian Church is true of St. Peter, too. He was the close friend of our Lord + Jesus. When our Lord did something special, it was always St. Peter, and the two brothers, St. James and St. John.

It is also St. Peter who makes the good confession of Who our Lord + Jesus Christ is in the Gospel reading. This reading is a familiar reading. Our Lord asks His disciples Who men say that He is. The Jewish people had many ideas about our Lord, none of which are the right answer: He is St. John the Baptist come back from the dead; or the Prophet Elijah, or the Prophet Jeremiah, or some other prophet. At least the Jewish people recognized that the Lord + Jesus spoke the Words of God. For, they would not call Him a prophet if they did not recognize that His words came from the One, True God.

However, our Lord + Jesus is more than a prophet. He is a Prophet—Who proclaims the good news that He has come into the world, bearing our flesh from the Blessed Virgin Mary, in order that He might fulfill the whole Law and will of His heavenly Father. He is a Priest—our High Priest, Who offers up Himself as the Lamb of sacrifice for the atonement of the whole world on the tree of the holy cross, so that He might suffer for our sins, and redeem us from all unrighteousness. And, He is a King—a descendant of the line of King David Who after His death, resurrection, and ascension sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty and will come to judge the quick and the dead. He also sends out His Holy Ghost to create and strengthen faith and life in all who believe on Him through the means of grace.

Therefore, since He is more than a prophet, He asks His disciples who do they say He is. It is St. Peter who states the matter plainly and correctly. The Lord + Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Our Lord + Jesus is the Anointed One—the Christ. He is the One come into the world to redeem the world from sin, death and the power of the devil. It is upon the rock of this confession—this solid foundation of the truth of Who our Lord + Jesus is—that the Church throughout all the world is established. It is this message of truth which St. Peter would preach to the multitudes on the Day of Pentecost, and three thousand men (and their families) would receive Holy Baptism. It is this message of truth the Apostles would preach in Jerusalem and five thousand more men (and their families) would receive Holy Baptism. With this proclamation—that our Lord + Jesus is the One, True Messiah come into the world to redeem sinners—the Apostles would spread out across the globe and preach this Gospel to all the world. It is this same message that St. Paul preached to the Gentiles throughout the Roman world.

It is this same Gospel which we continue to preach in this place, so that men (and their families) might hear the good news of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, and receive Holy Baptism and receive all the gifts of God, especially faith. All this is done by the work of the Holy Ghost, Who creates and sustains faith in us. It was after all the Holy Ghost Who gave the words to St. Peter to speak the truth about our Lord. For, our Lord says to St. Peter, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.” It was the Father, Who sent the Holy Ghost, Who enlightened St. Peter’s understanding, and gave him faith in our Lord + Jesus. It is the Holy Ghost still today, Who works through the means of grace to draw us to the Lord, by filling our ears with His promises.

He promises to forgive us of our sins. He promises to give us save us from our enemies of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. He promises to grant us eternal life after this life of toil and labor is finished. He promises to grant us whatever we ask both spiritual and temporal gifts. He will grant them to us in His time and according to His will. His promises are rich, and abundant. On account of His great love for us, He desires that we rejoice in Him and His gifts.

Just like St. Peter and St. Paul proclaimed the good news of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ for poor, miserable sinners like us, we carry on that mission here in this place. We continue to preach that the Lord + Jesus is the true Son of God, come into the world to redeem sinners and grant them grace through their faith in Him. But, it is not our flesh and blood that will reveal this unto whom we proclaim the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Men will not be converted by tricks or gimmicks, or even by our winning personalities. No, my dear friends, people who hear the Gospel hear that message because the Holy Ghost has broken through their heart of stone by the Law. They have seen their sin, and realized that salvation is not found within them, but outside of them. And the Holy Ghost opens up their heart to believe in the Lord + Jesus.

This is the task we have been granted here in this place, and in all of our missions: to continue to preach the Word of God in its truth and purity, and to administer the Blessed Sacraments according to Christ’s institution, so that sinners might repent of their sins, and believe on the Lord + Jesus through the work of the Holy Ghost, and amend their sinful lives so that they live lives worthy of repentance.

We have one other promise from our Lord + Jesus. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church. When we remain faithful to the task given to us, the Lord promises that He will not allow our enemies to prevail against us. He will guard and protect us from their onslaught. That does not necessarily mean that He will give us growth in numbers or finances, but it does mean that He will protect us from falsehood. He will not allow false teaching to enter into our midst if we remain diligent in completing our task of preaching the Word of God in its truth and purity and administering the sacraments according to Christ’s institution. He has promised that wherever two or three are gathered in His Name He will be there handing out His gifts. There only needs to be a preacher and a hearer. There only needs to be a penitent sinner and a forgiver of sins.

Whatsoever sins we bind on Earth, they will be bound in Heaven. Whatsoever sins we loose on Earth, those sins will be loosed in Heaven. We hold the key to the lock of Heaven. It is our task to unlock the gates of Heaven for all those who confess their sins in contrition, desiring to amend their sinful life. We offer them an absolution to which they can cling to in faith and hope. Let us all as poor, miserable sinners cling to the promise of forgiveness found only in our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Therefore, my dear friends, let us also as the parish of Saints Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession located in Simpsonville, SC, and at all her missions, continue to walk in the footsteps of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Apostles, and proclaim to penitent sinners the forgiveness of sins that is found only in our Lord + Jesus, the Christ alone. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*