

Pentecost #12

8/23/20

Matthew 16:13-20

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Celebrate (Introduction)

“In Isaiah the people are advised to look to their ancestors as the rock from which they were hewn. Jesus declares that the church will be built on the rock of Peter’s bold confession of faith. God’s word of reconciliation and God’s mercy are keys to the church’s mission. Paul urges us to not be conformed to this world but to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, using our individual gifts to build up the body of Christ. From the table we go forth to offer our spiritual worship through word and deed.”

Opening Hymn: [“The Church’s One Foundation”](#)

Psalm 138

I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
² I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word
above everything.^[a]
³ On the day I called, you answered me,
you increased my strength of soul.^[b]
⁴ All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.--
⁵ They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
for great is the glory of the Lord.
⁶ For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far away.
⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
⁸ The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Hymn of Praise: [“All People That on Earth Do Dwell”](#)

Prayer of the Day

O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life. Be our strong foundation and form us into the body of your Son, that we may gladly minister to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

1st Reading: [Isaiah 51:1-6](#)

2nd Reading: [Romans 12:1-8](#)

The Gospel: [Matthew 16:13-20](#)

Hymn of the Day: ["Breathe On Me Breath of God"](#)

The Message: ([Video](#))

Have you ever wanted to go to some deserted island with no TV, internet, cell phone, radio, or newspaper to escape what seems to be one bad story after another. It is hard not to wish to get away from this time of fear, uncertainty, and turmoil. It is hard not to wish to avoid the news of thousands being the victims of a deadly virus. It is hard not to wish to avoid and remove ourselves from the very real tragedies which surround us every day. We need not be reminded of all the perils of today which are of man's making bringing fear and despair.

It all seems so hopeless and beyond the ability to find a way out. This is not new for mankind since time and time again people have experienced like moments and even worse. Just look at the feudal system of the dark ages or the Irish potato famine, or the Spanish inquisition, or the Third Reich. How about in this country; the Civil War and slavery, the sweat shops, child labor, injustice, racial prejudice, the great depression and dust bowl of the 1930s and of course the many wars. Mankind just seems to be its own worst enemy for it is man who brings disaster upon himself. It is mankind when left to his or her own pursuits who destroy any good which he or she has done in the past - no less destroying the good which God has bestowed upon us through His creation.

Now we often think that it would have been a blessing to live in a by-gone era like during Jesus' time. But things were no bed of roses then. The nation was divided and occupied by the Romans who kept people in line through terror tactics such as crucifixions. The diseased and the lame were outcast. Slavery was the only answer for some to escape hunger. There was even the constant fear of violating some man-made religious law or being fleeced by temple authorities when trying to fulfill mandatory religious obligations, a tax if you will. To add to their plight was suffering from the consequences of a pious, egocentric group of religious fanatics.

Into such a world God made the decision to send a savior by becoming a man who would walk in the footsteps of mankind experiencing the trials of that day. To be sure Jesus was not born into any utopian society. It was also very true that the Jews of that day were eagerly

longing for some answer to their long lived plight. Even Jesus' disciples were among those who had the hopes and dreams of finding a solution to the Jews long suffering situation. They were not exempt from believing that Jesus was the special person of God, the long awaited political Messiah. After all He referred to Himself as the Son of Man, Son of God, who spoke in the name of God and performed life-saving miracles. They thought that He had to be the very special chosen one from God.

In determining how others saw Himself, Jesus asked His disciples "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" The response was that Jesus was the reincarnation of John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or other prophets of the past. Then Jesus asked the disciples directly: "But who do you say that I am?" It was Simon Peter who answered "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." With this Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." It was this confession of Peter which Jesus said would be the rock or foundation of not a new political kingdom but the spiritual kingdom of God on earth. Jesus specifically reinforced this by saying the keys that He gave would not open the gates to a new earthly kingdom but would be the keys to open the gates to the kingdom of heaven.

The answer which God gave to those wanting a physical or political solution to the problems of earthly kingdoms was not in earthy pursuits or power. God's answer would come in the form which would be much more lasting and fulfilling. The answer which Jesus came to proclaim would be in the form of the keys to open the doors to solve the despair of a people living in tumultuous times. They were given to mankind through Peter's confession. "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." God's answer through Jesus would not be with political kings, the politicians, the CEO's, Wall Street, or political pundits, for their answers are found in hidden agendas, egocentricity, false pride, lies, and greed. These attributes of mankind are the cause of the problem and therefore cannot be the answer and solution to our earthly travesties.

The Messiah who God had sent would introduce a whole new kingdom, a kingdom which replaces the sins of man with the will of God. It is the kingdom whose citizens find citizenship through a conversion of spirit, of heart, and of soul. This citizenship would be governed by God's love and not mankind's pitfalls. This love is the key to overcoming the worse that mankind can produce. This is the key which Jesus has given to us.

Tell me what the outcome of any of our problems today would be if love would have been in control? There is no love in egocentricity, false pride, lies, and greed. Love cannot be found in life destroying motivations. Peter's confession is the key which opens the door to hope and fulfillment even when the world around us seems to be crushing down in defeat and disaster. To make such a confession is to acknowledge that there is a living God and that this God came to us as a Messiah to lead us to a new realization of other possibilities for life other than those disastrous avenues which humankind seems to love to live.

But Peter's confession is even more than such an acknowledgement it is actually living the will of the God in our lives. It is one thing to proclaim and then it is another to confess. To proclaim is just mouthing words but to confess is to live a life response to those words. Proclaiming and pontificating changes nothing but to confess is to change everything. The world has a habit of proclaiming everything in the name of what is right and good but it cannot confess the same. Our nation today is suffering from this basic problem. Therefore we have ended up where we are today.

We just have not been able to stand before Jesus and say "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God." If we would be able to confess this then things just may be different today. But the reality is that they are not. The question becomes how do we manage to survive in such a negative atmosphere. Well the answer is the same. It is through making that confession of Peter the rock and foundation of our lives. If we live God's gift of love then that is what becomes important in life. Even though our standards of living may suffer, even though the world may be in tumult, we still have that precious life giving and life fulfilling gift of the power to live God's love. We still have the joy of being able to love and to be loved. We still have the fulfillment of sharing this love and our life, along with any of its treasures and talents, with someone who is feeling the brunt of mankind's sin. We still have the peace in knowing that no one can take this love away from us. We still have that power to realize that we can make a difference not only in our own lives but within the life of others since the love of God is all powerful. Wish for a deserted island to escape it all is no answer. But to confess with Peter "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God" is what will bring ultimate victory over anything that the dismal news of the day proclaims as hopeless. Now that is the Good News!!!

Offering*

We give thee but thine own, what-e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer:

Most merciful Father, we find it so easy to say that we believe that your love is for all but so difficult to live that love. We let our biases and prejudices cloud that love even when we try to overcome them. Give them the strength of conviction in order to live your love even though it may demand personal sacrifices. We pray that we will always be emissaries of your love within this broken society. Keep us from being a part of the problem but a positive force to bring equality, justice and peace. Continue to give strength and health to all care givers during this pandemic. Comfort those who have lost loved ones as a result of the corona virus. Bring healing to all who are physically and economically struggling during this time of suffering.

We continue to pray for those who have been overtaken by the corona virus and those who are caring for them in their desperate time. Help us be sensitive to all those who are suffering at this time and work towards alleviating their pain.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Danny Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Kirk Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer: [Andrea Bocelli and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir](#)

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Savior Like A shepherd, Lead Us"](#)

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

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