

August 27, 2017
Sermon for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Matthew 6:13-20

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Matthew 16:13–20 (ESV)

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, **“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”** ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ 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.** ¹⁸ **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.** ¹⁹ **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.”** ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

When a young person is inducted into the military, he or she takes an oath, makes a solemn promise. The current oath runs something like this:

I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God (Title 10 US Code Chapter 31 § 502).

Not much different than the oath I made in May of 1986 in San Antonio. Most of the young men or women who take that oath have some sort of a vague idea that this means military service, perhaps even dangerous military service, as so many have proved. But I wonder if they really know what it means and the responsibility it entails. Looking back, I am amazed at how young we all were. Men that I thought were so old, in their 20s and 30s flying multi-million dollar B-1 bombers, carrying nuclear bombs. For that matter, I as a 19 year old had access to the nuclear bomb storage area. I can still tell you my pass code. And yet, when Cyndi and I were going on our honeymoon at age 20 we weren't allowed to check into a hotel in Arlington because we weren't 21.

Still, because I had been empowered through training and governmental authority, I, a 19 year old had access to nuclear weapons.

Did I really understand the gravity of the situation?

Nope, but that didn't stop me from doing my duty.

As a Christian, Jesus empowers us in our confession of Him to assault the very gates of hell. Most of us would be happy if He just let us get a handle on our pet sins or let us put a few dollars in the offering plate for Him to put to good use, but Jesus is not satisfied with that.

He hears the promises made in Baptism and confirmation and in every confession, and **He** empowers us through the gift of His Spirit to assault hell itself and win.

On this Rock of the confession of Jesus the Christ as Lord, He has built His church, and not even hell's gates can withstand its attack.

On this Rock, Peter would storm the gates of hell. Peter said: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" And Peter is right, but he is still a little confused.

Peter makes a great confession; he gets it right. Jesus delights in his words of confession and even says He will build his Church on it.

But if we keep reading in Matthew, Peter does not do so well with this. A few verses later Jesus calls him "Satan" because peter has in mind earthly benefits of this confession. (16:21–23).

Jesus knows that soon Peter will try to steer Him away from the cross to which He is heading' which is what the devil really wants. Anything that he can do to keep Jesus from the cross is a bad thing for us but a good thing for the devil. Satan moves Peter to try and keep Jesus from the cross. He moves Judas to go so far as to betray Jesus.

But still, that doesn't take away the reality of Peter's wonderful confession right now. Peter does get it right in this moment, and God delights in it.

And even though Peter will later blow it far worse, Jesus will use him for huge things. We know the rest of Peter's story. He will deny Christ and weep bitter tears as Jesus is tried and convicted and then he will run away and leave his Friend, the one whom he named as the Christ, to die.

But that is hardly the end. Jesus met His disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius AKA the Sea of Galilee. There He shared a meal with the disciples, and Jesus forgives Peter and re-commissions him to proclaim the Gospel. (Jn 21:15–17)

Peter will go on to be a Spirit-filled and bold witness to Jesus. On the Rock of his original confession, that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord would build His kingdom, and hell would have no defense against it.

On the same Rock, we will storm hell's gates.

Jesus and all of heaven delight in our confession of Christ as our Rock of salvation too. Most all of you have made a promise and a confession of Christ.

On the days of our Baptism and confirmation, we got it right. We confessed Jesus with the true and sturdy words of the creed. Even within our hearts we can daily confess that Jesus Christ is our Rock of salvation

God loved to hear those promises. He delighted in our words that day. He still does when we confess in the creed or informally to one another.

And Jesus does restore us when our lives deny our confession. Like Peter, we have not always lived up to those promises we made.

We have fled the embarrassment of being a Christian, the danger to our careers and our popularity. Sometimes we don't want others to know that we are Christians, even going as far as Peter did and denying Christ with an oath!

But like Peter, Christ has sought us out and restored the broken relationship. He has poured out his Holy Spirit on us.

In doing this, He has empowered us to assault the very gates of hell (vv 18b–19) despite our failures, despite our sins.

He has said that when we forgive someone, God backs up those words. Sin has trapped our neighbors; they are hell bound in their sins; they are bound by Satan's cruel chains; and we, you, are empowered to break those chains.

The sweet words of forgiveness that we may speak in Christ are the very substance of heaven. When we forgive in the name of Jesus, hell must yield before the Word of Christ. The prisoners of sin and death are then set free.

Like those soldiers who took an oath of induction, you may have stood before an altar like this one on the day of our confirmation and confessed the name of Jesus.

We made solemn promises we may not have fully understood, but God did. He loved to hear what we said, and He has promised to use us, even though, like Peter so long ago, we are flawed and sinful people.

He has made our words too, "*Jesus is the Christ,*" the rock on which the Church is built. The words we speak in Christ's name and with Christ's love are the hammer blows that crush Satan's power.

Amen.

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

Sermon Outline

Storming the Gates of Hell

Matthew 16:13-20

- I. On this Rock, Peter would storm the gates of hell.
- II. On the same Rock, we will storm hell's gates.
- III. Jesus has empowered us to assault the very gates of hell.