**8/27/23**

**The Messiah, The Rock, & The Keys**

**Matthew 16:13-20**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2 NRSV) (2) **Amen.**

Today we get three very distinct messages. So, as you can imagine there indeed is quite a lot of ground to cover, and a lot to unpack. Now, I am going to do my best to share with you my thoughts and my research. I can only hope to truly unwrap the entire Gospel Reading for you and myself today. I can only hope to be able to really relay the true points that are in and through it. Now, I admit it is very easy to get focused on one particular topic, but it is also not fair to you or myself to not share and explore the message we are provided with here this morning in its entirety. So, we are going to take a look at The Messiah, The Rock, and The Keys. Here goes nothing. God, do you got me on this one? Church, are you ready?

What do you mean I can’t tell anybody?!?! I just don’t understand it Lord! I thought that is what you called us to do. I thought you wanted us to go and share about you, and that you wanted us to go and share the message. Now we got to keep this to ourselves? Wow, what a mystery and what an order to get from Jesus to close out our Gospel Reading today!

I mean have you ever been told something that you had to keep to yourself? Have you ever just really been itching to share the news with someone? I mean share it with anyone, even your dog or your turtle? I mean what more awesome information and confirmation could the disciples have been given than to know that Jesus was indeed the Messiah?!?! Peter was blessed to have this revealed to him from the Father in Heaven, and despite being made aware of this, instead of being blessed to go and share it, the disciples got a stern order. Jesus gathered them around and said Fellas… even though you now know who I am… just don’t share it with anyone quite yet!!!

I am sure each and every one of us has been in the same sandals as the disciples were at one point or another. I am sure that maybe you could not share that someone was pregnant, or maybe you could not share that there was a big surprise party, or just maybe you could not share that someone was in town and back from the military earlier than expected. Those are just several examples for sure, but they were not as great as knowing that he is indeed the Messiah! I mean how in the world do you manage to keep that news to yourself, back then or even now? But… if you really think about it… we all do at times. Now, that is whether we intend to or not. We do not go and share the news from the roof tops and the mountains; or more plain and simple we do not go out and share it from every gas pump, coffee stop, luncheon, community meeting, or family gathering. That is just weird! Right?!?! Well, maybe it is, and just maybe it isn’t. It is hard to say if he was protecting his disciples then, and it is hard to say if he is protecting us as his disciples now at times as well. We for sure do not always know what his plans are, and all too often his plans and purpose are way larger than we could ever imagine.

 If you really think about it, when he asked a rather simple but loaded question, “The answers are interesting aren’t they? Everybody thinks he’s a dead guy come back to life or someone from the past. (John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.) No one wants to admit that he might be someone in and of himself. No…he’s got to be someone else.” (3) I mean “That’s not unusual back in Jesus’ day. People were seeking. People were expecting the Messiah. They just didn’t anticipate that it would be someone like Jesus, son of a carpenter out of the city of Nazareth.” (3)

It kind of goes along with this cool little story I am going to share with you from my reading and research. So, "An organist was practicing one day in a great church in Europe. A man came up to the organ and asked if he could play. The organist looked at him and thought to himself. I shouldn’t let this man play, just look at him, he is unshaven, his clothes are soiled, he looks like a bum. So he told the man no. But the unkempt stranger asked again and again. Finally, the organist let him play thinking he couldn’t play very long, for what does a bum know about organs. The bum’s fingers danced over the keyboard in a way the organist hadn’t heard in his lifetime. The stranger played on and on. The organist was spellbound. When the stranger got up to leave, the organist could not contain himself and shouted, "Who are you, what is your name??" As the stranger, who looked like a bum slowly walked away, turned over his shoulder and said, "My name is Felix Mendelssohn." The organist gasped. He said to himself, " I almost did not let the master play."” (4) Appearances and perception are not everything, and we know that for sure, but it always seems to cloud our judgement at one time or another. We more often than not do not let the master play the role in our lives that he wants to play. Sometimes, we need to just sit back and listen to the music and the message that are offered to us, and allow ourselves to be led and to follow the way he desires.

Alright, let’s move on here a bit. This is where I said earlier it is very easy to stay focused on one topic, and not share about the entire message we have been imparted with this morning. I am sure I could keep going on here about The Messiah, and this next topic will allow me to link The Messiah to it, but there is indeed more to share. I need to get into the next topic of The Rock. Now, of course I am not referring to Dwayne Johnson, the former WWE wrestler that turned movie star. I am also not talking about the Sean Connery and Nicholas Cage film from 1996. I am talking about the one and only Rock. The most important Rock of all. And we are forever reminded that “Jesus promised to Peter, and to us, that He would build His Church, and that He would build it on The Rock. What rock? The rock-solid foundational truth that He, Jesus, is the Messiah, meaning the one chosen by God.” (5) You heard me correctly, “The “rock” that Jesus was building on was not the individual, but what was said. God, using Peter as a mouthpiece, had just told the disciples that Jesus, this man standing in front of them was the Messiah, the very living Son of the very Living God! Peter’s confession is what the entire Church is built on.” (3) So, we come to the very reality that this building, this gathering, and this world wide movement were all indeed ordained. God is indeed alive, and is living in and through each and every one of us! When the disciples were finally able to share, when we have it in our hearts to share whether we realize it or not. We all come at it from, because of, and for The Rock!

Now, we will transition on to our final topic here this morning. We will move on to discussing The Keys. Now, again I am not talking about the keys you used to lock up your house before coming to church this morning, and I am not talking about the keys that you may have used to turn your car on so you could drive here either. I am also not talking about the famous singer, Alicia Keys. I am talking about “The Office of the Keys and Confession. Martin Luther didn’t try to hide it in his Small Catechism. It’s right there, right between the two Sacraments, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion… Now why do you think that for most individuals this is the hardest concept to grasp and sometimes the one that they least want to talk about? It has to do with two things: responsibility and authority.” (3) Those two topics alone all too often scare us for some reason, as accountability and being in charge are not roles we all feel we can thrive at in specific times with God’s help or not.

We are also forever reminded that “God has given to His church here on earth the ability to bind and loose sins. Think of sins as being a prison…cause that’s what they really are. As long as we are slaves to sin, we are imprisoned. You see. God has given us a free will. He’s told us what is right and what is wrong. He’s given us the Ten Commandments. He’s given us parents and teachers to guide us.” (3) With those guides we still all too often tend to stray off the path. Free will is awesome, and it is a bugger for sure. When we lose our sight, when we lose our focus, and when we forget to come back to center then we indeed are forgetting our call and our purpose.

As we were reminded of before, The Keys are a responsibility and they give us authority. Sometimes, it is a blessing to have them, and sometimes it can seem like it is a curse. Yet again we are reminded that without God none of this is, or ever will be, possible. We are reminded that “All authority comes from God and lies in God. That’s why this text is so important. Here and in other passages from scripture, God gives to The Church the authority to say, “Your sins are forgiven.” The Church vests that authority in the person of their called representative, the pastor. Just as the words of the confession made by Peter did not come from him, but from God, the words of absolution, come not from the pastor, but from God. The pastor is the called individual that God is using to pronounce the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ Jesus.” (3) As your Vicar I am called to forgive you of your sins, I am called to share the meal with you at this very table, and I am also blessed to be able to prepare and share the message with you each and every week. However, without knowing he is The Messiah, without coming to the realization of Peter’s confession that he is indeed The Rock on which we stand, and without being blessed with The Keys none of this is possible. So, praise be to God for that!

Amen.

**References**

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 August 27th, 2023

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 Scripture: Matthew 16:13-20

 Denomination: Lutheran

**Matthew 16:13-20**

 At a climactic point in Jesus’ ministry, God reveals to Peter that Jesus is “the

 Messiah, the Son of the living God,” and Jesus responds with the promise of a

 church that will overcome the very gates of Hades.

 13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his

 disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14And they said, “Some

 say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the

 prophets.” 15He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16Simon Peter

 answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” 17And Jesus

 answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has

 not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. 18And 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. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you

 bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be

 loosed in heaven.” 20Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that

 he was the Messiah.