

**Saint Peter Lutheran Church**  
**Service and Sermon notes**  
**June 11/14, 2020 • Pentecost 2 (A)**  
**Pastor Jack Kelly**

**Theme**

*The Holy Ministry Stands on Rock-solid Truth!*

Not all who call themselves ministers stand on what the Bible teaches, so watch out for false teachers! Many will come with wise sounding words and pious promises, but they are not what they seem. The Church's only defense is to stand firmly on the rock-solid truth of God's Word. This initial Sunday in Pentecost lays the foundation for our teaching and life: the inspired Word of God.

**THE WORD**

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, you rule over all things in wisdom and kindness. Lead us to built our lives on the solid truth of your holy word; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**First Lesson: Deuteronomy 11:18–21, 26-28**

When God spoke these words through the ministry of Moses, he meant for them to have a home in our hearts, rather than just tied to our heads. Moses proclaimed the Word that gives both promise and warning. There are only two choices: the rock-solid truth of God's Word that brings fruitful life or the barren words of false teachers that lead to nothing but death.

**Psalm of the Day: Psalm 78 (p. 95)**

God's Word is worthy of our constant attention and all our efforts to instruct children with it

**Second Lesson: Romans 3:21–25a, 27-28**

Only through Christ's cross could both the Law and the Gospel be upheld. Only through Christ's cross could all God's words be kept. Only through Christ's cross could God be both just and justifier. Only through Christ's cross could man be justified by faith. That is rock-solid truth.

**Gospel: Matthew 7:15-29**

We are to watch for false prophets. True teaching will bear fruit in the lives to true followers and teachers. The mark of a man on the narrow road, the mark of a true teacher is one who hears the words of Christ puts them into practice. That foundation of rock-solid truth can withstand any storm. True ministers of the Word proclaim the truth and put Christ's words into practice.

**Sermon Text: Matthew 7:15-29**

<sup>15</sup> "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good

tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

<sup>24</sup> "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

<sup>28</sup> When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

**Sermon summary**

Who would have guessed it could happen? Houses torn off their foundation and literally floating down a river until they break apart and submerge. Well it happened in central Michigan about a month ago. Record-setting rains caused not one, but two dams to break apart and the river they held back flooded Midland and surrounding cities in Michigan. Homes were ripped from their foundation and Midland saw almost 9' of water. Our ELS church in Midland had water standing to the tops of pews.

Who could have guessed it could happen? Large sections of our nation were flooded with not one, but two torrents of disaster when COVID-19 arrived in March and then at the end of May riots broke out in major US cities. Who knows about the long-term effects of these events? How many lives were uprooted by loss of jobs, anxiety, depression, families spilt by deep feelings, and a host of consequences. Whether it is a natural flood or a social flood—floods bring destruction and chaos. Your only hope is to have a solid foundation for your home and your life.

And so, how about you? How have you been managing? If you have been weathering the storms that have been raging about us, it has everything to do with your foundation. And here is the truth about the foundation of your life.

**(Theme) Only Christ's Teachings Give You a Rock-Solid Foundation**

**I. Lies and false living will cave in**

**II. Christ's teaching and living cannot collapse**

**I. Lies and false living will cave in**

In Matthew 7 we come to the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. It is a sermon meant to give clear truth in the face of misconceptions and lies. The Beatitudes explain what true piety is. Jesus explains what true murder is—hatred. What qualifies as true

adultery—lust. How far does true love extend—to enemies! And the sermon goes on to other issues. As Jesus concludes the sermon his finishing point is this: “Truth is hard to come by, but only truth has permanence.”

*Watch out for false prophets.* Who is he talking about? Jesus doesn't mention specific prophets. It suggests to me that false prophets come from everywhere. They certainly come from churches that lie in God's name, but they come from internet blogs and Facebook posts. A false prophet might be a friend who makes you feel guilty for wearing off-brand clothes. Or a false prophet could be a teacher who says your parents are out of touch and you should ignore them. This is why they are dangerous. *They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.* They won't literally eat you alive, but they will steal the spiritual life right out of you. They want you to walk with them down the wide path to unbelief and Hell. “Misery loves company,” as they say.

How do you recognize a false prophet or lying spirit? After all, they are wearing the outward clothing of us sheep. Look at what they teach and do; look at their “fruits.” *Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?* Lying spirits eventually do what God commands us not to do or teach what God commands us not to teach. Their foundation is on sand of human opinion instead of bedrock of Christ. You will discover it soon enough. You will see they their words contradict the Bible. When you see it, the trimmings of their life—their wealth, popularity, or talent—won't matter. You will see that you can't trust them.

Why is it important to distinguish them from your family of faith? The work of lying spirits cannot endure God's judgment. *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* Or to use another picture, *the rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.* In dry weather all houses seem perfectly serviceable and look identical. It's when the storm of God's judgment comes suddenly that the difference is seen. And the big problem that confronts us is that we don't know when the storm of God's judgment will hit. His judgment could come in the form of a tornado, a pandemic, or just the day that you take your last breath. All of those could come tomorrow.

If I am living on the sandy foundation of self-righteousness and trust in human achievement and opinion, I'm doomed. My excuses don't matter to God. “I couldn't make it to church because I'm so busy.” “I thought it would be unloving to criticize my friends.” If your life is like a house intended to withstand the storm of God's judgment, you want something more solid than common excuses and majority opinion.

## II. Christ's teaching and living cannot collapse

Why does Christ's teaching survive all judgment? Here's a story that will help you see why the teaching of Jesus Christ is so solid. Do you know the story about the Brooklyn Bridge? It was the first modern large

suspension bridge connecting Manhattan and Brooklyn over the East River. It was completed in 1883. In order to build it John Roebling called for use of caissons: a huge wooden barrel turned upside down and submerged into the East River. Inside the caissons workers dug in darkness through hundreds of feet of mud. They needed to reach bedrock and pour cement for the massive tower that would rise 275 feet over the river. It was incredibly dangerous: Oil lamps easily started fires and the conditions paralyzed and even killed workers. But sacrifices had to be made if the Brooklyn Bridge had to stand on bedrock instead of mud. Almost 140 years later, six lanes of Manhattan traffic are built on the sacrifice of people who lived long ago.

The foundation of Jesus' teachings is built on sacrifice. During his life Jesus never satisfied his own desires; he sacrificed his will to serve his Father in heaven. It's impossible to imagine let alone do. Equally impossible is the eradication of our filthy, stinking guilt. But Jesus got rid of all of it, like digging through hundreds of feet of river mud, Jesus' death clears away our sin and guilt. The foundation of our lives is only found in those teachings about Jesus. Only Christ's teachings give you a rock-solid foundation for your life. A life that is built on Jesus and his life cannot collapse.

So what does Jesus mean when he says, *everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.* What does it mean to put Jesus words into practice? Jesus gave us part of the answer in John 6:29: *This is the work of God: that you believe in the one he sent.* By trusting in Jesus for salvation we do the work of God. The work of God is also honoring the truths and teachings of God's word by gladly hearing God's Word and keeping it Luke 11:28. And James would remind us “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” James 1:23. The life built on Christ's teaching is a life that trusts only in Jesus for all righteousness. Then in that faith it reflects and radiates the power of God that transforms our lives in willing servants doing the God's will. Christ's teaching alone will endure God's judgment. No other foundation will be bedrock secure and last through God's judgment on a sinful world.

People of God, we have been through a flood of difficulty these past 3 months. Years from now someone might ask you, “How did you get through the year 2020?” Consider this answer: “I got through 2020 because of a rock-solid foundation. Jesus' life and death were the only things I could count on. That's what saved me and that's the only thing I could rely on.” Amen.

Votum [Concluding encouragement]: *Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are [made holy].* (Acts 20:32).

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### **(Theme) Only Christ's Teachings Give You a Rock-Solid Foundation**

#### **III. Lies and false living will cave in**

#### **IV. Christ's teaching and living cannot collapse**

#### **II. Lies and false living will cave in**

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