

## **Sunday, August 27, 2023 – Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

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### **Introduction**

In Isaiah the people are advised to look to their spiritual 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.

### **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.**

### **Exodus 1:8—2:10**

*The brave Hebrew midwives defied Pharaoh to save many infants from death. When the mother of Moses placed him in a basket in the Nile, the daughter of Pharaoh found him, adopted him, and raised him. Moses' sister and mother also played crucial roles in this drama.*

<sup>8</sup>Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup>He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. <sup>10</sup>Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." <sup>11</sup>Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. <sup>12</sup>But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. <sup>13</sup>The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, <sup>14</sup>and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

<sup>15</sup>The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, <sup>16</sup>"When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." <sup>17</sup>But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. <sup>18</sup>So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" <sup>19</sup>The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." <sup>20</sup>So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. <sup>21</sup>And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. <sup>22</sup>Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

<sup>2:1</sup>Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. <sup>2</sup>The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. <sup>3</sup>When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. <sup>4</sup>His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

<sup>5</sup>The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. <sup>6</sup>When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. <sup>7</sup>Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" <sup>8</sup>Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. <sup>9</sup>Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. <sup>10</sup>When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

## Psalm 124

*We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler. (Ps. 124:7)*

<sup>1</sup>If the LORD had not been <sup>l</sup> on our side,  
let Isra- <sup>l</sup> el now say;

<sup>2</sup>**if the LORD had not been <sup>l</sup> on our side,  
when enemies rose <sup>l</sup> up against us,**

<sup>3</sup>then would they have swallowed us <sup>l</sup> up alive  
in their fierce <sup>l</sup> anger toward us;

<sup>4</sup>**then would the waters have <sup>l</sup> overwhelmed us  
and the torrent gone <sup>l</sup> over us;**

<sup>5</sup>then would the <sup>l</sup> raging waters  
have gone right <sup>l</sup> over us.

<sup>6</sup>**Blessed <sup>l</sup> be the LORD**

**who has not given us over to be a prey <sup>l</sup> for their teeth.**

<sup>7</sup>We have escaped like a bird from the snare <sup>l</sup> of the fowler;  
the snare is broken, and we <sup>l</sup> have escaped.

<sup>8</sup>**Our help is in the name <sup>l</sup> of the LORD,  
the maker of heav- <sup>l</sup> en and earth.**

## Second Reading: Romans 12:1-8

*In response to God's merciful activity, we are to worship by living holistic, God-pleasing lives. Our values and viewpoints are not molded by the time in which we live but are transformed by the Spirit's renewing work. God's grace empowers different forms of service among Christians, but all forms of ministry function to build up the body of Christ.*

<sup>1</sup>I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not be

conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup>We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup>ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

### **Gospel: 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.*

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup>And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup>He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup>And 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. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>I 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." <sup>20</sup>Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

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## **Prayers of Intercession**

Confident that God receives our joys and concerns, let us offer our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

God of Sarah and Abraham, inspire your church to pursue righteousness in its ministry. Equip us to share your compassion that unites us as one family of faith. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Remind us that from the beginning of creation, you knit together a world meant for harmony. Protect and restore the wasted places to joy and gladness. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Stir the leaders of nations and towns, militaries and courts, to respond to your teachings. Let your call for justice reach all people and bring deliverance where there is oppression. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Show your steadfast love and faithfulness to those in despair. Increase their strength, care for all who feel low, keep safe any in the midst of trouble, and protect vulnerable people from harm. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Encourage those who offer their gifts and talents in service to your church. Energize this congregation's rostered and lay leaders, musicians, teachers, greeters, and administrators so they may be transformed in sharing your grace. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of all the saints, death is overcome in Christ's resurrection. We rejoice with the faithful departed (*especially*). Sustain us in hope until we come at last to our heavenly home. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, in the name of the one who reconciled all creation to himself, Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

## ***A reflection for this Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost***

Confessing Christ, Formed in Faith

In late August, students are preparing to go back to school, and many churches gear up for a new year of Christian education. It is a good time to be reminded of the heart of Christian formation: conformation and transformation (Rom. 12:2).

Disciples are formed over time—shaped by learning, worship, and all aspects of Christian life in community. As it was for Peter, part of our formation is learning to confess Jesus as the Messiah, not only with the right words but also through an experience of the Living God in Christ. And along with Peter, through such formation we also discover who we are in relation to God: After Peter “confesses” Jesus’ identity of Messiah, Jesus “confesses” Peter’s identity by calling out his name and vocation.

Traditionally, Lutheran worship contains two confessions which keep forming us: a confession of sin and a confession of faith. In the first, we acknowledge who we are as sinner and saint, and in the second, we acknowledge who God is in the mystery of the Trinity. Like Peter’s, our own identity is revealed in those truths. And, we might say, we are continually formed by and through them.

Peter’s confession is not a precondition for following Jesus; it comes in the middle of his journey of discipleship. Our formation too is a long process—lifelong, in fact—which begins at baptism (or even before!) and is guided by those who travel before and with us. At this time of year, as we explore our own formation, identity, and vocation as disciples of Jesus, Isaiah entreats us, “Look to the rock from which you were hewn.” Envisioning Peter “the rock,” we might also consider how our shape is a “chip off the old block” of our forebears in faith.

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