

## Jesus the Rock

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost) is Matthew 16:13-20. This text is about Peter's confession concerning Jesus.

Our text places Jesus with his disciples up in the region of Caesarea Philippi, a city some distance from the usual area of Jesus' ministry, and deep in the territory of the Gentiles. The text does not explain why he is there, but the location is important.

At some distance from the pressures of his Galilean ministry, Jesus asks his disciples an interesting and leading question. We who have heard this before know where it is heading, but try to imagine what it must have been like when the questions were first posed. Jesus asks his disciples what people are thinking about him. We know that throughout Jesus' ministry the disciples had different ideas about him than he himself did (recall, for example, Acts 1:6). You can almost sense their hearts start to race at this question. Is Jesus finally testing the waters? Will he finally declare himself as a messiah and lead the Jewish people? Is he asking the pollster question, the sort of question that potential presidential candidates ask before they launch a campaign?

People like Herod thought Jesus must be John the Baptist brought back to life. At least they recognized that John and Jesus both proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God and called people to repentance. People in Jesus's day expected the reappearance of some notable prophet, but opinions differed as to who this would be.

Most people, according to the disciples, seem to put Jesus into a prophetic mold, but beyond that agreement, there are a variety of answers. This verse offers a salutary reminder that there was no single, uniform messianic expectation in Judaism in the first century AD.

Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of apostles, as appears from the text itself. Christ does not ask Peter alone. Now Peter boldly confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ.

Peter's blessedness is the result that Peter is among those to whom the Father reveals the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. Peter's confession is not of human origin.

In the Greek "Peter" is *petros* and "rock" is *petra*. The rock on which the church is built is Peter's inspired (v. 17) confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah, "the Son of the living God." The Greek *petros*, basically a pebble, is here distinguished from *petra*, a solid rock.

Peter's rocklike confession of faith was the solid foundation on which Christ would build His Church has been built upon the ministry of the confession Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus as the true rock of our faith is stated well in 1 Corinthians 3:11 where it says "*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" Jesus is the rock upon which our faith is built. We can be certain that our faith has a sure foundation. That allows us to face daily challenges with full confidence.

Prayer: Grant us grace, heavenly Father, to confess Jesus and so remain on the unshakable rock of our salvation. Amen. (TLSB)