



### Introduction

*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. We go forth to offer our spiritual worship through word and deed.*

### Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity one God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,  
whose steadfast love is everlasting,  
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance,  
and we deny your presence in our lives.**

**We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts.**

**We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.**

**We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.**

**We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us.**

**We sin in thought, word, and deed.**

**By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us;  
and in your Spirit, lead us;**

**so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.**

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy

we have peace with God through † Christ Jesus,

through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.

Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope.

For hope does not disappoint,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### Gathering Hymn

### *The Church's One Foundation*

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## 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.**

## Psalmody: Psalm 138

- <sup>1</sup>I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart;  
before the gods I will sing your praise.
- <sup>2</sup>**I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name,  
because of your steadfast love and faithfulness;  
for you have glorified your name and your word above all things.**
- <sup>3</sup>When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me.
- <sup>4</sup>**All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O LORD,  
when they have heard the words of your mouth.**
- <sup>5</sup>They will sing of the ways of the LORD, that great is the glory of the LORD.
- <sup>6</sup>**The LORD is high, yet cares for the lowly,  
perceiving the haughty from afar.**
- <sup>7</sup>Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe;  
you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies;  
your right hand shall save me.
- <sup>8</sup>**You will make good your purpose for me;  
O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever;  
do not abandon the works of your hands.**

## 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.*

*Read the text [here](#).*

## 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.*

*Read the text [here](#).*

## Reflection on the Text

Today's Romans reading has a lot in it. Be acceptable as a living sacrifice to God. Don't be conformed to the world, but be transformed. Assess how we are doing; what is our mood? What does God want for us? What are our gifts? What do we do with them?

These are things that people have been praying over, asking questions about, worrying about, sometimes being confused about, for around 2,000 years. Sometimes, chapter 12 is seen as a set of ethics, written by Paul. If we do that, we see a set of things we have to do: actions we have to take to make ourselves better; actions to earn favor with God. It sounds like a lot for us to do by ourselves.

Yet Paul writes in verse one, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God". God continues to be merciful, and God gives the gift of love and compassion to everyone throughout time. In our baptisms, we are claimed by God. As the first paragraph in the Holy Baptism service states, "In Holy Baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ." (**Lutheran Book of Worship**, 121)

Paraphrased, the service further says that Baptism brings us into the body of Christ. With the other people that form the body of Christ, we increase in "faith, love, and obedience to the will of God."

As claimed people of God, God will guide us in our lives. This includes growing in faith, knowledge, and ability to do things. God has given us a different lens to lead our lives by. God gives a message of love and compassion, etc. for us to reflect to the world, because God first loved us. God comes to humanity, and creation in general, repeatedly throughout the bible, to give us a second, third, and fourth chance.

As we have heard in past weeks, God's call for us to be with God is always there. Through this lens of love, God transforms us to look at each other as God looks at us. Yes, at times we will fail to do so. Through repentance (that God gave us), God will forgive us and continue to claim us.

Through the movements of God, reading the scriptures, and being with our brothers and sisters in Christ, God will give us directions on where we are supposed to go. We do not always listen, but God will keep a path open for us to follow.

In response to God's gifts and direction, we use these gifts from God as a living sacrifice that is holy. In Jewish life, animal sacrifice was made for forgiveness, as well as a form of thanksgiving.

After Christ sacrifice himself for humanity, we are called to live a life of sacrifice. It is a life of living like Christ. I do not mean we have to die on a cross like Christ. Yet we are to love God with all of our being and love our neighbors as ourselves.

With our heart, mind, soul, and body, we serve God and others. We do not look for payback. We do not look for it to be a stepping-stone to heaven. We operate out of love for everyone and everything.

Paul writes about the gifts that we are given. Some of these gifts are in leadership, preaching, teaching, building things with your hands, or the ability to organize. These are gifts that God has given to individuals. As Martin Luther points out, these gifts are to be used as gifts to God and others. These are gifts to honor God, to build up others. Do not consider these gifts to be of your own design, the gifts belong to God. When using your gifts, use them to the best that you can. Be the best cook, builder, teacher, preacher that you can be. Do not be envious of each other. God has given each of us, individually, what we need to build up the community we belong to.

God loves us. Through Jesus Christ, God unites us as the Body of Christ. God's mercies have given us the chance to live into what God wants us to be. God gave us faith. Through our faith, God guides us and give us gifts to use. Pray to God, read the scriptures, and talk with others in the community. The Holy Spirit talks to us through these methods.

As God loves us and helps us grow in faith, go forth and share God's love with the world. Share the news of Jesus Christ. Love God and others with cheerfulness. Amen.

## **Hymn of the Day**

## ***Take My Life, That I May Be***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## **Apostles' Creed**

*We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

Lord our rock, you are our foundation in Jesus Christ, your Son, whom we confess as the living God. Prepare your church for its mission in bearing witness to Christ, both here at home and throughout the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You call forth praises from the far reaches of the universe to the smallest of creatures. Join our songs to theirs, that a spirit of praise and thanksgiving will arouse us to cherish this wondrous home you give us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord. Direct the leaders of countries, legislators and magistrates, mayors and councils, to walk in your ways. Help leaders regard those in need with mercy and fulfill your loving purposes in the governance of peoples. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Though we walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are bereaved, in trouble or adversity, or sick and in need of care especially those we name now. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You call us into this community, in which we, though many, are one in Christ. May we recognize in ourselves and in one another the unique gifts you have given us for the building up of the church for the sake of the world. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

You are the everlasting Rock from which we were hewn, and you restore your people to joy and gladness. In blessed memory and hope, we thank you for the lives of our beloved dead. Bring us with them to our heavenly home. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Lord's Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

## **Closing Hymn**

*Built on a Rock*

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

Worship adapted from sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS027356.

Today's reflection was written by Vicar Mike Lang.