

My Fellow Redeemed In Christ,

Martin Luther Once Said That Wherever God Builds His Church The Devil Sets Up His Chapel Right Next Door. Perhaps He Was Thinking About A Bible Passage Like Our Gospel Lesson For This Morning Where Jesus Refers To The **"Gates Of Hell"** Attacking His Church. Satan Often Causes All Kinds Of Problems For The Christian Church Including False Teachers And Teachings And Divisions. It Is Satan Who Leads People To See The Church As Nothing More Than A Club Or An Organization, To See The Church More As A Convenience Rather Than An Important Priority In Their Lives. And He Finds A Sadistic Pleasure In Seeing Christians Persecuted And Put To Death. ...But His Greatest Victory Is Keeping People From Faith In Jesus Or Destroying The Faith Of Those Who Do And Keeping Them From Having Eternal Life. And It Doesn't Bother Him At All When People Deny His Existence Or At Least Forget About Him. As Author **George R.R. Martin** Says In His Book **A Clash Of Kings: "The Unseen Enemy Is Always The Most Fearsome" ***. It Is, After All, Hard To Defend Against An Enemy That Is Either Unseen Or Denied. Which Brings Us To Our Gospel Lesson For This Morning Where Jesus Gives Us A Wonderful And Comforting Promise.....Despite The Powers Of Darkness, The **"Gates Of Hell"**..... **"Jesus Will Build His Church"**.

I. The Church Of Jesus Christ Is Not A Building, An Organization Or A Denomination? The Church Is People.....But Not All People. The Church Is Made Up Of People Who Make The Same Confession That Peter Does In Our Gospel Lesson.....That Jesus Is **"The Christ, The Son Of The Living God" (V. 16, Esv)**.

A. In One Of His Routines, Comedian **Jim Gaffigan** Says That If You Want To Ruin A Really Good Party Just Walk Up To A Group Of People And Say, **"So, What Do You Think Of Jesus?"** Jesus Has Always Been A Controversial Figure. Even In His Own Day.....And So, Like **Jim Gaffigan** Jesus Asked His Disciples: **"Who Do People Say That The Son Of Man Is?" (V. 13, Esv)**. Some Thought He Was **John The Baptizer**, Who Had Been Murdered By King Herod.....Or **Elijah** Or **Jeremiah** Or Some Other Ancient Prophet Raised From The Dead. No Doubt This Kind Of Thinking Was Created By The Great Miracles That People Saw Or Heard That Jesus Did.....But All Of These Views Have One Thing In Common: They See Jesus As Nothing More Than A Man.,,,,Maybe A Good Man Or A Great Man....But Still Nothing More Than A Man. And This Is Also True Today. But Members Of His Church Believe That While Jesus Is A Man, A Human Being Like UsExcept For Sin.....Yet We Believe Along With Peter And All Christians That Jesus Is The **"Son Of The Living God"**. Yes, Jesus Is Both God And Man In One Person As The Apostle John Says At The Beginning Of His Gospel: **"In The Beginning Was The Word...And The Word Was God.....And The Word Became Flesh And Dwelt Among Us" (1: 1, 14, Esv)**. This Makes Jesus Unique....One Of A Kind.....**"The Son Of The Living God."**

And Everyone Who Believes This Belongs To His Church As Martin Luther Writes In His Small Catechism: **"I Believe That Jesus Christ, True God, Begotten Of The Father From All Eternity, And Also True Man, Born Of The Virgin Mary, Is My Lord...."**

B. But There Is More To Peter's Confession.....And Ours. We Believe That Jesus Is **"The Christ."** The English Word **"Christ"** Comes From The New Testament Greek Word That Means **"The Anointed One, The Chosen One"**. It Means The Same Thing As The Old Testament Hebrew Word **"Messiah"**, Jesus Then Is The Chosen One. Chosen By Whom? God. To Do What? To Be The World's Savior From Satan And Sin, Death And Damnation. As Paul Says In His Second Letter To The Corinthians: **"...In Christ God Was Reconciling The World To Himself, Not Counting Their Trespasses Against Them" (5: 19, Esv).** We Cannot Save Ourselves.....This Is So Obvious That It Doesn't Need To Be Explained Or Defended.....When The Day Comes For Us To Die....We Will Die...We Won't Have A Choice....But Jesus Was Chosen By God To Do For Us What We Cannot Do For Ourselves.....He Lived A Sinless Life In The Place Of Our Sinful Life.....And He Did Something We Would Never Want To Do....Experience The Wrath Of God Against Our Many Sins. Yes, Jesus Came Into Our World To Be Our Substitute To Save Us From Satan And Sin, Death And Damnation. And Only Those Who Believe This Are A Part Of His Church.

ii. And In Our Gospel Reading Our Lord Jesus Assures Us That, Despite Outward Appearances, His Church Will Never Go Out Of Existence. That's His Promise: **"I Will Build My Church, And The Gates Of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It" (V. 18, Esv).**

A. Jesus Reminds Us That We Don't Make Ourselves Members Of His Church....But Didn't We Say A Moment Ago That We Are Made Members Of His Church By Believing What Peter Confessed: **"You Are The Christ, The Son Of The Living God"**? Yes, And This Is True. But Here's The Key Question: Where Do We Get The Ability To Make That Confession? And Jesus Tells Us Even As He Told Peter, **"Blessed Are You...For Flesh And Blood Has Not Revealed This To You, But My Father Who Is In Heaven" (V. 17, Esv).** In Other Words Faith In Jesus As The Christ And The Son Of The Living God.....Is Revealed To Us As A Gift From God. This Is How Jesus Builds His Church.....As The Message Of Jesus Christ Is Preached, Taught And Shared God Works Through That Message To Give People Faith In Jesus. And So Martin Luther Again Writes In His Small Catechism: **"I Believe That I Cannot By My Own Reason Or Strength Believe In Jesus Christ My Lord Or Come To Him But The Holy Spirit Has Called Me By The Gospel"**.

B. **"Called Me By The Gospel"** People Can Be Brought To Saving Faith Only As They Hear The Gospel Of Jesus Christ As Paul Says In His Letter To The Romans: **"So Faith**

Comes From Hearing, And Hearing Through The Word Of Christ" (10: 17, Esv). In Jesus Christ God Has Paid For The Sins Of The Whole World.....They Are Already ForgivenAs John The Baptist Says At The Baptism Of Jesus: **"Behold, The Lamb Of God, Who Takes Away The Sin Of The World!" (1: 29, Esv).** What A Great Relief It Is To Know That Jesus Christ Has Done Everything Necessary For Us To Be Saved From Satan And Sin, Death And Damnation As He Himself Said On The Cross: **"It Is Finished!" (John 19: 30, Esv).** Jesus Has Done For Us What We Could Not Do For Ourselves. And Now This Completed Salvation Is Offered To All People As Jesus Said To Peter: **"I Will Give You The Keys Of The Kingdom Of Heaven" (V. 19, Esv).** Keys Can Lock Or Unlock Doors. Keys Can Let A Person Into A Room.....Or Keep Him Out. And So It Is With Heaven. Jesus Has Given His Church The Keys To Heaven.....One Key That Opens The Door To Heaven....Another Key That Locks The Door To Heaven.

The Key That Opens The Door Is God's Forgiveness In Jesus Christ...Jesus Calls This The Key That Looses Sin.....Because It Sets People Free Of The Guilt And Condemnation Of Sin..This Forgiveness Is Given To Us In The Written And Spoken Word, The Waters Of Baptism, And The Lord's Supper. In These Three Means Of Grace Heaven Itself Is Open To Us. Adam And Eve And All Mankind Lost Our Relationship With God Because Of Sin....And So Where Sin Is Forgiven Our Relationship With God Is Restored As Paul Says In His Letter To The Romans: **"Therefore, Since We Have Been Justified By Faith, We Have Peace With God Through Our Lord Jesus Christ" (5: 1, Esv).** Peace With God.

But There Is Another Key That Locks The Door To Heaven.....And What Is That Key? To Not Forgiven Sins. But Wait A Minute...Didn't Jesus Die For The Sins Of All People? Yes.....But That Forgiveness Does Not Do Them Any Good Unless They Know About It And They Want It. This Is The Key That Binds....Their Sin And Guilt Remains With Them And They Will Not Enter Heaven.

Conclusion: Perhaps You Noticed That At The End Of Our Gospel Reading Jesus Told The Disciples Not To Tell Anyone Who He Was. He Did This Because There Were So Many Wrong Ideas About The Christ, The Messiah....Including Political Ideas. He Wanted His Church To Wait.....Until His Resurrection From The Dead, His Ascension Into Heaven And The Giving Of The Holy Spirit On Pentecost. And Now For Over Two Thousand Years His Church Has Been Telling Others About Him. And This Is Why On September 11 We Will Begin New Adult Information Class. Our Mailing Has Gone Out To Thousands Of Homes. We Are Inviting People To Come And Hear More About Jesus Christ. And Satan Is Not Happy....The Gates Of Hell....The Powers Of Darkness Will Do All They Can To Keep People From Coming To This Class And To Faith In Jesus Christ. But Jesus Will Build His Church.....And So I Ask You Once Again To Pray For This Class...That God Would Open The Hearts Of Many To Accept Our Invitation.....If You Have The Opportunity... Invite Someone To Come.... A Family Member, A Friend, An Associate At Work Or From School...Better Yet....If You Are Able...Come With The Person That You Invite.....Through The Message Of God's Forgiveness And Eternal LifeJesus Will Build His

Church....But To Do That People Need To Hear About Him And..... As They Do ...God The Father Will Also Reveal To Many That Jesus Indeed Is **"The Christ, The Son Of The Living God"**. Amen.

*[Http://Www.Goodreads.Com/Work/Quotes/3272005-A-Clash-Of-Kings](http://Www.Goodreads.Com/Work/Quotes/3272005-A-Clash-Of-Kings)

This Sermon Was Preached A Week Later On Aug. 31, 2014. On August 24 One Hour Before The Early Service I Was Informed That We Were Having A Guest Preacher!