

"You Have To Be A Rock"

Matthew 26:40-41

March 16,2011

Lent 2

Do you know the expression, "That person is a rock? It means he/she is very strong, self-reliant, and independent. When troubles come, he doesn't need help from any one else. He can take care of himself. He will always talk boldly and unafraid. Many people in the world want to be like that. That sounds good, but it is a lie from the Liar Satan.

Jesus' disciple Peter believed that lie. His name, Peter, means "rock". And he tried to live like a rock. Peter always acted bravely, lived independently, and spoke forcefully. When Jesus asked, "Who do you say I am?", Peter boldly confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of God." Peter was very proud. He didn't need anyone's help. When Jesus and His disciples ate their Last Supper together, Jesus washed the disciples' feet to teach them humility and service. Peter proudly refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet (although later he changed his mind and allowed Jesus to wash his feet). Peter made bold promises. On that last night, Jesus told Peter that he was praying for him – that his faith would not fail. Peter said Jesus, "“Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.” When Jesus told His disciples, "Tonight, you will all leave me." Peter got even bolder and said, "If the others leave you, it doesn't matter, I will always be with you. Even if I have to die, I will never will leave you."

Peter spoke bravely and acted like a rock, but what did he actually do? After Jesus and the disciples finished eating, they went to a garden called GETHSEMANE. Jesus needed to pray to His Father in heaven. When they arrived, Jesus left the disciples and took three of his best friends - JOHN, JAMES, and PETER with him. He needed their support. He asked them to keep watch while he prayed. When Jesus was finished praying, He came back. What did he see? The three disciples wataching intently? No. Peter and the other two disciples were fast asleep.

When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, what did this rock, Peter, do? Did he stay with Jesus and go to prison with Jesus? No. Oh, he pulled out his sword and fought a little, cutting off someone's ear. But, when the soldiers arrested Jesus, Peter ran away afraid.

Later, Peter got a little more braver and followed Jesus and the soldiers at a distance. They arrived at the high priest's house. Some people recognized Peter and knew he was Jesus' disciple. They asked him about that. Did that rock, Peter, strongly confess, "Yes, I know Jesus. I love Jesus. I am His follower,"? No. Peter cursed and swore and said, "I don't know Jesus - never met Him. I am not His follower." Peter did that - not once, not twice, but three times.

When Jesus was crucified, did Peter die with Jesus as he had promised? Did he at least stand by the cross, giving support to his friend, not caring about the soldiers and Jesus' enemies. No. That "rock", Peter, was hiding in a house with the doors locked because he was afraid the soldiers would arrest him.

Satan fooled Peter. He told him that he was a rock, powerful, independent, and that he could do all these things by himself - watch with Jesus, stay with Jesus, declare His faith in Jesus. And Peter believed that lie. Yet, when it was time for Peter to do those things - this "rock" collapsed - he fell asleep, ran away, and denied Jesus. It is very easy for us to criticize Peter for trying to be a rock and becoming mush. However, Christians today do the same as Peter long ago. We feel we have to be rocks - powerful, independent, strong enough to do everything ourselves. And what happens?

Many parents have brought their children to be baptized here, promising to bring their children to church and Sunday School, and then never come back. Satan tells them the lie that their children are independent and can decide for themselves to believe in Jesus or not. Many young people have knelt here on Confirmation Day, promising to remain faithful to Jesus Christ until they die and then they don't come back. Satan has lied to them, telling them that they are rocks and don't need Jesus Christ and His Church. They can live successfully on their own.

How many of you have been proud like Peter, promising to do great things for the Lord? Maybe you swore that you would begin reading the Bible and praying every day. Maybe you decided that this year you would give a tithe of your money to the Lord. Maybe you made a promise that you would begin attending Bible class. Then you fail. You break your promise. Satan has lied to you, making you think you can do all these things.

How many of you have decided you can live life on your own through your own hard work and effort? Many people think that. Some of our members have believed they can live independently and without God. They no longer attend worship and receive the Lord's Supper. Satan has lied and made people think they are independent and can do for themselves.

We are not strong enough to live alone and independently. We become like Peter -- feeling strong and independent -- but failing ourselves and failing God. The truth is we are dependent. When Jesus came and found Peter sleeping in the garden, what did he say? You should improve! Try harder! No. Jesus said, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." What did it mean? Jesus knew that Peter wanted to do those things -- his spirit was willing. But he could not do them alone -- his body was weak. He was not independent, powerful, and strong. He needed help. And Jesus tells him to pray -- ask God for it.

We cannot become rocks - strong enough to do everything ourselves. We need another rock. Our Psalm tonight says, "God alone is my rock and my salvation." God is powerful enough to support us and care for us. We are not rocks. He is the strong rock on which we can stand. We can depend on Him.

However, we ourselves cannot step up on Him. Our sinful pride and actions prevent us from standing on Him. We sin and fall off. But God loved us and sent us another "rock" - His Son, Jesus Christ. We are weak, but He is strong. God's will and His Laws - we could not do it all ourselves, independently. But Jesus could and He did. He lived holy and perfect in place of you and me. God's anger and punishment for sin - we could not satisfy it ourselves. But Jesus could and did. He

suffered and died on the cross in our place. And Jesus was so powerful that He did not remain dead, but He rose from the grave to live again. That's the reason we gather here during Lent -- to remember our powerful Savior Jesus dying in place of us weak sinners in order to forgive us and rising from the dead to give us new life with God here on this earth and later in heaven forever.

When you have faith in Jesus Christ, you receive His forgiveness and new life. But you are not strong enough to have faith. Martin Luther wrote, "I cannot by my own reason (*because I am smart*) or strength (*because I am strong*) believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts (*inspired me*), sanctified and kept me in the truth faith." The Holy Spirit has given you faith to trust Jesus and step on the "rock" which is Him. You are now on the rock. He supports you in your weaknesses. When you have troubles or problems, you can depend on Him. He will never let you down. You can depend on Him alone.

But you are not alone. When you trust in Jesus Christ, you are joined together with all other believers - His Church. The Bible says that you *have* become a rock, but not an independent rock. The Bible says that God's church is like a house. The prophets from the Old Testament and the (12) apostles from the New Testament are the foundation. Jesus is the corner stone. And each of us is a rock within that building. That means we are dependent on God for strength *and* we are dependent on each other. God supports us and we support and encourage each other. We don't stay home and read the Bible and pray independently. We gather together here -- first of all to receive His forgiveness, love, encouragement, and support and, secondly, to forgive, love, encourage, and support each other.

On this second Wednesday of Lent, we face a choice like Peter. Will we try be rocks ourselves - strong, independent, and doing everything for ourselves? Or, will we put our faith and dependence on God, our Rock, and His Son, Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone? Hear Jesus' words again, "Watch and pray" Watch - be careful. Do not think that you can be independent and self reliant. Don't let Satan lie and fool you. Pray - ask for God's help. Your spirit may be willing but your

flesh is weak. Pray for His help to trust Him, depend on Him, and depend on others. He will support you with His Word and Sacrament. He will send other Christians to help and encourage you and give you strength to help and encourage them.

In this world, we may think we have to be strong and that we have to become rocks. That's not true. It is a lie from Satan. There is one rock -- one source of strength and support -- the Almighty God. His Son, Jesus Christ, bled and died so that you could stand on that rock. The Holy Spirit has called you to stand on that rock. So, don't go searching for other rocks. Don't try to become a rock. Stand on the one true Rock. He will never let you down. Amen.