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Pentecost III & Sts. Peter & Paul  
June 29, 2025  
Text: Matthew 16:13 – 19  
Title: Doubtful

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. The room was finally quiet. Most everyone had left so that she could get some much needed rest. She laid there in the bed, exhausted after her 7 hour ordeal. The pain had been as bad as everyone said that it would be, but she got through it and the result was resting quietly in her lap now. As she looked down at her new daughter for the hundredth time in the last hour, she thought to herself once again, “I’m a mommy.” What an incredible feeling. What an incredible day. What a massive responsibility.

The weight of that last thought came crashing in on her as fast as it took her to come up with the thought. In that single instant the peaceful, joyous thought of “I’m a mommy,” suddenly turned into, “I’m not ready for this yet. I don’t know what to do. What if I mess up? What if I do something to hurt her?” All of her elation turned into a flood of doubts as this newest chapter of her life was beginning. Would she be able to do this?

She took a deep breath to clear her head. Then she looked over at her husband who was dozing off in the chair after sitting up with her all night. That was how she’d get through it, with his support. Together they would do the best for their new daughter, and between that and God’s blessings, everything should be fine. He suddenly jerked his head up, and looked her in the eyes, and then he gave her that little grin that she always found so cute. “I love you,” she said. And then he replied with the same words, and she suddenly felt better as the nurse came in the door.

He was trying to keep his eyes open. He really was, but he was just so tired after all of the stress of watching her in labor. He knew it was nothing like what she had just gone through,

and it made him feel guilty for not being able to stay awake as she laid there with their new baby girl. It was just such a beautiful thing to see. The sight of the woman that he loved holding onto his brand new daughter made him feel so good. “I’m a daddy,” he thought to himself for about the 50<sup>th</sup> time since he first held her in his arms 90 minutes ago.

He knew that he had never been so happy or proud. He also knew that he had never felt so overwhelmed. He may have been 27, but he felt like a kid so often that he couldn’t help but think about whether he could actually take care of a kid himself. She was just so little, and he had no experience at all with babies. He had never even so much as changed a diaper! Now he had a baby of his own, and he didn’t know the first thing about how to take care of her. Would he be able to learn everything that he needed to know and do to help his wife raise their little girl? He had his doubts, but he sure was going to try his hardest to take care of this newest member of their little family.

He jerked his head up a few minutes later opening his eyes to see his wife looking at him. She looked so tired, but also so beautiful and peaceful as she smiled at him. That smile always made her face light up, and this time it was even better as she cradled their little girl. He stifled a yawn as she told him that she loved him. “I love you too,” he said, and knew that everything was going to be okay. He could do this with the woman he loved by his side, and with the help and blessing of God. It would be okay.

Two people in the same room at the same time. Each one having similar thoughts and feelings about the blessing of a new child in their lives. Both of them are tired and full of joy. But both of them are having their doubts about what is to come with this newest chapter of their lives. There is so much to learn, so much to look forward to, and so much to worry about. But each knows that they can trust the other, and they both know that they can rely on the Lord God.

Today, the Church celebrates and remembers two of the Lord's apostles, Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Two people in the same area at the same time. Each one having similar thoughts and goals about what to do with this gift of faith in the newly revealed Messiah, Jesus. Both of them are full of joy and full of the desire to share this new faith with the entire world. Both of them know that because of Jesus, their lives will never be the same, and each one knows just how unworthy he is to be an apostle of God's Son, the Crucified and Risen One. There is so much to do, so much to learn, and so many things to be worried about. But both of them know that no matter what they face, they can fully rely on their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as well as the guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit whom He and the Heavenly Father have sent them.

Today, as we sit here almost two thousand years later, it's easy for us to honor these two men as great pillars of the Christian faith, and in some ways that's exactly what we should do because the Scriptures do tell us about the strength of their faith. But as with each person that we read about in the Bible, these two apostles each have their failings as well, failings brought on by doubt fed by sin and the whispers of the devil. This Festival of Saints Peter and Paul is not so much about those two apostles, but about what God did through them to further His Kingdom. And after the Lord chose them to serve Him – that is what an apostle is, someone chosen by a master to serve as His representative or ambassador – one of the first things that He did was to forgive the sins that they had committed against Him. And their sins were serious ones.

Consider St. Peter. In today's Gospel reading we see him at his best. In response to the question that Jesus asks the apostles, "...who do you say that I am?" Good old Simon Peter boldly declares, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." No hesitation. No doubt in his words, just sure and certain faith in Jesus.

But it wasn't always like that with Peter. In the verses that immediately follow this reading, Jesus begins to talk about His coming suffering and crucifixion as well as His resurrection, His very reason and purpose for coming into the world. It will be the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecies about the Messiah, and the culmination of God's plan of salvation for His creation. This is when we see one of Peter's most glaring failures of sin and doubt. He reprimands Jesus and then contradicts what the Lord has just said. The rebuke from Jesus is harsh and firm, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men."

As bad as this incident was, Peter's worst failing happens during the so-called trial of Jesus. He stands in the courtyard trying to find out what's happening and trying to remain anonymous, but he's recognized. And in three different conversations he ultimately swears an oath that he doesn't even know Jesus, the same man that he had sworn to die with rather than abandon less than twelve hours before. This is the man who makes the solid confession that Jesus says He will build His Church on in today's Gospel reading.

We know from the Easter readings in the book of Acts that we just went through a couple of weeks ago what St. Paul's beginnings were. He also believed in the things of men instead of God. That's how he wound up hunting down Christians and attempting to destroy the Lord's Church before it had even really begun to grow. He also denied the identity of Jesus, until he met Him face to face on the road to Damascus.

And how much like these men you and I are! We can be praising God on a day such as this one, and yet we may be denying that we even know Jesus by tomorrow, either by our words, our actions, or our inactions. Those friends and neighbors that you've known for years, but you've never even thought about inviting them to join you in worship, much less to ask them if

they believe in Jesus Christ your Savior. Or there are the times when you place your own desires or will before what you know God's will to be. Like when you decide that it doesn't really matter what the Bible says about a particular topic such as life issues, adultery, or homosexuality. Instead you choose to listen to the philosophies and reasoning of the world around you. And you find yourself in line with the spirit of the times and saying that people should be able to do whatever they want with their own bodies, ignoring the fact that those bodies have been bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus. You have in mind the things of men, not of God.

But thanks be to God that you are like these two great apostles in a different way. You've come to know Christ by the same Word that these two saints used to spread His Gospel throughout their world. You too have stood up to say that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. You too are part of that same Church that Jesus founded on the confession of Saint Peter. There is no doubt about that! And if God would choose to use Peter and Paul to do His work and spread His Gospel then there is no doubt that He would choose you and me also.

It doesn't matter whether you think you're able to do it or not. It doesn't matter whether you think you deserve God's grace and mercy and sacrifice for you or not. What matters is that God has chosen you to be His child. He has sent His Son, Jesus the Christ, to pay the price for all of your sins, even the ones that have led you to doubt Him and His Word. He has made you a part of His Church, and He has promised you that not even the gates of hell itself will prevail against it. No matter what evil the enemies of Christ might throw against His faithful Christian Church, we will stand firm in our faith on the sure foundation of Saints Peter and Paul and on their confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.