



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Devotion Time: Week 8: Matthew chapters 15 and 16
Prayer Time

God of our faith, you claim us in baptism, but we claim you in our witness to your love and grace and mercy. Lead us not to just confess the name of Jesus, but to more fully live as he lived. Amen

The gospel writer for Matthew is writing this gospel for two purposes. One, of course, is to tell us about Jesus. The other is to tell us about the formation of the Christian community. And this story with Peter's confession is one of those stories that Matthew tells for both purposes. Yes, this story is absolutely about who Jesus is. But this story also tells the early church community that at the heart of the community is the confession of Jesus.

So take a moment to think about your church. How does your church confess Jesus? Most churches have a moment in worship when a creedal statement is recited, typically the Apostles' Creed or on special Sundays the Nicene Creed. But beyond that moment in worship, how does your church confess who Jesus is?

Does your church take seriously what it means that Jesus is Messiah? Do we pick up our cross, deny ourselves and live for others as Jesus did? Or do we seek just to be comforted, and want to run away from the painful truth that in following Jesus, we must die to our old selves and rise to new life every day?

This is the difficulty with being a confessional church. We can say the right words, "I believe in God the Father I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God I believe in the Holy Spirit". We can parse what the trinity means, we can dissect God's law into moral categories of what we have to follow and what we don't have to follow. We can spill our confession into our voting at the election booth and cry foul when someone believes differently than we think is absolutely right.

But getting the words right is only a part of what it means to be confessional. Peter learned this the hard way ... "You are the Messiah" he said, receiving praise from Jesus. "No, you will not die," he said, getting scorned and even called Satan by Jesus. We receive praise from Jesus when we recite the creeds each Sunday. But when we don't change our life, when we don't lift the cross, when we choose the comfort of being right over the discomfort of doing right, we hear what Peter heard - "get behind me Satan". Satan is not the evil overlord of hell in this story, Satan is the adversary, the advocate for easy power, the advocate for self-advantage over other's needs. Satan is the antithesis to the Messiah and the cross.

So, re-read this story in chapter 16, re-read Peter's excitement turn to disappointment at getting it wrong. Reflect on your church -- reflect on when church gets it right and when we go amiss. And then give thanks, for Jesus is there every time we get it wrong, to pick us up and lead us again to the promised new life.

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

First Lutheran Church * 116 South B Street * Monmouth, IL 61462
309-734-2106 * office@flcmonmouth.org * www.flcmonmouth.org
Pastor Jamie Gallagher * prjamie@flcmonmouth.org

Jesus is Lord

One of the earliest confessions of the church was a simple 3 word expression: Jesus is Lord.

This confession was radical. It signaled Jesus as the Messiah, the true King of Israel, the Prophet of all Prophets, the Savior and Restorer of God's goodness.

But it also was radical because of its political nature. In the Roman Empire, the Emperor was Lord. What the Emperor said is what you lived or died by. If the Emperor said he was a god, you worshiped the Emperor. If the Emperor ordered you to die, you died.

So imagine standing in a room and declaring allegiance to Jesus, not the Emperor. This is the power of the confession "Jesus is Lord." This is not just spiritual, it is very much political, and it matters in that same radical sense today as much as 2000 years ago.