

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost – August 30, 2020

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

– Matthew 16:24–25–

When I was very young (in 1974), there used to be commercials on television for the Prudential Insurance Company. The jingle went like this, “Get a piece of the rock!” They were selling an insurance that you could count on. It was rock solid. It was foundational to your well-being. In one of these commercials the narrator says, “This is Mr. Finnegan, he’s seldom satisfied and often disappointed.” Turns out though that Mr. Finnegan actually liked Prudential Life Insurance. He addresses the camera and says, “When I find something I like, I stick with it!” Cue the music once more, “Get a piece of the rock!”

Jesus told Peter, nicknamed “the rock,” that He was going to have to suffer at the hands of men, be crucified, and on the third day rise. Peter didn’t want to hear it. The “rock” on whom Jesus would build his church was now waffling. We humans do that, quite often, when it comes to suffering. We’re not good at suffering. Jesus went on to explain that if any want to follow him they must be willing to take up their cross. Our cross is Jesus’ cross. When we follow him we enter into situations where our faith is tried and tested. But no matter what happens, we put our trust in our sure and solid foundation which is Jesus. Peter may have been called “the rock,” but Jesus is the boulder! Peter is more like a piece of THE Rock – Jesus.

Martin Luther said it this way in a sermon he gave on this text. He points us to the source of the real benefits, Jesus. “So now you might say, does not Christ say here, ‘You are Peter,’ and ‘upon this rock I will build My church?’ So you must understand that here Peter is called a rock and Christ is also a rock. For Christ is the whole rock and Peter a piece of the rock, just as surely as Christ. For what is attributed to us for the sake of our fellowship with Him is that we also have a Christian nature on us. He is good so we are also good. He is righteous and we also. Everything He has and can do we can also boast is ours.”

So, we can get a piece of the rock (Peter) or we can get a piece of THE Rock (Jesus). And when we find something we like (that brings us salvation and a right relationship with God) we stick with it! Amen.

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