

Built on Christ

“Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!” That is God’s good news for us this Easter season, His promise and our hope! And this is certainly no time for us to give up hope. As the old hymn rightly promises, *Built on the Rock the Church shall stand Even when steeples are falling.*

We’ve seen steeples falling amid fire and flames: Trinity Lutheran Church in Milwaukee last year, and Notre Dame in Paris last month. Sad though the extensive damage to such historic buildings may be, we know better than to trust in mere physical structures. For, *Surely in temples made with hands God, the Most High, is not dwelling; High above earth His temple stands, All earthly temples excelling. Yet He who dwells in heav’n above Chooses to live with us in love, Making our bodies His temple.* Remember what St Paul wrote: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

You see, you and I are not “only human” (as if that were an excuse for all our faults and foibles). By grace through faith in Jesus Christ, *We are God’s house of living stones* (see 1 Peter 2:5!), *Built for His own habitation. He through baptismal grace us owns Heirs of His wondrous salvation.* We’re not meant to ‘go it alone,’ either. *Were we but two* (or three—see Matthew 18:20!) *His name to tell, Yet He would deign with us to dwell With all His grace and His favor.*

God’s grace and favor do not come from the good things we may do in our daily lives. They don’t come to us because of the good thoughts we may have about God from time to time, nor from believing we can adequately “worship” God in solitude. God’s gifts come through the means God has chosen to deliver them. We see the instruments of His grace when we gather with our fellow believers in His house: *Here stands the font before our eyes, Telling how God has received us* in Holy Baptism. *The altar recalls Christ’s sacrifice And what His Supper here gives us:* the Body and Blood of Jesus, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. *Here sound the Scriptures that proclaim Christ yesterday, today, the same, And evermore, our Redeemer.*

Dr CFW Walther, the first President of the Missouri Synod, once said: “No one is a member of the Church except the person who is built on Christ. Being built on Christ does not mean connecting yourself mechanically with the Church, but placing your confidence in Christ and hoping to receive righteousness and salvation from Him alone. Whoever fails to do this is not built on this rock. Therefore, this person is not a member of the Church of Jesus Christ.” (Thirty-Second Evening Lecture, June 19, 1885, *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, Concordia Publishing House, 2010, page 376.)

In other words, just ‘being a member’ or ‘going to church’ does not make one a member of the True Christian Church, of which Jesus is the Head. Receiving the gifts God has given and, because of those gifts, placing your confidence in Christ alone, that makes one a Christian.

Lay those thoughts upon your own heart, and consider the great things that God has done for you in Jesus Christ. Then, may our prayer together be: *Grant, then, O God, Your will be done, That, when the church bells are ringing, Many in saving faith may come Where Christ His message is bringing: “I know My own; My own know Me. You, not the world, My face shall see.*

My peace I leave with you. Amen.” (Lutheran Service Book #645) And we know His peace is with us because Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!