

## **SLIDE 1**

### **Five Solas Christ Alone Matthew 16:13-23**

**Grace Connection October 29**

**Luther film October 29**

**The Reformation. 500 years ago. What was it and why does it matter in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for goodness sake? We are in week three of ten weeks in which we will attempt to answer that question. In October of 1517, a German monk named Martin Luther challenged the Roman Catholic Church to a debate about matters of salvation. The Catholic Church was not responsive, so churches broke away from Rome – or, were driven away, as the case may be – and what started as an attempt to reform the Catholic Church ended in the Protestant Church movement. We are meeting in this space and time as Grace Community Church because of what happened on October 31, 1517 – 500 years ago.**

**SLIDE 2** The five solas represent an attempt to distinguish Protestant doctrine from Roman Catholic doctrine. Sola is the Latin word for “alone.” We believe that Scripture alone – not what the Pope says, not what our hearts say – but Scripture alone points to salvation in Christ alone as our only hope of salvation. We are saved by God’s grace alone through faith alone – not good works on our part in any measure – and, our salvation is to the glory of God alone, with no applause for our wisdom or even our good fortune to believe. **SLIDE 3**

**Today is our first Sunday thinking about Christ alone – was Jesus’ work on the cross sufficient for our salvation or do we have some part to play in our salvation? Equally relevant, especially in our day, is Jesus the only path to heaven or are there other roads that lead to heaven if we are sincere and we are good people? Those**

questions and more will be addressed by a panel of our elders toward the end of this message, but first we will look at a text that is enormously influential in Roman Catholic life and theology – Matthew 16:13-20 where Jesus told Peter he would give him the keys to the kingdom. As the Scripture is read, I will ask you to stand out of respect for God’s Word. Matthew 16:13-20: **SLIDES 4-6**

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14 And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” 20 Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

The striking conversation **SLIDE 7** between Jesus and the apostles took place in the strikingly pagan city of Caesarea Philippi, 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and the farthest known point that Jesus was from Jerusalem. It is often immensely difficult when the four Gospel accounts say that Jesus was with his disciples to know whether the 12 apostles are meant or the larger group of disciples, both men and women, who followed Jesus to most of the places he went. Here, we get the sense that the 12 were with him, which meant that Jesus’ command not to let others know he was *The Christ* would be followed. Why the secret? It was not God’s time for the nation of Israel to know at that level, which, again, speaks to

why Jesus was in such an unlikely place for such an important confession that Peter was about to make on behalf of the other apostles. **SLIDE 8**

Jesus' question to his apostles is a good one today, don't you think? Who do people say that Jesus is? The apostles gave answers you would expect to hear today – a religious leader reincarnate or a prophet. In John 7, where we spent time earlier this year, some called Jesus a teacher, others said he was an imposter, but some understood him to be the Messiah.

Jesus directed his question to all the disciples when he said, “But who do you say that I am?” In the English, when Jesus uses the pronoun “you,” whether he is speaking to an individual or to a group. In English, “you” is used both as a singular and as a plural pronoun. Greek, as most languages, has different forms for singular and plural. We end up making our own distinctions such as “you and y'all” and “you and you guys,” or, perhaps, “you'se guys.” From the Greek, we know that Jesus asks all the disciples about his identity and that once Peter answers on behalf of the disciples, Jesus addresses him directly and tells Peter that he was blessed because God had revealed something to him that he was incapable of knowing on his own. The exchange between Jesus and Peter in Matthew 16:21-23, immediately following our text, indicates clearly that Peter did not yet understand that God would save his people through Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. God did show Peter, though, that Jesus was the Messiah, and although Peter, again, did not fully understand what it meant that Jesus was the Son of the living God, in time Peter would know that Jesus was and is God, the second Person of the Trinity.

**SLIDE 9** Upon Peter's confession, Jesus now utters the words that, as much as anything else, divide Catholics and Protestants. Jesus said, in verse 18, “You, you are Petros - Peter,” or, “The Rock” with

**a capital R, and then he said, “and upon this petra, or, rock” with a little r – a different word in the Greek, but close. Jesus used a wordplay to make his point. “Upon this rock (little r) I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” In verse 19, Jesus said that he would give the keys to the kingdom of heaven to Peter and whatever he binds on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever he looses on earth will be loosed in heaven. That sounds like Jesus is bestowing his greatest authority on Peter, doesn’t it? In fact, the Roman Catholic Church understands this to mean that Jesus passed his authority to Peter and Peter passed it on to others who passed to others until we have the present-day Pope and bishops. This doctrine is known as apostolic succession.**

**Roman Catholics believe that in addition to Jesus, the Pope and the whole priestly class along with Mary and the Saints, need to mediate between God and his people. Where does this doctrine come from? Not from Scripture, but when, as we have learned over the last two weeks, Catholics elevate Tradition (capital “T”) and official pronouncements from the Pope to be on the same level as Scripture – well, there is your answer. The biggest problem with this doctrine is the notion that Jesus’ death on the cross is not enough to save us. There will be much more about this as we examine the next sola – sola gratia, or, grace alone – but it would not be too extreme to say that the Catholics do not believe that Christ alone will save you. One can only be saved with the intervention of the Pope and his representatives. They would point to the end of verse 19 to justify this authority. Once again, thought, the Greek gives us some direction. **SLIDE 10****

**The verbs, “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven” and “whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” are in a complicated verbal construction that is future perfect passive. While it may seem to say that decisions that Peter makes on earth will then be enacted in heaven, we know from the rest of Scripture**

that God is not bound by what we do, but, rather, it is the other way around. In fact, if you translate this literally, it will read, “Whatever you bind on earth will have (already) have been bound in heaven.” It is not certain that is the correct reading, but it is far more likely, and it is consistent with the rest of Scripture.

I want to transition to our panel discussion by giving two lists that you can pursue in home group this week or in your private study of these verse. The first list is the special place Peter held in the building of God’s church and the second list will be reasons why we do not believe Peter was the first Pope who then passed his authority all the way down to the present time. I will not spend much time at all, so you will need to check these things out for yourself. **SLIDE 11**

**1. Peter is listed as first among the apostles – Matthew 10:2**

Matthew 10:2 literally says, “The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter.” You know about Peter, don’t you? You should: **SLIDE 12**

**2. Peter was in the inner circle of three at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8) and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-38)**

Whenever Jesus took three disciples with him, it was Peter, James, and John. In, Matthew 16, today’s text, Jesus has high words of praise for Peter. In fact: **SLIDE 13**

**3. “Upon this rock” probably refers to Peter, not his confession – Matthew 16:18**

I am going to guess you have always been told that when Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church,” he was referring to the rock-solid confession that Peter made about Jesus. Many

**Protestants interpret it that way because they do not want to give ammunition to Catholics, but even most Protestant theologians are now saying that Jesus was saying, “I am going to build my church on you, Peter.” I will tell you why in just a moment, but it is worth cautioning you to interpret Scripture with a “pro-gospel” bent rather than an “anti-Catholic” hermeneutic. Be very careful about proof-texting. The last indication of Peter’s status may help: **SLIDE 14****

- 4. “Keys of the kingdom of heaven” probably indicates Peter’s role whenever the gospel spread to a new people group (Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10)**

**Why is it surprising that Jesus singled out Peter to have a special role in the establishment of the church? Peter was preaching at Pentecost when 3,000 Jewish men were saved, plus women and maybe children. When Philip preached in Samaria and Samaritans believed and were baptized, it was not until Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem before the Holy Spirit came upon them as evidence that the gospel had moved to Samaritans. Then, in Acts 10, Peter shared the gospel with Gentiles and they believed. Peter was surprised about this ministry, which will support the next point. Even so, there is pretty strong evidence of Peter’s special role in the kingdom, but let’s spend a few minutes thinking about why:**

**Peter was not the Pope **SLIDE 15****

- 1. Jesus gave the same authority to the rest of the apostles in Matthew 18:15-20 and John 20:23**

**We looked at John 20:23 a few weeks ago where the apostles were told that when they forgive on earth it will be forgiven in heaven. But, once again, future perfect tense verbs – Whatever sins you forgive on earth will have (already) been forgiven in heaven. So,**

**Peter's authority was no greater than the other apostles. Second: SLIDE 16**

- 2. Every time Peter sought to distinguish himself from the other apostles, his actions ended in failure – Matthew 14:22-33; 26:31-35, 69-75**

**This is when Peter walked on water – and sank, and when he vowed to never deny Jesus. Hmm. Third: SLIDE 17**

- 3. Paul publicly rebuked Peter in Galatians 2:11-14 and wrote it for all posterity**

**This is a pretty big deal. Can you imagine one of the Cardinals writing about the Pope, “I withstood him to his face”? Neither can I. Peter was not the Pope. Need more evidence? Fourth: SLIDE 18**

- 4. When Paul and Peter appeared before the Jerusalem council over the issue written about in Galatians, Peter submitted himself to the council, which was led by James, the half-brother of Jesus – Acts 15:1-35**

**This is even bigger than the previous point. Read this account of Peter before the council. Don't you think the Pope would be in charge of such a council? SLIDE 19**

- 5. Peter disappears from the historical account of the early church after Acts 15, though we hear from him in his wonderful letters known as 1 and 2 Peter**

**It seems strange to me that as the story of the church spreading all over the Middle East and Europe that the Scripture remains silent on the Vicar of Christ. Not to be sarcastic, but does that not seem**

odd to you, especially if the Pope and bishops must mediate our salvation? I think so. **SLIDE 20**

**Our panel this week for Christ alone is larger than our panel two weeks ago. I am pleased to invite Christian Pope – appropriate today don't you think – Michl Money Penny and Lee Williford to the platform. We are going to answer the questions why was this idea so important to the Reformers and does it matter today? There is much more material than we can cover in these sessions, so if you have specific questions about the solas, please speak with the elders on the various panels. They are reading a great deal in preparation for these services and can provide helpful insight and information for any questions you may have.**

**The First Question **SLIDE 21****

**Salvation is found in Jesus alone. This according to Jesus and to the apostles. There are a fair number of people who read the NT, though, and understand that that are many roads to heaven and that the primary road is the morality road. What are some verses or passages in the NT that point to Christ alone?**

*John 14:6 (Jesus talking to disciples who did not yet understand that Jesus would die as a sacrifice for our sins; v. 9 – anyone who has seen me has seen the Father, which clearly means, “I am God.”)*

*Acts 4:12 (Peter, preaching to religious leaders who believed in the God of the OT – but, not Jesus; disputes the notion that we all worship the same God; unless we worship Father, Son, and Spirit, we do not worship the same God)*

*1 Corinthians 2:1-4 (Paul emphasized the sufficiency of the cross; it is not man's wisdom, but in the wisdom of God, Jesus died for sinners; the*

*world thinks it is foolish and the religious stumble over the need for a cross-centered theology, according to 1 Corinthians 1:18-25)*

**Next question: SLIDE 22**

*When we say that “Christ alone” distinguishes Protestant theology from Catholic theology, is that not offensive to Catholics? Is the implication that Catholics do not believe in Jesus for salvation?*

*It is not that Catholics would say that you can go to heaven if you believe in Allah or Buddha. Catholics would agree that only Jesus saves, but there are a couple of things that Catholics believe that evangelicals do not believe: 1) You must continue gaining God’s favor by your good works and attention to the sacraments; and 2) You must be properly represented to the Father by the ones Jesus’ chose to represent you – Jesus passed his authority to Peter and Peter passed it on and it kept going to the present-day Pope. Now, priests must represent you to God, which is why confessional must be to a priest.*

*Protestants believe in the priesthood of the believer. Jesus’ death was sufficient to open the way to God for individual believers who are gathered together into the church. 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16*

**Next question: SLIDE 23**

**Why did Jesus die on the cross? Was it so that I might be drawn to him in repentance and faith, or did he die as an example of one who gives everything for love? Was Christ’s death enough to win my salvation or did it simply put me in the right direction and ultimately it is up to me with a little help from him?**

*Most people today who know and use the name of Jesus tend to think in subjective terms rather than objective terms. It is not that Jesus died so*

*that God might save me, but he died so that I might experience his love, and in his love, I will become a better person. But – total depravity.*

*That is right – and, in becoming a better person, I earn my salvation. Most people – even a majority in evangelical churches think that it really doesn't matter which religion you follow as long as you are becoming a better and more moral person because that, in the end, will determine whether or not one gets to heaven. Self-righteousness.*

*What most people do not consider is that God sent Jesus to die to save us – not from ourselves, but from Himself! Habakkuk 1:13. God cannot allow sin into his presence, so he initiated the great exchange of 2 Corinthians 5:21*

**Last question, and it is an important one for us: SLIDE 24**

**What dangers exist for Protestants in our day with the belief in Christ alone?**

*This sola, along with Scripture alone, is where Catholic criticism of the Protestant movement finds its easiest target. The priesthood of the believer is a doctrine that, if abused, leads to all kinds of cultish beliefs and practices with bizarre interpretations of various passages of Scripture.*

*Indeed, many evangelicals believe there is no need for the church. It is “me and Jesus” that matters. But, Jesus is the head of the church. It is his bride, his body. You can hardly find more intimate terms to describe the relationship between Jesus and the church!*

*If Jesus is the living Word and Scripture is the written Word and the church is the primary vehicle through which the Word is disseminated, then the church is vital for the spread of the gospel. The Reformers believed that the word preached is the word of God, and said so in the*

*Second Helvetic Confession (and you thought Helvetica was a font). Thus preaching, in the mind of the Reformers, had a huge role in the church and in the lives of all believers. One of the Reformation changes in the arrangement of church architecture was to bring the pulpit to the center of the sanctuary to emphasize the centrality of preaching.*

**AS WE WRAP UP AND CLOSE IN PRAYER SLIDE 25**