Sermon Notes: June 28, 2026 Lectionary Readings
Focus: Peter and Paul

I "moved" the Feast of Peter and Paul from tomorrow, Monday, June 29, to today, Sunday, June 28.

Paul
The more I study Paul, the less I personally like him, and the more fascinated by him I become. He was a royal pain in the saddle to nearly everyone who knew him. But he was useful.

He was an academic and, before Christ got hold of him, a bloodthirsty assassin. He seemed riddled with insecurity about his popularity and yet so singularly focused that he transcended popularity contests altogether.

I think of him as the Grinch who stole Christmas mixed with an even more neurotic version of John Calvin. At times, I cannot decide whether Paul couldn't read people at all, or whether he read them perfectly well and simply did not care if they were standing in the way.

Peter
The more I study Peter, the more I personally like him, and the more fascinated I become by his rise to prominence. He was good people. He worked hard and laughed hard. He wore his heart on his sleeve and could read a room so well that it cowed him more than once. He is the sort of person you'd want to have over for dinner. I imagine he could tell some great fishing lies.

I think of him as Winnie-the-Pooh, a happy bumbler, mixed with Abraham Lincoln: someone rooted in humble beginnings who learned leadership through serious, on-the-job training while trying to hold things together in the middle of a civil war.

Peter and Paul
It was never inevitable that these two men would become fused at the hip in Christian history. Only by the second century did the church intentionally pair them together. Tradition labels Peter and Paul as twin pillars of the church.

Peter symbolized continuity with Jesus. Paul symbolized mission to the nations. Together they embodied both identity and expansion. The church resisted choosing one at the expense of the other. And so, as much as part of me would prefer a little less Paul, the church we have inherited is so wound up in these two men that it is hard to imagine one winning out over the other now.

Best Buds?
I don't think they liked each other all that much. I imagine Peter thought Paul had all the social nuance of Ted Cruz. And Paul probably looked down on Peter, "the Rock," wondering how an uneducated fisherman ended up with so much influence. From Paul's perspective, Peter might have seemed like a character out

of “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” earnest, decent, but wildly underqualified for the role history had handed him. And yet, there they are.

The Beginning of Christian Paul
Paul has his Damascus Road encounter. He is blinded. He is led to Ananias, who baptizes him. Then, according to Paul's own account, he heads to Arabia. Maybe he needed a change of scenery. Maybe he needed to let his soul catch up to what had happened to him. That reset lasted three years.

He returned to Damascus and quickly discovered that becoming a “Christian” had not made him any more popular. He escaped the city by being lowered in a basket through an opening in the wall. The great apostle to the Gentiles began his ministry as a fugitive. Then he headed to Jerusalem to seek out Peter. Not because he needed Peter's permission. Not because his experience of Christ wasn't real. He wanted to sit down with someone who had known Jesus before Easter. I don’t know for sure, but I wonder if they were like frenemies until their deaths.

Peter
It feels redundant to recap Peter. Most of us have heard two dozen sermons about his successes and failures already. But I imagine as the years piled on, that the fire of his youth mellowed into something deeply relatable. His memories would find a resting place:

The crowing rooster
The water walking
The miraculous catches of fish.

I hope those memories warmed him, even the hard ones. Over time, the impulsive fisherman simmered down into something rock solid, steady enough to build a church, a tradition, and a faith upon.

Us
We all need fire and friendliness. Homespun wisdom and deep learning. And, like it or not, we are probably more balanced people because of the friction in our relationships. I'm certainly not giving you, or me, a pass to be a jerk.

But if you are like Paul, pray for a Peter: someone who can turn down the volume in your fractious head and remind you that people matter as much as ideas. And if you are like Peter, pray for a Ross Perot. Remember that weirdo? He once said, "Revitalizing General Motors is like teaching an elephant to tap dance. You find the sensitive spot and start poking."

I don't have a ton of Scripture to throw at you today. Mostly, I just want to groove on what I imagine these two men did for each other and, like it or not, what they continue to do for us. The church needs both. And thanks be to God, Christ seems perfectly willing to build a church out of people who would never have chosen each other.

Todd