

I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

Matthew 16:13-28

REVIEW OF LAST WEEK

- St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, Italy was built on the alleged site where Peter was crucified.
- The money Catholics raised for St. Peter's Cathedral came from the sale of indulgences, and it was the sale of indulgences led to the Protestant Reformation!
- Our congregation's name "Christ Church" comes from Peter's profession in verse 16 "You are the Christ" and Jesus' statement in verse 18 "upon this rock I will build My church."
- The true wonder of Peter is not his "greatness" but that Jesus chooses to entrust the least likely man and men/Apostles with the most precious truths of heaven! (1 Corinthians 1:27-29; Matt.16:19 with 18:18-20; cf. John 20:23)
- After Peter opened the Gospel to the Jews on Pentecost and to the Gentiles in Acts 10, his foundational role was essentially finished.
- While Peter fades into the background of Acts, Paul preached the very same message Peter confessed (Acts 9:20-22).
- Matthew 16 is the first time in Matthew's Gospel Jesus explicitly affirms He is the Christ, the Son of God.

I. FAITH IN JESUS ALWAYS LEADS US TO THE CROSS. AND IT IS AT THE CROSS THAT WE FIND THE POWER OF GOD – THE POWER OF GOD NOT ONLY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS BUT THE POWER OF GOD TO SAY NO TO UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY PASSIONS.

A. The "heart" of Christianity is the PERSON (Christ, Son of the living God) and WORK (death and resurrection) of Jesus. The heart of discipleship is faith in Christ and cross bearing, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt.16:24).

1. As the Second Adam, Jesus' ultimate authority over Satan came when Satan's head was crushed at the cross.
2. Jesus had authority to heal because He took our infirmities and carried away our diseases at the cross (Matt.8:17 with Isaiah 53:4).
3. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus was bringing everything under His Sovereign Lordship. Not as the Romans did by crucifying insurgents, but by calling a people to Himself who would bear the cross.

"Crucifixion was a powerful symbol throughout the Roman world. It was not just a means of liquidating undesirables; it did so with the maximum degradation and humiliation. It said, loud and clear: we are in charge here; you are our property; we can do what we like with you. It insisted, coldly and brutally, on the absolute sovereignty of Rome, and of Caesar. It told an implicit story, of the uselessness of rebel recalcitrance and the ruthlessness of imperial power. It said, in particular: this is what happens to rebel leaders" (Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 543).

II. THE CHURCH IS THE ONLY INSTITUTION JESUS ESTABLISHED FOR MAKING THE POWER OF THE CROSS KNOWN: "UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; AND THE GATES OF HADES WILL NOT OVERPOWER IT" (Matthew 16:18)

A. The church is even more foundational for making the power of the cross known than the family because only the church has the keys of the kingdom. Jesus isn't building human families, but Jesus is building a new family, the church, which is the household of God.

B. In ancient times, kings would take up building projects to demonstrate their earthly glory, power and splendor.

1. Herod the Great, who died shortly after Jesus was born, was best known for his building projects.
2. Archaeologists found in 1997 an inscription at Masada one of the palace/fortresses of Herod and inscription reading, "Herod, king of the Jews."
3. Herod had Caesarea "entirely rebuilt with white stone, and adorned with the most magnificent palaces, displaying here, as nowhere else, the innate grandeur of his character" (Josephus *Antiquity of the Jews*. 1.21.5 §208).
4. At Caesarea, Herod the Great built a marble temple to Augustus Caesar.
5. Caesarea was the Roman capital for Judea (cf. Matt.16:13).

C. *What great building project does Jesus begin in Caesarea Philippi?*

1. Jesus was a carpenter by trade but He is also the Great King. His building project that continues to this day is the church.
2. The church is a building made not with dead stones, but living stones and it is extending to the ends of the earth, “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).
3. If you have confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God and are a part of a church, then you are a living member of the greatest, largest, and most glorious building in all history (**Psalm 48:2-3; 50:2**).

And coming to Him [Jesus] as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: “Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, “The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,” 8 and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. (1 Peter 2:4-8)

D. Profession of faith in Jesus and membership in Christ’s church go hand in hand.

“Poll data on religious behavior and practice are notoriously unreliable. Individuals often describe their own behavior inaccurately; they answer questions according to what they think they should be doing. For example:

- ✓ 17% of American adults say that they tithe (give 10 to 13% of their income to their church). Only 3% really do.
- ✓ Many polls indicate that the percentage of adults who regularly attend a religious service is about 40% in the U.S., 20% in Canada, and perhaps 10% or less in Europe. But when noses are actually counted, the true figures are about half the stated figures (about 20% in the U.S. and 10% in Canada.)” http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_prac.htm

E. In ordinary circumstances, a person who professes faith in Jesus but chooses to neglect membership within the church is not a member of Christ’s body (see the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 25:2).

From 1992 to 1999, average attendance has dropped by 12% whereas the population of America has increased by 9%!

QUESTIONS FOR SABBATH DISCUSSION & MEDITATION:

Take what you have learned this morning and make it into a prayer. Have you confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God? Have you and your household been baptized and are you members of Christ’s church?

What was the title of this morning’s sermon and why?

What did Peter’s confession of faith lead Jesus to teach His disciples about? Where does faith always lead?

What does it mean to take up the cross and follow Jesus? Is the cross a symbol of universal human experience? Why or why not?

Are you experiencing the power of the cross in your life? If not, have you put the cross down? Are there areas of your life in which you are not denying yourself?

Where on earth today is the only institution that Jesus established and the place wherein the will of Jesus is made known? Where is the only institution Jesus established for making the power of the cross known?

What great building project does Jesus begin in Caesarea Philippi?

What was the significance of Caesarea Philippi being the place Jesus “started building His church”?

Explain why a profession of faith in Jesus and membership in Christ’s church go hand in hand.

Westminster Confession of Faith, 25:2

The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; (1 Cor. 1:2, 1 Cor. 12:12–13, Ps. 2:8, Rev. 7:9, Rom. 15:9–12) and of their children: (1 Cor. 7:14, Acts 2:39, Ezek. 16:20–21, Rom. 11:16, Gen. 3:15, Gen. 17:7) and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, (Matt. 13:47, Isa. 9:7) the house and family of God, (Eph. 2:19, Eph. 3:15) **out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.** (Acts 2:47)

The whole world is a theatre for the display of the divine goodness, wisdom, justice, and power, but the Church is the orchestra ...the most conspicuous part of it.

John Calvin