

How The Church Is Built – Mt 16:13-20

Throw back song – College Ministry; Mt 16:13-20; Having been away for a few weeks, it's good to be home; We covered 10 states in 14 days, met with 5 Senior Pastors . . .
Worshipped in 2 churches, squeezed in some fun, and came away really encouraged
I'm increasingly thankful for our Fellowship, and love what God is doing all over the world through our efforts to plant life-giving churches
In fact, 2 more are launching this morning – Cleveland NE, and Union County, PA

- That said, I'm thankful for the guys who preached in my absence, and eager to get back at it; But I'm not going to return to the series on salvation just yet (**Intro**)
We're going to digress for a few *more* weeks, to focus on Easter and prepare our hearts for that

And I want to start with this passage in Mt 16, regarding the church; B/c what Jesus promises here, goes hand in hand with what he did at Easter
And has massive implications for our lives right now

[13] *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi* [an area north of the Sea of Galilee], *he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is* [referring to himself]?" [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* [Simon son of 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.*

- There's a whole bunch here, but the core of it is Jesus' promise in v18 – *I will build my church*; It's a promise; And thank God for it, or I would despair
B/c who wants to give their life to something uncertain? Something that may not pan out? Something that's not dear to the heart of God? I don't
But for something that's sure? Something that won't be *overcome* by the powers of darkness? I'm in; All in; And hope you are too; *I will build my church* Jesus said

The question, is how? *How* does Jesus build his church?

How does he grow the community of the redeemed? *How* does he increase those who are saved? *How* does he multiply the family of faith? It's a legit question
And this passage contains a good number of answers; Starting with this

THE CHURCH IS BUILT . . .

When God reveals the truth to those who want it (v17)

Those who are hungry to know it; Those who are eager to receive it; Those who are ready to heed it; *That's* how the church is built
God reveals the truth about himself and his Son, to those who are looking; Those who are seeking

Like Peter and the first *disciples* in John 1; Having heard that Jesus was the Lamb of God, they followed him (**Jn 1:38**) wanting to know more
And we know that b/c it says in v38 . . .
Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" [What do you want?] *And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"* IOW we want to go where you're going, and hear what you're teaching
Having *tasted* the truth, they wanted more

And God revealed it; Jesus said in v17 – "*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.******

Peter didn't come to the conclusion in v16 that Jesus is God in the flesh, *the Son of the living God*, and the one promised to deliver us, *the Christ* – all by himself; He didn't
Nor did he reach that conclusion by talking to his friends; Or reading the available literature; Or thinking it through
God revealed it to him; Peter wanted the truth, and God revealed it

- How about you? Have you acknowledged the truth that God has revealed – the truth of his Word and the truth of his Son?
Have you received it and believed it? Do you heed it and follow him?
If so, you're in; You're a part of the church – just like Peter; Saved by the *grace* of God, to live in the *family* of God

Unfortunately, some people don't *want* the truth, and it remains hidden from them
Often times b/c they don't want to give up their *lifestyle*; Or control of their life; Or the sin that they're in
But for those who have come to the *end* of themselves, those who are seeking, those who *want* the truth – God reveals it; And thereby the church is built
That's foundational to the fulfillment of Jesus' promise

2nd, is that the church is built . . .

When people confess their faith (v16,18)

IOW when you and I talk about our trust in God – our trust in him to save us, and our trust in him to keep us; And provide for us; And protect us; And comfort us
That's confessing your faith

As is talking about your beliefs – your beliefs about who God is, or what he's done, or what he's doing, or what's to come
Or expressing your identification with Christ – like in the waters of baptism
Or conveying the reason you live the way you do; Or think the way you think
That's the better part of what it means to confess your faith; And it's one of the ways Jesus builds his church; Just like he said to Peter

In response to the question – "*Who do you say that I am?*" (15); Peter says in v16 – "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" *That's* a confession of faith

And after telling him he was *blessed* for such a belief in v17, Jesus makes a very clever, and often misunderstood statement in v18; Saying . . .
I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church
It's clever, b/c in Greek, the original language, it's a play on words

You see, the name *Peter* sounds a lot like the Greek word for *rock*; And even *means* stone
So the statement would sound something like this – “You are *Petros*, and on this *petra* I will build my church”; Clever; For the sake of drawing attention to his point

- But notice he *doesn't* say – you are Peter, and on *you* I will build my church; He doesn't say that; And that's where the misunderstanding comes in
He says – *you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church*; Distinguishing between *Peter* and the *rock*
The question is, what rock? And the answer, is the rock of *faith* that Peter just expressed; His confession, that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living God*

That's the meaning here; Jesus builds his church through the confessions of faith
You are Peter, and you are John, and you are Rick, and you are Susan, and you are Jenny – and on your confessions of faith, your belief, I will build my church

- Which means we must not hold back; Whether inside these walls or out
Inside, b/c God uses our confessions of faith to build one another *up*, and provide much needed encouragement; And *outside* these walls . . .
He uses our confessions to *add* to our church, and cause people to think

But our tendency is to hold *back* in the company of unbelievers; To change our speech
And we need to fight it; If God gives you a thought about him, or your faith . . .
Or the reason you live like you do – speak it; Speak up
Not obnoxiously, but winsomely; Not arrogantly, but humbly
Not in some sort of soliloquy where you pontificate for 20 minutes – but in a sentence, or phrase, or bit-sized statement that leaves room for more
That's how the church is built – one confession of faith at a time, time and time again

3rd, the church is built . . .

When godly men are empowered to lead (v19)

That's the idea of v19, where Jesus says 2 main things; First, he says – *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*; As in, I will give you the ability to enable people to enter

If you have a key to a door, you have the ability to open it and allow people in
And when it comes to the kingdom of heaven, that ability, that key, is the preaching of the gospel – the good news that eternal life can be found . . .
Through faith in Jesus and repentance of your sins
So *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, are the opportunities and ability, to usher people into the presence of God, by means of sharing the Good News

Which Peter did many times over in the book of Acts; And every child of God since who has shared the gospel in some way, shape, or form
Especially those in a position to preach it or teach it; Those roles, abilities, and opportunities are the keys to heaven that Jesus grants; That's the first thing he says

- The 2nd, is that – *whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

IOW I will give you the authority to make kingdom-shaping decisions
Like judgment calls regarding right and wrong; Or decisions of stewardship; Or direction; Or church discipline

It was a responsibility first given to Peter and the Apostles, and *later* extended to the church and those who lead it; Like James in Acts 15; And elders in 1 Pet 5
The bottom line being: Jesus builds his church when godly men are *empowered* to lead

Empowered, meaning 4 things: chosen by God, gifted with ability, affirmed by others, and trusted by all; An empowered leader is one who is . . .
Clearly marked by God as a leader, one who is gifted with the appropriate abilities, one who is affirmed by other leaders, and one who is trusted by all
Leave any one of those out, and the church falters
But put them together, and the church flourishes; Enabling it to open doors it otherwise couldn't, and make decisions previously out of reach

- And speaking on behalf of our pastors and elders, we covet your prayers in this respect
Whether it's ministry, staffing, marriages, or direction – we make many, many decisions that are anything *but* black and white; And we need wisdom; Always
Not to mention your trust – which we highly value; It's one of the ways we feel affirmed by you in our leadership; And one of the ways God builds his church

4th, the church is built . . .

When those who know Jesus, talk about him (v20)

Which is just the opposite of v20 – *he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. Why? Why would he say such a thing?*

B/c the time to *fully* reveal himself and his plan, had not yet come

His mission was to establish himself as the Messiah, glorify his Father, and die for our sins; And if he drew too much attention to himself too early . . .
He would have jeopardized that; People would have tried to make him an *earthly* king, and dispensed with the rest; And some did
So on several occasions he told his followers to keep it on the D.L.

But that's not *our* M.O. On this side of the cross we're supposed to spread the word as much as we can; Going and making *disciples* in his name . . .
And teaching them to observe *all* that he commanded (Mt 28:19-20); That's our M.O.

- Which means talking about him; Like Peter went on to do in **Acts 2:36**
Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” He was explicit

And the same was true in Acts 4, when he and John stood before the council of religious leaders; They talked about *Jesus*
And so did Stephen in Acts 7; And the scattered believers in Acts 8; And Saul turned Paul in Acts 9 – preaching **boldly** *in the name of the Lord* it says (Acts 9:28)*****

- And lo and behold, the church was built; B/c those who knew Jesus, talked about him
And not just to each other; They made him a party to *every* conversation, and named the name every chance they got; And we should too

The church, and *our* church as a microcosm of it – will not be built if we're ashamed of the name; If we're hesitant to talk about the *head* of the church; It won't go

And consequently Jesus won't be lifted high in worship; And God won't be glorified;

And people won't be saved

The church stops growing, when people stop talking

➤ So can I encourage you to do 3 things?

1. Get comfortable saying "Jesus"; Get comfortable saying his name

You know what I did years ago on that note? I stood in front of my bathroom mirror one day, and said "Jesus" out loud, over and over again; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus

Until I was completely comfortable hearing it come out of my mouth

Spare nothing, to get comfortable with the name of the one who saved you

2. Start using his name in your conversations with believers

Instead of referring to him as "the Lord", or even "Christ", which is usually a little more comfortable, a little more socially acceptable, a little less offensive . . .

Start using his proper name; If you can't do it with *like-minded* people, you'll never do it with others

3. Don't withhold his name when talking with *unbelievers*

If you would say his name or refer to him explicitly with a believer in front of you, do it with an unbeliever as well; Especially so, b/c Jesus said in **Mk 8:38** . . .

Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man [Jesus] also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Don't go there; If you know him, talk about him; B/c that's how the church is built****

And then last, the church is built . . .

When those who belong, invite others (Mt 22:9-10)

When those who belong to the church, invite those who don't

Like Jesus taught us in the parable of the Wedding Feast a few chapters later

In Mt 22, he said *the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son* (Mt 22:2) . . .

And when it was ready he said to his servants in **v9-10** – *Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.* ' [10] *And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

That's how Jesus builds his church*****

It's not built by great signs, or great facilities, or great websites

Nor does the adage – "If you build it they will come"; That may work in baseball, but it doesn't work in church

The church is built when those who belong, personally invite others who don't belong

When you see someone who needs Jesus, or needs to return to Jesus, or needs more of

Jesus – ask them to join you; Ask them to come and see

That's how the church is built

➤ And the next few weeks, with Easter around the corner, is a great opportunity to do so – to invite others; It's not the *only* opportunity

We should be inviting people year round; Every chance we get; But Easter's a really good one; Which is why we've printed these little **invitations** – to make it easier

➤ And I would love it if we would pray as a church, and ask God to burden us with 2 people *each*, to invite; Would you do that?

Would you ask God to burden you with the names of 2 people? Just 2

2 people who you commit to invite to one of our Easter services

If God lays more on your heart, great; But let's pray for 2, and then follow through

Asking God to prepare their hearts, draw them to himself, and fulfill his promise to build his church

Pray – Lord, would you bring to mind those 2 people right now? Would you give us a burden for their eternity? And a passion for their souls? We commit to follow through

We also pray for courage to confess our faith and talk about Jesus; Forgive us of our shame and hesitations; Make us bold and overflowing

And receive our tithes and offering now, that more and more people would know you more and more