

# What Did We Learn This Summer?

Matthew 16:13-20

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Hudson United Methodist Church

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Soon, summer will end. In two weeks, we will welcome fall's arrival with our Annual Pig Roast. The Sunday of this sermon, in gathered worship, our youth will share what they learned as they traveled with other Wisconsin United Methodist youth on a cross country mission trip. In just a few days, they will be returning to Hudson Senior High or beginning their college studies. Perhaps in a writing class they will be assigned to write the classic start-of-the-school-year essay, "What I did this summer." There is a mischievous composition teacher in me who would rather assign, "What I learned this summer." There could be a good number of D's for those who answered the question they expected rather than the question asked.

What would you write about what you learned this summer with all that you did? Remember back to June 1 and name one thing you have learned. I stayed home this summer, focused on vegetable gardening, and tried starting a fall crop of broccoli in mid-July. I carefully nurtured those seedlings, even planted some of them during a children's sermon the correct number of weeks before our average date of last frost. Left outside the night before I planned to transplant them into a raised bed to keep veggies safer from the rabbits, the beetles found them. That fall broccoli crop was lost in a night. I learned that if I want to grow fall broccoli in the future, I need to remember and plan to share my garden with both rabbits and beetles.

Another thing I relearned this summer was how important it is when preaching from the gospels to read the in-between parts not assigned to be read in worship. The worship team and I like our tools for following the revised common lectionary as we set our themes for each Sunday and the season ahead. In May, I saw two sermon series, the first one on Jesus' parables about gardening, and the second one on his travels with his disciples as he taught people his message about God's love for all.

Matthew is an inspired writer, and when we preachers skip over unassigned paragraphs where Jesus tried to teach Pharisees a new idea, we often act like the Pharisees by being deeply attached to our own old ideas. Those scriptures were about a season when Jesus's twelve disciples traveled with him. Today we are near the end of that mission trip. Soon, Peter, James, and John will witness Christ's transfiguration as Jesus' final mission trip to his cross and resurrection will begin. In today's reading as they travel home from Tyre and Sidon, Jesus asked two questions about what his disciples learned on their mission trip. His first question was, "Who do people say that I am?" His second question was, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mt. 16: 13-15)

Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mt. 16:16) Peter had not only seen quite a bit on this mission trip with Jesus, but he had also experienced or at least witnessed, three miracles. Peter helped Jesus feed 5000 people with a lunch meant for one boy. He walked with Jesus on the water. He watched Jesus heal an enemy's daughter with just a word because of her faith. Had Peter not been on the mission trip with Jesus, had he just stayed home to tend his fishing nets and go to Synagogue each Sabbath, he might have answered Jesus question like other people, who speculated that Jesus was either John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. (Mt 16: 14)

Peter's answer was based on his experience of traveling with Jesus. Their travels changed him, changed his beliefs, changed his faith, and ultimately changed the course of his life. When Peter said Jesus was the Christ, Jesus replied, "I'll build my church on this rock." (Mt. 16:18)

Friends, this is a very rich passage of Scripture, and this week we are having a Holy Spirit encounter between Matthew's Gospel and our youth mission team's experience. While our youth were traveling, serving, and learning their hearts were touched. They learned a praise song recorded by the Rend Collective, "Build Your Kingdom Here."<sup>i</sup> It is a prayer that Christ will build his kingdom here and now. Amazingly enough, that is the same prayer Peter was beginning to pray himself as he realized his rabbi, Jesus, was the Christ. Can you imagine the essay Peter may have written about what he learned on his mission trip with Jesus the Christ?

But Peter's changes were not done the moment Jesus said, "I'll build my church on this rock." (Mt. 16:18) Neither are ours, because Christ is still building on the rock of Peter's faith and ours. Every summer we ask our youth to share with us with they did and what they learned on their mission trip. What would we share with them about what we did and learned with the same amount of time?

After all, even if you went nowhere this past summer, you did travel about 89 million miles in your annual voyage around the sun. You experienced drought, heat waves, and smoke from Canada's fires. You probably learned something personal. Perhaps you learned something from your own curiosity that can be applied to growing your faith. My broccoli failure taught me more about how my plans are realized in an environment; therefore, as I teach Jesus' parables, my experience gardening helps me understand the Bible better as a preacher. Perhaps you learned an unwanted lesson about your own aging body, or what it is to love a person who needs your care. What about this summer's learning now shapes your faith? Did you learn something this summer that grew your faith to encompass that experience? Perhaps in our summer worship you learned how Christ served his neighbors, companions, and enemies alike. Perhaps like our youth, you are inspired to bring the mission home, for your faith to be built on as Christ answers our youth's sung prayer:

Unleash Your kingdom's power  
Reaching the near and far  
No force of hell can stop  
Your beauty changing hearts  
You made us for much more than this  
Awake the kingdom seed in us  
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ  
We are Your church  
Oh, and we are the hope  
On earth

Build Your kingdom here  
Let the darkness fear  
Show Your mighty hand  
Heal our streets and land  
Set Your church on fire  
Win this nation back  
Change the atmosphere  
Build Your kingdom here  
We pray (change the atmosphere, build Your kingdom here)<sup>ii</sup>

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqZX08DDWiA>. Accessed on 8/22/2023.

<sup>ii</sup> build your kingdom here lyrics pdf. Accessed on 8/26/2023. Punctuation absent in the original.