Authentic Evangelism

Matthew 16:18  And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 1:7-8 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The Church
• The church is a unique thing.
  o It is the mystery of the ages.
    ▪ It is a concept that is unique to this dispensation of time.
  o The prophets of the old testament were never permitted to see this glorious thing called the church.
    ▪ The Patriarchs, never were allowed to grasp such an incredible concept.
    ▪ The poets, and writer,
    ▪ Kings and scribes,
    ▪ none of the family of God in the Old Testament had a revelation of the church.
  o It isn’t introduced in Genesis.
    ▪ You won’t find it in the books of the law.
    ▪ It isn’t described in the lyrical prose of the poets.
  o And the prophets,
    ▪ though they saw glimpses and understood in part,
    ▪ they never fully realized what they were saying
    ▪ when they prophesied that God would take a people that were not a people and make them his people!
      ▪ That God would take a bride for himself,
      ▪ a church composed of both Jews and Gentiles,
      ▪ both bond and free,
      ▪ both black and white,
      ▪ both rich and poor,
    ▪ a group of people who could never be united by any other means
      ▪ would find a common faith and an amazing salvation in the precious blood of the lamb
      ▪ and God would take that group of people and mold it and make it into his church!
    ▪ His body on this earth, his hands, his feet, his voice calling to a lost generation!
      ▪ We are that church!

Authentic Evangelism
• I’m so glad tonight that I belong to the church!

Our text tonight is very important because it is the first time in scripture that the concept of the church is introduced.
• If we want to know what it means to be an authentic church, we must start here.
  o Nowhere, before Matthew 16, does God choose to enlighten men about his great plan that is embodied in the church.
• This is very important.
  o If you ever study the principles that govern biblical and doctrinal interpretation
    ▪ you will learn that one of the governing principles is the Law of First Mention.
  o Without getting too complex let me define the law of first mention to you.
    ▪ It is a rule that says that if you want to understand a doctrine or principle of scripture then you must go to the place in the word of God where it is mentioned for the first time
    ▪ and study that first occurrence because that is where you will find the fundamental, inherent meaning.
  o The meaning introduced in that first mention in scripture is the common theme that will resound through all future mentions of the principle or doctrine.
    ▪ If you want the heart of the doctrine or principle you will always find it where it is first mentioned in scripture.
• This is what we have in Matthew 16, Jesus, in an intimate moment with his closest disciples chooses to mention the church for the very first time.
  o Everything else that will ever be revealed about the church will be colored by and influenced by that first mention.
    ▪ If we want to understand the significance of the church we must start here.
• This is what he said: Upon this Rock, I will build my church.
  o There’s a whole lot of preaching right there.
  o First of all, the foundation of the church is a revelation of the identity of Jesus Christ
    ▪ – but that’s not where we are going tonight.
  o Secondly the church is a thing built by God,
    ▪ not spoken into existence but constructed,
    ▪ starting from a foundation and building towards perfection
    ▪ – once again, that’s not where we are going tonight.
  o Third, the church belongs to Him and Him only
    ▪ – he will build His church!
  o Another interesting, and pertinent fact to be drawn from that statement is the actual word used to describe the body of believers.
    ▪ When Jesus said, “I will build my church...”
• He used a Greek word that is translated as “church.”
  ▪ That word is ekklesia and it means “to call out from” or “the called out ones.”
  ▪ Now this is an interesting and important concept.
    o The Church is called out!
    o We are separated unto him and him alone.
  ▪ There’s a whole lot of preaching in those four words.
    ▪ I will build my church...

Gates of Hell

But my focus tonight is on the next phrase, because we find here one of the first defining characteristics of the church: *And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!*

• We often assume that this phrase describes a church taking on the onslaught of evil and withstanding it.
  o The church is seen as this mighty fortress
    ▪ that that cannot be defeated by the brutal attack of the forces of darkness.
• But the English word “against” is not present in the Greek text.
  o If the phrase were translated as it is written,
    ▪ it would take on a completely different meaning.
      ▪ Upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not withstand it!
    ▪ The statement, as it is written is a powerful revelation that the gates,
      ▪ or the strength,
      ▪ or the fortifications of hell
        ▪ cannot withstand the church!
  o The image given by Jesus is an image of a church on the offensive,
    ▪ a church that is storming the gates of hell,
      ▪ a church that is actively tearing down strongholds
        ▪ and casting down powers and principalities.
  o This is the truth of what it means to be an authentic church:
    ▪ all of the powers of darkness can not withstand the powerful force that is called the church!
• Listen, this is that church that was born in an upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.
  o They were, at the beginning, just a handful of people
    ▪ whom the authorities in Jerusalem regarded as ordinary,
    ▪ simple, unlearned and ignorant men and women.
  o There were, at the beginning, just 12 men
    ▪ and an unspecified number of other followers
      ▪ that were not a part of the core group
      ▪ but were just on the fringes.
They had nothing going for them.
  - No great names,
  - No degrees,
  - No money,
  - No marketing, and no advertising.
They had nothing at all:
  - they were nobodies.
Yet, what we know about that first century, authentic apostolic church, is mind boggling.
  - Their story is staggering.
  - They were evangelists.
  - They preached Jesus Christ and the cross.
  - Everywhere. To anybody who would listen.
The fact is that this handful of unlearned and ignorant people “turned the world upside down” according to Luke 17:6.
  - Within 2 centuries Christianity became the most powerful force in all of the Roman Empire.
    • By the end of the third century the church had become such a powerful force
      o that a Roman Emperor named Constantine
      o deemed it a wise move to officially declare that the Roman Empire was a Christian Empire.
That’s the legacy of the church that Jesus established.
  - The gates of hell could not withstand it.
    • One of the most wicked, sensual, violent and humanistic societies in the history of the world
      o could not stand against the powerful truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ that was preached by the church!
    • No human force could conquer Rome,
      o no army was great enough,
      • no tactician skilled enough.
    • But the church, in the short span of three centuries, completely overwhelmed all of the forces of Rome.
Christianity is one of the greatest phenomenon of history.
  - The humble little church that Jesus established
    • emerged as one of the premier defining influences
      o in the history of the world!

Call to Arms

• The question that comes to mind is why would we ever structure the church as a mighty fortress,
  o a fortified structure,
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

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**Authentic Evangelism**

- that is designed to withstand the onslaught of hell?
  - Who ever sold us that bill of goods?
  - That doesn't sound at all like the authentic first century church that Jesus established.
    - Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church
      - and all of the fortifications and strongholds of hell
      - will never be able to withstand the advance of the church!
  - For too long we have envisioned the church as a mighty fortress that withstands the crashing waves of evil and darkness generated by the powers of hell.
    - We need to realign our thinking with the words of Jesus,
      - the church that He established is mighty army that will not be denied.
      - The church that he established is a great and powerful force that is putting the powers of darkness to flight!
        - A beacon of truth
        - a lighthouse that pierces this present darkness!
          - We are that church!
            - That is our heritage!
    - We will not be satisfied to watch hell wreak its havoc in our world!
      - We will not be satisfied to sit back in a defensive posture
        - and watch the world race headlong into the fires of hell.
      - We will reach like we have never reached.
        - We will cry out like we've never cried out.
          - We will give our all that we might pull some from the fires of hell before it is too late!
      - The darkness can’t contain us,
        - the strongholds of hell can’t withstand us,
          - the powers and principalities that wreak their havoc in our world
            - are subject to the name of Jesus,
            - they are powerless to resist a church that recognizes its role!

**Evangelism**

- The real question tonight is not, what did the church accomplish throughout history, the real question is how did they accomplish it?
  - The message of the church is what makes it so powerful.
    - It is about Jesus,
      - it is about a hill called Galgotha,
        - it is about an old rugged cross,
          - its about a tomb that,

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Authentic Evangelism
• In the third day, was found to be empty!
  o The effectiveness of the church as a catalyst for spiritual and cultural change is embodied in the message of the church!
    • That’s how they had such a powerful impact on their world.
• They were an evangelistic church because they realized there was power in their message.
  o They weren’t ashamed,
  o they didn’t look at themselves as some kind of second class citizens,
    • they realized if they could share their message,
      • it had within itself the power to transform lives.
• So often we get caught up in ourselves and all of our inabilities,
  o everything that we can’t do,
    • but can I tell you tonight that you’ve been given a powerful message!
  o If you will just share it, it will do the work!
• The first century church was a church that carried the gospel to the world.
  o They declared the gospel to the strong and the weak,
    • the rich and the poor,
    • the powerful and the powerless.
• They spread their gospel because they realized it had the power to transform lives.
  o They were a revival church, which reached their world through the power of the gospel.
    • Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;
• It is high time that we recognized who we are and what we have!
  o We are an authentic church with a powerful message!
    • What the world needs is not another religious movement,
    • what this city needs is not another church,
      • what people need is the life changing message of Jesus Christ!
  o We have a message that sets the captive free,
    • that binds the broken hearted,
    • that lifts up the discouraged,
    • that fills the emptiness that exists in every man.
  o We must publish it far and wide.
• The key to revival lies in our message of hope and deliverance.
  o We were called to share that message.
  o We were called to be evangelists of this great truth.
  o In the first century church you find every believer,
    • empowered by the Holy Ghost,
    • speaking in all places to everyone,
      • sharing the message of truth and salvation.
o They declared Jesus Christ risen from the grave.
  ▪ They shared with everyone the need to be baptized in Jesus Name.
    • They told anyone that would listen about the power of the Holy Ghost.
• And God added Daily to the church, because they weren’t just a Sunday church or a Wednesday church they were an everyday church, daily sharing this gospel message!
  o Acts 8 – Phillip was in Samaria talking to some folks about God in the middle of the city.
    ▪ Then Peter and John started praying for folks in the town square and folks were filled with the Holy Ghost and baptized in Jesus’ name.
  o Acts 10 - Peter was found in Cornelius’ house telling them about the power of the Holy Ghost.
  o Acts 19 – Paul ran into some disciples of John.
    ▪ Started talking to them about the Holy Ghost and baptism in Jesus’ Name.
• They talked to people in the synagogues, in the streets, on the steps of temples, in parks, in homes....
  o They did not wait for people to “open the door” so to speak....
  o They considered a ‘soul’ as an open door for the gospel!

Acts 1:8
• In the first chapter of Acts, at the very beginning of the church,
  o Jesus told his followers that they would “receive power, after that the Holy Ghost <was> come upon <them> and that <they> would be witnesses unto <Him>.”
  o The initial function of the church was to be witnesses of Jesus Christ!
    ▪ This is how they would overcome the power of hell.
    ▪ This is how they would tear down strongholds and pull down spiritual wickedness in high places.
      • They would be witnesses of Jesus Christ!
  o This theme is repeated in several places n the book of Acts:
    ▪ In Acts 1:22 a replacement is sought for Judas that will be “a witness with us.”
    ▪ In Acts 10:39 all of the church was declared to be witnesses.
    ▪ In Acts 10:42 God commanded them all to testify.
    ▪ In ACTS 26:16 Paul says that He was called to be a witness of Jesus Christ.
  o This is the center of what it means to be an authentic church: we are witnesses of Jesus Christ.
    ▪ This is the primary difference between Israel of old and the church that was established by Jesus Christ.

Authentic Evangelism
• The church recognized that its highest function was to share what it had received,
  o to bear witness of Jesus Christ,
  o to declare the greatness of His person,
  o the beauty of his spirit,
  o the wonders of his work
  o and the amazing grace that he brought us.
• Old Testament Israel’s saw itself as the keepers of heavens greatest secrets,
  o the guardians of the greatest truths ever known.
• But the church saw itself as the witnesses of Jesus Christ!
  o They were called to testify!
  o To tell, loud and long, what God had done for their lives!
  ▪ The church is not a storehouse to stockpile the saved,
    • It is a lighthouse to reach for the lost.
  ▪ The church is not a place were perfect saints are enshrined,
    • It is a place where sinners, saved by grace, share their testimony, telling others of the great grace and wonderful salvation of Jesus Christ!

Authentic Evangelism

• Jesus told the disciples, “after the Holy Ghost is come, you will be witnesses of me.”
  o The disciples were already witnesses of the life, teachings and miracles of Jesus Christ.
  ▪ But the focus of this statement by Jesus is on a personal experience.
    • After the Holy ghost comes upon you, you will then be witnesses of me.
    • You will share more than just the stories of my life, death and resurrection.
    • You will testify of a deeply personal experience with God!
    • After the upper room the disciples are doing more than just sharing the story that had already become familiar to their culture,
      o they were testifying fro the depth of a personal experience with God!
  ▪ The infilling of the Holy Ghost transforms the testimony.
    • Before they could have told of his life,
      o his teachings, his suffering,
      o his death, his burial
• and even his resurrection.
• But they were admonished to tarry in Jerusalem,
  o to wait in an upper room,
  o because the power of their testimony would rise
    from their personal experience with God
    ▪ as he filled them with the glorious gift of
    the Holy Ghost!

▪ This is authentic evangelism:
  ▪ You can’t testify of that which you haven’t personally
    experienced.
    o The key to authentic evangelism is an authentic
      experience with God!
  ▪ Authentic evangelism rises from authentic relationship
    with God,
    o it rises from an authentic outpouring of the Holy
      Ghost!
  ▪ If religion alone could transform the world,
    o it would have been done long ago.
  ▪ If the story of the life, death, burial, and resurrection
    was, alone, enough
    o the whole world would be saved by now.
  ▪ But the power, the effectiveness of the testimony rises
    from a personal experience with God!

• The strength of a witness lies in a firsthand experience.
  o There is no strength to the witness of a second or third hand recipient
    of knowledge.
    ▪ You can’t stand in a court of law and testify about something
      that you heard but never experienced.
    ▪ If the call to be a witness of Jesus Christ was simply a
      call to share the story of his life, death, burial and
      resurrection.
    ▪ Then the only reliable witnesses have long been dead
      and buried.
  o That’s the beauty of Acts 1:8
    ▪ The indwelling of the Holy Ghost makes each and every
      believer a first hand witness of the transforming power of
      Jesus Christ!
    ▪ That’s why the word witness is used: it appeals to direct
      personal knowledge.
    ▪ Authentic Evangelism is not just the telling of the story
      but it is the testimony of a life that has been changed!
      o That’s what turned the world upside down!
      o That’s what caused Rome to crumble from
        within.
The testimony of real people with a real experience with a real God.
- That’s what it means to be an authentic church!
- It is more than just the telling of a familiar story!
- It is the telling of your story!
- That is authentic evangelism!

- This was the great indictment against established religion, it saw itself as preserving the status quo but the church

**Timeless Truth**

- Evangelism is the foundational imperative of an authentic church!
  - It is a timeless truth of what it means to be his people.
- Looking back to Acts 1:7-8, from our text:
  - Acts 1:8 begins with “but” putting it in direct contrast with Acts 1:7.
    - Instead of being concerned with the times or the seasons, the apostles were to focus on being Christ’s witnesses to the very ends of the earth.
  - When he is coming back is not our concern.
    - Trying to figure out the season and the time and how all of the endtime plays out – that’s not our concern.
    - According to Jesus, our primary concern is WHAT we will be doing WHEN he chooses to return.
    - Its not about the When, its about the What, and the primary purpose of the church is o be witnesses of Jesus Christ!
      - This is WHAT we are supposed to be doing!
  - Act 1:8 is not a suggestion, nor is it a commandment – it is a prophecy!
    - You will receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you will be witnesses!
    - If we are going to be an authentic church then we will be authentic witnesses!
    - We will be witnesses of Jesus Christ!
  - We are not called to alleviate Hell on earth,
    - to mitigate every disaster and injustice in this world,
      - we are called to pull people from the fires of an eternal hell before it is too late!
    - If we don’t feed the poor, someone else will.
    - If we don’t clothe the naked, someone else will.
      - But, if we don’t spread the gospel, who else will?
- Evangelism is a deeply personal thing.
  - It is not a function of the corporate church.
  - It is a personal endeavor.
  - If evangelism isn’t happening in your life, personally, then it isn’t happening in your church!
• We said from the beginning that being an authentic church hinges on being authentic Christians,
  o because it is the people that make up the church that makes the church authentic.
    ▪ The same is true with evangelism;
      • it is a personal pursuit, based on a personal testimony!

Close

When was the last time you shared your personal testimony?
  o When was the last time you let this powerful message work?
  o How will we have revival if we don’t open our mouths and declare what God has done!
• I want to challenge you to be an Authentic Book of Acts Church...
  o Let it be noised abroad that Jesus is in the house.
    ▪ Go spread the word—it is the catalyst for revival!
• We need to be an evangelistic church.
  o It is our job to plant the seed and water it, God gives the increase.
    ▪ But there can’t be any increase if we are constantly intimidated not to share this message.
• The only way we can keep from having revival is if we don’t share this powerful truth – if we fail to be personal witnesses of Jesus Christ!
  o You are a witness of Jesus Christ!
    ▪ TESTIFY!