

Church Matters

SERMON TITLE: The Church Matters

DATE: May 28, 2023

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 16:13-18

PASTOR: Charlie Boyd

SERIES SUMMARY

The church of Jesus Christ isn't going anywhere. She has outlasted religions, empires, and nations. She has experienced persecution, political oppression, and even martyrdom. She has lived in hypocrisy, idolatry, and even committed great acts of violence. But still, she remains. Because of these things, the question should loom large: What does it mean to truly be the church? What should faithfulness to our risen Lord look like? Jesus promised, "I will build my church." So, what does that entail? Why does the church matter so much? As his people — his bride, his family, his body — how are we to carry ourselves in the world while embracing his love and extending it to those around us? Yes, the church matters, but what does that really mean?

SERMON SUMMARY

Our summer sermon series title, and the title of this message, "Church Matters," has a double meaning. First, *church* matters, meaning it is important. It's not optional. It wasn't an afterthought in the plan and purpose of God. The local church is the way Jesus intends to build/grow up His people in the faith and it's the way Jesus' mission moves forward in the world. And second, church *matters*, meaning, there are certain "matters" that make up a New Testament church—"matters" that make it distinct from other forms of Christian gatherings or personal worship. The "church" is a particular gathering of Christ-followers who meet in a specific location to hear and to respond to God's Word in congregational worship as they work together to move Jesus' mission forward in the world.

SERMON SCREENSHOTS & KEY POINTS

Key passage: Matthew 16:13-18

The church matters because it matters to Jesus. He is the architect and builder of the church. He died and rose from the dead to bring it into existence. And, He promises to preserve and protect His church until the day He comes back to put every enemy under His feet.

The church matters because, by its very nature and definition, it is unique from other forms of Christian gatherings or personal worship. A "church" is a particular gathering of Christ-followers who meet in a specific location to hear and to respond to God's word in congregational worship as they work together to move Jesus' mission forward in the world. The primary gathering Jesus had in mind when He talked about building His *ekklesia* "church" was not the universal church (for example see Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24), but the local church. The unfolding story found in the book of Acts shows us this.

The church matters because in congregational worship you can experience God in a way that's impossible anywhere else—at least, that's how it's supposed to be (see the context of 1 Corinthians 14:25).

Don't let the world infect you with a low view of Jesus' church. Don't let imperfect Christians make you think less of Jesus' church than He does. If Jesus loves imperfect people, maybe you can learn to do that too. Don't tell yourself that you're just fine on your own at the lake, or watching from home, or just hanging out with a group of Christian friends. Those things aren't bad. There's lots of good in them, but they're not the same as being a worshiping, contributing member of Jesus' local gathering.

Listen to the invitation extended to us by the author of Hebrews: "Let's think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. *And let us not neglect our meeting together*, as some people do, but instead—[come together to encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25)

SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS

1. When you hear the word "church" what comes to mind?
2. What are some of the disadvantages of people viewing the "church" as a building rather than a gathering of God's people?
3. Were your first experiences attending church positive or negative for your faith journey? Explain...

Read Matthew 16:13-18.

4. Why does the "church" matter so much to Jesus?
5. How does the book of Acts help us see that what Jesus had in mind when He said, "I will build my church" help see that Jesus was referring more to a rapidly growing, multiplying local gathering of His people rather than the universal church?
6. Charlie's working definition of the "church" is—"A 'church' is a particular gathering of Christ-followers who meet in a specific location to hear and to respond to God's word in congregational worship as they work together to move Jesus' mission forward in the world." What did he mean by "a particular gathering? How does the NT help us see that the local church is uniquely different from other forms of Christian gatherings? What makes it unique?
7. What are some ways you have experienced God here at FG that you could not have experienced anywhere else?
8. What "ahas" / insights are you taking away from this message?
9. Anything else? ... other thoughts, other questions?