

Keys to the Kingdom

Sunday, October 14

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Turn with me if you would to Matthew 16:13-20. If you have your bible with you today, I want to invite you to turn there and if you don't have a bible, you can turn to page_____ in the bible you find in your row. Today we're going to conclude our series on the Kingdom of God and take a look at the Keys of the Kingdom through a conversation with Jesus and Peter.

Read: Matthew 16:13-20

Pray:

Tonight I want to share with you 4 keys to kingdom that Christ refers to in this passage. I think what Christ wanted to do in his conversation with Peter (and the disciples who were listening) was to encourage and inspire them as they carried out His mission. I think for us, this message today is really about how the Kingdom of God can be unleashed in the world around us if we understand and apply these 4 points to our lives. And I think that as a result of applying these points to our life, we will be encouraged and inspired as we carry out Christ's mission of sharing the message of hope and love to those who are around us. If we do that, the kingdom of God will advance!!

Let's jump into the notes.....

1. The first key that Christ shares about is that "He will build His Church. (vs. 18) – Jesus was talking to his disciples and he said directly to Peter– "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build MY CHURCH" He didn't say that the disciples would build the church. He isn't telling us that we will build the church, He was saying then as He is saying now, that HE WILL BUILD HIS CHURCH!!!!

In **Acts 1:4-8** – Again Jesus was speaking to his disciples and said, "Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father has promised you, which you have heard me speak about. You will receive power when the holy spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth! This is a huge statement of Christ building his church! He doesn't say that "we might receive the power or that we might be his witnesses"Jesus is stating to them, and to us, what WILL BE DONE! He will build HIS Church!!

It's important for us to understand that the Church isn't built just because we have programs, or slick marketing, or whatever we may or may not have for resources. Christ will use those in reaching people, and he will use us as HIS WITNESSES, but ultimately the church is built by Jesus, not us. If you and I set out to "build the church" with our own thoughts and our own agenda, we will build something that is inferior to what Christ will build.

With this statement that Christ made about building the church, we can draw some conclusions as to what He meant.

a. If Jesus is going to build the church, we have to realize that he also owns the Church

We do not own the Church! Now we have a place that we come to for worship, it's paid for, we're good managers of it, but we're not talking about a building when we talk about Christ's Church. Christ's Church is made up of the people. We are HIS CHILDREN.....He owns us.....We are His Church!! We only get in trouble spiritually when we try to take ownership of something that isn't rightfully ours. And the Church is not ours, it's God's.

b. Another conclusion is that the church is more than a building –

This is kind of obvious but I think it deserves a reminder. In Matthew 28: 19 Jesus was talking to His disciples and he said, "Go and make disciples of all nations!!!! He didn't say" "Go and build buildings so that my name can be shared!" In Acts 1:8 Jesus was talking with His disciples and he said, "And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth!" He wasn't saying "Go to a church building! He was saying BE THE CHURCH wherever you are!!

The message of Christ was always about BEING THE CHURCH!!, not about "coming to church" ...It was a whole new ballgame when the holy spirit came at Pentecost!! If we put our emphasis on coming to a building, we've missed the point of Christ's intention for us to **be the church** by serving others, loving others, healing others, sharing with others, and caring for those who desperately need a message of Hope and Redemption. Don't mishear me though..... It is important for us to gather together in a church setting for corporate worship –we can't neglect that responsibility, but we can't overlook the greater responsibility of being the church.

c. Another conclusion that we can draw from Jesus' statement is that the Church is meant to be growing –

III. Rev. James Meeks said, "In order for growth to happen, we must believe that it can happen". The Apostle Paul was addressing the Christian believers in Ephesians 3: 20 – "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! Amen!" Friends, if we want to be a part of the growing Church, we have to believe and have the faith that it will grow!!! And we have to remember that faith without works is dead (James 2:20). So in order for the Church....the Kingdom..... to grow, we have to believe in and participate in what God is doing in and around us! God wants us to grow. He does not want us to be comfortable with the number of people in attendance each week.

2. The second key that Christ gives to us is a promise that the "Gates of Hell will not prevail" (vs. 18)

As Jesus is building His church, we have to know that there will be opposition. And we'll face opposition from three areas.

a. From satan – Our passage here implies that satan is coming against the church in a real and powerful way! He will attack us from every single angle possible. He will come against the leadership of the church, he will come against our marriages, he will come against our families, he will come against our finances, he will come against friendships, he will come against everything that he possibly can in an attempt to destroy the Church! – Ephesians 6:10-12 ¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” We have to be aware that at every angle possible, satan is fighting and opposing what we are trying to accomplish in Jesus’ name.

b. From Ourselves.... Sometimes you and I get in the way of God doing his work in our local place of worship! Sometimes as people we are driven more by our agenda, our tradition, our motives, and our “right way of doing things” than we are driven by what God wants. It won’t stop him from building his Church, but he may just move on to another group of people that are willing to set aside their agendas and traditions, and “way of doing things” in order to do His Great work – I love Paul’s honesty to the churches in Galatia- he’s addressing the Christians there and in verse 8 of Chapter 4 Paul says, “when you did not know God, you were slavesbut now that you know God, how is it that you have turned back to those weak and miserable principles? Then in verse 15 he asks (and I paraphrase), “What has happened to all your joy!? – What in the world are you doing!? You’re putting yourself in the way of what God wants to do!!!!” Friends, for you and I today, there may be some things in our lives that stand in the way of God doing an incredible work in the life of HIS CHURCH here in Fishkill! In my life, I have to say, “God, is there anything in me that is opposing what you want to do?” And if there is, I have to let go of that! Maybe there are some things in your life that you need to let go of as well so that God will accomplish what He wants to do through your life, for the kingdom, through the efforts of this local church.

And the 3rd area where the church will face opposition is from

c. From Others

III. A while ago a friend of mine was going through a tough situation in the life of the church he leads. There was some disunity, disharmony among the people that attended there and that disunity and disharmony had filtered out into the community. It really was a sad situation for the church and the community. Thankfully, they are through those darker days now, but my point is this.....other people can really hold back and oppose what God wants to do in the life of His Church. You’ve seen it happen, I’ve seen it happen and God is not pleased with that. In Chapter 5 of Galatians, Paul continues, and says “ You were doing so well!! You were running a good race! Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth!?” Friends, we cannot allow others to cut in on us and mess up what God wants to do!!

The bottom line here is that even though there will be opposition, the church that Jesus builds is unstoppable

If we look at an overview of history, we would see the Church that began at Pentecost still exists today! I'm not talking about the building.....I'm talking about Christ's Church. It's been built through wars, through politics, through reform, through struggles, through division, through persecution, through shifts and changes, it's been through everything and yet Christ's Church still continues to grow!!!! And here's why (these aren't in your notes)

a. Because the Church isn't bound to a single location – "Acts 1:8 – You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth! The Kingdom of God is meant to be decentralized

b. Because the church is organic – it's natural, it's not man-made, it's pure, it's free, it's not a building, it's more than a one-hour service held on one day of the week, it's more than a program, it's a lifestyle of people being the church wherever you are.

c. Because God has promised to build His Church and there's nothing that can stop it!!

3. The third key and the fourth key go hand in hand and it's a rather brief point for us. Christ shares that everything bound on earth will be bound in heaven and that everything loosed on earth will also be loosed in heaven.

There is room for some healthy debate on what these phrases actually means, but I think we can take a simple look at it and better understand what Jesus was really saying.

If we were to look at the Greek text, we would discover that these phrases really were suggesting that the binding and loosing had already occurred, and the effects of that action would remain. It's a similar phrasing like when Jesus said, "It is finished". The work of the Cross was in completion but the effects of that action would remain. So we can look at these phrases here as not something that will one day happen but as an agreement and opportunity to participate in what heaven is already doing.

When Christ spoke these words, he really wanted to drive home the idea that power and authority was being handed over to Peter, and the disciples, and now to you and I so that the kingdom of God would continue to advance. Acts 1:8 – "and you will **receive POWER**, when the holy Spirit comes upon you"!

And not only do these **keys have power but they have Christ's authority as well**. These keys were in the Lord's hands and he GAVE them to Peter. And on Christ's authority, Peter opened up the Kingdom of God to Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. He exercised that God given authority to help build up and unleash the kingdom of God here on earth. We could look at Acts 2, and see that one of Peter's most significant acts in Kingdom work, was when he stood up and addressed the crowd by preaching about the good news of Christ, and 3,000 people got saved in that day.

Christ offers you and I the same power and authority that peter had. There is virtually nothing that we cannot do under the power and the authority that Christ gives to us! I think I said it last week but I am always struck by the passage in [John 14:12](#) where Jesus said that we will “not only do what He has been doing but we will be able to do even greater things than he accomplished.”

And friends, I think that’s where we need to find ourselves today. Believing that Christ will build His Church and that the Gates of Hell will not prevail, Receiving the Keys of the Kingdom (the power and the authority), and Participating with what God is already doing!!

Prayer: