



A People Set Apart (Matthew 16: 13-20)

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June 25, 2023

KingsWay Community Church

Introduction - Keys, Authority, Power (and Responsibility)

- a. Opening Illustration: What is the Church? Why is it important, why not Jesus and the Bible?

I want to start this morning off with a question: what is the church and why is she so important?

I bet many of you, like me, have asked this question at one point or another, perplexed by its role in the Christian's life.

Within our circles, within evangelicalism, we love Jesus, and we love the Bible, but I doubt people would quickly with equal vigor say "I love the church." For many, given the individualistic nature of the cultural moment we are in, the Church is a bunch of individuals that love the Bible and Jesus, and we just try to get along.

I think for a lot of us, when we asked the question, "what is the church and why is she important," we're saying that within a room filled with so many places to love Jesus and the Bible. The church can seem like one of many equal ways for you to tailor your Christian living. What does it matter if I'm a Jesus follower with a Bible at a church, at home listening to podcast, at a Bible college, or some business Bible study on Friday morning with a couple of my Christian coworkers?

With such a small percentage of people already interested in church, and the fact that Gen. Z is rightfully being called a post Christian generation, shouldn't we just celebrate whenever we see someone saying that they're a Christ follower? Does a Christian really need a church?

- b. Transition to Topic

How would you answer the question: "what is the church and why is it important? Why should I join a church? I live a busy life, the church sinned against me, I am enjoying God where I'm at and I've never been more spiritually alive apart from the church, what's the deal with church?"

This larger question I'm asking really boils down to: **what is the identity of the Church and what authority does the Church have in the life of the Christian.** This is the trail that we're going to embark on this morning.

The Church's identity is grounded in the good news of Jesus Christ and has delegated authority to affirm or deny professions of faith.

1. The Identity of the Church
2. The Authority of the Church

1. The Identity of the Church

An Exposition of Mt16: The context, the question, Christ's response

CONTEXT

As we look at this text in front of us, we have to 1st take a glance at the context of the passage. What happened just before this unique question and response with Peter and Jesus?

Just before Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi, Christ had warned his disciples of the teachings of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. He used the analogy of leaven and bread, saying, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." The word watch in the original is a tricky word to translate and comes with it the idea of perceiving that which is true reality. What Jesus is telling his disciples is to be on watch for where true spiritual authority is, out of all the people that speak with spiritual authority and look as if they have spiritual authority, Christ is telling his disciples to guard against specifically the Sadducees and Pharisees.

In light of all places where we can find spiritual authorities, Christ's words "to be perceptive" and "to watch out," we need to hear those words. We need to rightly perceive and the true identity of the church.

So let's look at verse 13. Jesus asked the question who do people say that I am, and Peter responds with the last prophet, John the Baptist, with Elijah who typified the office of prophet during the Divided Kingdom, and Jeremiah, the prophet most known for his suffering and his representation of the people before God.

But the most important part of this story is not how close Peter's finger was on the pulse of current events within the religious landscape, the most important aspect of this story, and our story is our answer to the question "Who is Jesus?"



When Jesus asked Peter in verse 15, “but who do you say that I am?” **Peter's answer was just as much a statement about himself as it was about Jesus Christ.**

How we answer the question of who Jesus is, speaks to the marrow of who we are just as much as it does to who Jesus is.

PETER'S RESPONSE

Peter responds by saying “you are the Christ, the son of the living God.”

Peter, unlike the Pharisees, unlike many in the crowd who followed Jesus, unlike many in Richmond VA, answered with a declaration that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and that he is the son of the living God.

When Peter made this declaration, it wasn't the right answer on his spiritual essay T. This wasn't a mental ascent for Peter this was a wholehearted declaration of who Jesus was to him. When we talk about the true church, and we talk about the church in its local expressions through local churches, you'll be hard pressed to find a church that doesn't say we're all about Jesus. Think about Jesus 's words regarding the Pharisees, be perceptive, be discerning. Not all who profess to know Jesus will be known by him on the final day. Sermon on the mount talks about this, about those who cry “lord, lord” and who do miracles and do signs and Christ responds to them i never knew you.

When you speak of Christ, is it merely a template e-mail that you regurgitate to someone else, or do you believe that Christ Jesus is the deliverer and savior of you personally? That Christ Jesus is not some sort of fire insurance but that he is the son of the living God who died for your personal sins so that you might give your life in whole-hearted service of God?

When you reflect on your spiritual state before God, are you like Peter, and declare in spiritual simplicity the reality that it is Christ, and Christ alone that saves you. That the gospel is summed up In the holy beauty of God, and Christ's substitutionary death on the cross for your sin, your thorough repentance of sin and your humble, faith in his provision alone?

O church, how I want us to be like Peter.

And so Peter in light of this context and warning, in light of what the world proclaims Jesus to be, Peter summarizes the proclamation that typifies and grounds God's people: Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God.

CHRIST'S RESPONSE

And how does Jesus respond?



First, Jesus declares that it is by grace and because of God that he reached that answer. Which reminds us, in our proclamation of the gospel, that believing in Jesus Christ is not a box checked but a miraculous work of God in raising the dead to life.

But after saying this, let's look at what Jesus says in **verse 18-20**,

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."

So it is in light of, and in response to, Peter's proclamation, Jesus tells Peter on him Jesus will build his church. There's no shortage of commentaries on this verse, but what is important to note is that it is not just Peter the man that is the rock, what makes Peter the rock of the church and the foundational stone for the people God is building until Christ's return is Peter's proclamation and adherence to what he just said. What is the Church? Why is she important? Why bother with Church?

The church is the people of God who cherish and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the church. Why do we treasure the church? Because Christ gave his happy approval and authority and blessing and protection to his church. He did not say that the gates of hell wouldn't prevail against parachurch organizations or missions organizations or your Beth Moore Bible study group or your precepts ministry book studies. Christ smiles and delights and blesses his people through the church.

And when we talk about the church there are two ways to talk about it. There is the capital C church which is the church universal. When I go and I visit Josh Kruger in Namibia and meet believers in his church plant one day I as a citizen of the United States and a member of Kingsway Community Church share the same citizenship in heaven with that dear brother or sister in Africa because we are part of Christ's universal church.

But when you read the New Testament, the church universal is spoken about in several passages, but it is by large majority expressed through localized gatherings. **The universal church is visible through recognizable, set apart, distinguished bodies of believers, which we call local churches.**

God has saved a people to himself from the world. We are set apart, and so there is a recognizable, distinguishable group of gospel-cherishing, gospel-believing Christ followers. Kingsway, that's what we're doing when we gather every Sunday. We're saying we're not of this world we're of the Kingdom of heaven, we love the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you care about the universal church, be all about a local church. That's why we care so deeply about membership here at Kingsway Community Church.

So as we look to identify what the church is and why it's important, I hope you hear the good news of the gospel. The good news of the gospel is that God saved a people, we are not in this world alone. God has set a people apart for his glory and their enjoyment.

The identity of the church is not a political affiliation, you don't have to go to a certain country to be with God's people, you don't have to have been raised in a Christian home in order to be part of God's church. The identity of the church is tied to the receiving in proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. Which was by no works or merit of your own were you saved but through the merits of Jesus Christ. And the people of God is no different. There's no merit, there's no works that are required.

Kingsway, what makes this the happiest place in the world is that we are a group of sinners saved by grace, all proclaiming with one voice Jesus is our Messiah the son of the living God.

God's church receives his special eye, his care, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus promises in this passage that the gates of hell will not overcome it: so we have Christ's protection that the world will not overcome us until he returns. What wonderful news.

But not only does this passage speak to the blessed identity of the church, it speaks to the Heavenly authority Christ bestows upon the church.

2. The Authority of the Church (v.18-19)

So let's look at the authority of the church. Look with me at **vs.18-19**:

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."

CHRIST GAVE HIS CHURCH AUTHORITY

Jesus has given the church the keys to the Kingdom, the power to bind and to loose things on earth which will then be bound and loosed in heaven.

Think about what a key does for you. A key grants you access into a room, it gives you the power to open it, to close it. At my house I have the power and authority to unlock my front door and invite people in or lock it and prevent an intruder from invading.



The authority that Christ has given his bride is the authority to affirm or deny professions of faith. He did not give that authority to reside in the individual, but in the church corporate. But hear me, this authority is not from man. Man didn't make these keys.

The keys of the Kingdom that Jesus gives the church is authority bestowed by Christ to his people.

Ephesians 5:23 says “²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.”

The authority that the church has is derived from the Lord Jesus Christ. Just like how the church would not exist apart from the grace of God, the authority of the church would be impossible apart from the authority of Jesus.

WHAT KIND OF AUTHORITY

So, if Christ has given his people an authority that is derived from him and for his glory, what kind of authority does God's people have? In the Old Testament, as we study Deuteronomy, we see that there is a judicial aspect to Israel's authority; those that break the law could be liable to death, does the church have that kind of authority? No, but why?

Is the authority and power that Christ has given his Church political influence?

The bride of Christ looks very different than the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. In fact, many misunderstood Jesus and dismissed him altogether because they had too political of an idea of who he was and what his mission was.

We get a hint of the kind of authority Jesus has given the church when he appears to his disciples at the close of Matthew's Gospel.

The Evangelist writes this in **Matthew 28:18-20**:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

So we see that *all* authority has been given to Jesus, and this authority of Jesus that is again grounding God's people is not an earthly authority but a spiritual authority, an authority tied to, in this instance, the proclamation of the gospel.

Church, this is really important for us to understand the New Testament nature of God's people over against the nation of Israel. The Old Testament nation of Israel was an ethnically distinct



nation-state and theocracy. We are not Israel, America is not God's nation nor is it God's church. We hope to be salt and light in whatever nation we are in, but the Kingdom of heaven is not a national identity. Our identity is a spiritual association with the contents and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We don't want Christian nationalism we want a holy church, a people set apart for God's own pleasure and will.

So we see that God has created his church, and delegated to his Church a spiritual authority to what Matthew 16 says, to "bind and loose." But what is being bound and loosened?

What the church binds and loosens through this authority given from Christ is the affirmation and denial of one's profession of faith.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THIS AUTHORITY

The authority of the church is tied to affirmations and denials, that's what Matthew means by binding and loosing. But where we see him define this, if you're looking in Matthew 16 go a little further to Matthew 18 starting in verse 15.

We see this phrase mentioned again just a little over a chapter later in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus says this is **Matthew 18:15-20**,

¹⁵ "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ *Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

It's here that we see in this famous passage on church discipline what Matthew means by binding and loosening. To put in the negative as seen in Matthew 18, the church's authority is observed in the denial of certain persons professions of faith. Persons that were confronted regarding their sin and testimony and the Lord Jesus Christ, think about Peters profession in Matthew 16. Not only was this individual met by someone privately, more people were included in a loving call of this person to repent of their sins, and lastly it is brought to the church. Not to bring the hammer but for the sake first of the purity of the church, and to guard the bride of Christ, but thirdly with the hopes of restoring the brother or sister caught in habitual unrepentant sin.



It could not be more clear from this text that when Jesus gives his church authority he is giving them the explicit authority to affirm or deny an individual's profession of faith.

Our first gut reaction when we read these two passages is "how dare you." I know mine was.

Normal feeling to have given the cultural moment that we are in presently. Our culture hates authority, distrusts it, in America it's all about our personal individual rights. No one knows the depth, complexity, and mystery of my personhood better than me, myself, and I.

One of the most dangerous places to be spiritually is to believe that you yourself can fairly judge and assess your spiritual state. We need the church.

Jeremiah 17:9 says this:

⁹The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?

Because of the Fall, the way that we think, the way that we want, and the way that we act are defaced because of sin. We need God's grace to properly think and feel and act, and Kingsway one of the graces of God is the gift of the local church.

The local church is a kind expression of God's love and care for you. That is the first thing that we need to hear, think, feel, and respond when we hear God's word in Matthew 16 and in Matthew 18. This is God gifting his people with the assurance of salvation through a body of believers empowered by the Spirit, centered on the gospel, to the glory of God.

When the world looks at Kingsway, and it beholds the members of our dear Church. Given the text of Matthew 16 and Matthew 18, we are saying to the world these people are set apart, they, like peter, proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the living God. This isn't a group of people that are religious and we pray that some in our midst are going to heaven as if membership was some kind of Gold Star, or name tag that we give to people. We believe that this is an unmixed congregation. That all who hold membership hold a true profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This ain't no Country Club, this ain't no fraternity, this is the local expression of God's Universal Church.

But also let me make crystal clear, the church doesn't give you salvation, it is affirming your salvation. It is affirming what is true in heaven. And that the authority of Jesus Christ to affirm what is true in heaven was not given to the individual but was given to his church.

Why do we take membership so seriously? Why do we tremble as ministers of this gospel?

because as needy men, we hold the precious authority of the Lord Jesus. We get to sit on the front row of the testimonies of God's people. We get to hear time and time again of God's precious children saying "I was dead in sin but now I'm alive, I was blind but now I see." What a joy and a privilege it is to serve Christ's church but, with this great power comes great responsibility.

God's kindness is seen through the corporate affirmation of salvation, thus giving his people their profession and assurance; but God's kindness and protection and gospel proclamation are tied *to the denial of professions of faith.*

We need the local church because it is in corporate authority where individual professions of faith are affirmed or denied. Your summer camp doesn't have that authority, your Bible college professor doesn't have that authority, Christ's body through local distinguishable, gospel proclaiming churches does.

Illustration: I can't declare myself to be a citizen of Canada, because I don't have the authority to make that claim. I need a state's authority to affirm my citizenship. Same for the Christian, Christ didn't give the individual the authority to totally affirm their spiritual state.

For the Christian, we have moved this affirmation of salvation from the church, having done this throughout all of Church history, to just less than 100 years ago given this authority to individuals who said a prayer as a child. In the span of history, the ink hasn't even dried on the Sinner's Prayer.

When we put one of our members under church discipline, it's chief goal is to honor the Lord God with the authority that he has entrusted us, and secondly it is to love our neighbor with the aim of restoring them or in hopes of sharing the good news of the gospel so that they might believe.

Remember, the identity of the church is grounded in the very fact that we are a people saved by God and set apart from the world.

So, it is of the utmost importance, because of the glory of God and the integrity of the gospel that we proclaim, and of the seriousness of authority delegated to us, that we with all humility bind and loose faithfully.

The blessed state of the Christian, the mission of the church, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the reign of Christ are equally present through the affirmation of salvation and fellowship of the church as it is through the biblical practice of church discipline.

Churches that ignore intentionally the practice of church discipline are not functioning as true churches. Because our identity as a set apart people comes with it the responsibility of affirming those set apart people and protecting the flock of God from those who are not set apart.



The best application that I have for this sermon this coming up in the next couple weeks. When you see individuals being baptized, and you see a group of individuals joining our church in July, I want you to think about the church's identity. God is growing his Church and he is giving us people who cherish and proclaim the message of the gospel. The people that are joining our church are individuals who have a credible profession of faith that they have been born again.

Why do we cherish Sunday morning? Why do we long to be in community as a church? Because we are with a people set apart because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Why do we go to Church? Why bother? *Christ died for his Church to set them apart and to care for them through the authority bestowed to them.*

For those that are in attendance here at Kingsway and you have not joined a local church, what is stopping you, my friend?

Scripture describes a Christian not as an individual, but as part of a body.

May we love the Bible, love Jesus, and cherish the church.