

ON THIS ROCK, I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

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Sermon presented by: Rev. Michael Scott
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Text: *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades^[c] will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matt. 16:18-19)*

Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:13-20

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A recent national survey suggested that for every member listed on a Church roll as member, only about 25% attended services on a regular basis. I conducted an informal poll at a recent event, where about 90% of those in attendance were church members, only about half had a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. My question is, “What does church membership have to do with being a Christian?”

Recently while discussing my ministerial work, an



acquaintance told me that he considered himself a Christian, but wasn't presently a member of any church. He then continued to tell me of all the weaknesses and failures of belonging to a church.

It seems to me that many people are on church rolls yet have no vital relationship with Jesus. Some people say they love and serve Jesus but have no appreciation for the church.

Today we are going to explore these ideas from a scriptural point of view, by looking closer at Matthew 16:13-20, but first, let's spend a moment in prayer.

Heavenly father, as we read today's scripture, we praise you for your presence in the church and that we can be a part of your church. Now we thank you that we can worship by bringing that with which you have blessed us so that your church may function effectively in the world. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord and saviour who reigns with you and Holy Spirit, one God for evermore. Amen.



If you have your bibles handy I'd encourage you to open them to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 16 verses 13-20 for our scripture reading today. It's a reading in which Jesus and the Disciples speak of the foundations of the Church.

Scripture Reading

Jesus and the disciples have retreated to an area north of the Sea of Galilea. There Jesus questioned the disciples about their faith in Him. Their replies were all interesting: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. Jesus teachings were similar to these men. Many considered Jesus a prophetic forerunner to the Messiah, but not the Messiah himself. Of course, all their answers were wrong. Peter responded correctly "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God". Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one. As such he is more than a human being, he is God. Peter thus acknowledged Jesus as the Son of the living God. The disciples were first hand witnesses to the miracles and words of Jesus Christ.



Peter was blessed because he had come to the correct conclusion about Christ. Jesus added that it wasn't from Peter's own intuition, it was revealed by the Father in heaven, that this knowledge was divinely inspired. Peter was living up to his name, it means "rock". Peter was strong like a rock in his faith, and in his commitment to Jesus Christ. In today's text, Jesus added that on this rock, He would build His church. Jesus was praising Peter for his accurate statement about Him, and was introducing the idea of building the Church.

Jesus considered that the building of His Church would be a future endeavour. He said "I will build My church". And this would happen after His death. Jesus was anticipating His death and His victory over death through the Resurrection. His church would therefore begin to be built starting on the day of Pentecost. Peter and the other apostles would play an important role in establishing this, and Peter would be granted significant authority..." the keys of the kingdom of Heaven". This privilege of binding and loosing was seen in Peter's life as he had the privilege on the day of Pentecost to proclaim the gospel and announce to all those who responded in



saving faith that their sins had been forgiven.

A colleague recently said, “I have seen people will make a commitment to Christ in their own homes, but a large percentage will not come to the church and make a public commitment.”

In Jesus time, he witnessed the emptiness of the temple and synagogues and sharply rebuked the religious leaders. Nevertheless, when in Jerusalem, he went to the temple. When in the cities and villages, he worshiped and taught in the synagogues.

Have you ever heard someone say, “I used to go to church, but I became so disillusioned I quit”? That person has never attended a church as weak, cold, or unfriendly as the synagogues Jesus attended every week, but he continued going. He pointed out their weaknesses, but he kept attending. He offered something better, but he never quit.

A man said to me recently, “My father was a preacher. I became so sick and disgusted with the way they treated him that I quit the whole thing.”



Jesus must have been very upset about the way they treated his Father, but he didn't quit.

Jesus went into the church business. Following the confession and commitment of his own disciples, Jesus promised continued success for his church. Whatever else may be said about that conversation between Jesus and his disciples, he clearly was building a church that was inseparable from a confession of him as Saviour.

People sincerely believe that if they can just make enough money, buy enough gadgets, and have enough fun, they will be happy. But you cannot swap God for gadgets. Gather about you every convenience in the world, and you will still be thirsty. Crises inevitably come into all our lives. We have learned that the happiness ratio is no higher with affluence and education than without it. This is not to speak against education, economic security, or even gadgets and expensive cars. It is to say that we are made for something that these will not satisfy.



Jesus gave us the church as a means of keeping the Good News alive. He commits this function to his churches, and we are unfaithful if we do not keep the proclamation of the Good News in the forefront.

Another advantage of church membership is fellowship. We are social beings who benefit from worshiping together. We need to share with others, confess our sins to others, and serve with others. As members of Christ's body, we are dependent on all the other members. The Lord gave us the church because we need the church.

