

Community Group Discussion Questions

“The Power of the Church”

Matthew 16:13-20

Sermon Series Title: “The Church of God”

Sermon Series Summary: The Church of God is the people of God throughout the ages, redeemed by Jesus Christ. We’re going to take a look at who we are and who we are called to be as the church of God. More specifically, we see that who we are is directly connected to whose we are in Christ.

Passage Setting: Matthew is the first of the Synoptic Gospels in the New Testament, emphasizing the kingship of Jesus. Through this Gospel so far, we’ve heard his teaching and seen his miracles. Matthew 16 is about less than a year before Jesus’ death on the cross.

Summary: In our passage, we see that our confession of Christ is the rock upon which God builds His church. Who do we confess Jesus to be? This is the most important question we need to answer in our lifetime. And our confession and proclamation of the gospel are the keys to the kingdom. This power is by grace on the finished work of Christ.

Central Truth: “Our confession is our foundation, and our proclamation is our power in Christ.”

Sermon Points:

1. The Personhood
2. The Profession
3. The Power

Opening Question

1. What do you think of when you think of power in the church?

(Answers may vary.)

People might not agree that church and power should go together. We see the abuse of power and authority in the church all over the news today. Church history confirms this abuse of power as well when we look at the Crusades,

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racism, or sexual abuse. But we see power in our passage today, referring to the church. But this power is rooted in the gospel by grace.

Read Matthew 16:13-20

2. What does our passage teach us about the church's foundation?

(Jesus makes the claim that upon "this rock," He will build His church. This rock does not refer to Peter or his position. We see that this is not a reference to the office of the pope. Peter fails many times in the future (rebuking Jesus in our next passage, denying Jesus 3 times, not living in line with the gospel in Galatians), and although he has an important role in the early church, he is not the sole main authority. In Acts 8, he is sent by the apostles to the Samaritans. In Acts 15, he has to submit to the rule of the Jerusalem council, and James has the final word.

So, what is the rock referring to? It is referring to Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, Son of the Living God. That confession is the foundation of the church. We need to answer the important question of who Jesus is ourselves, just like the disciples in the beginning of our passage. And our confession is the rock upon which we are built.

We are not built on one person, our abilities, our flashiness, our gifts, our programs, etc. We are built on the confession that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of the Living God: Jesus' person and work (reference to "The Center of the Church" sermon three Sundays ago). Jesus lived the life we could not live, and He died the death we deserved. He is the Son of the Living God, who has been sent to redeem us. We confess this every Sunday through the Apostles' Creed. All our programs, plans, agendas, and lives should be found upon this truth. Our personal growth and edification is built upon this confession.)

3. What is the power of the church? What does that mean for us?

(The power of the church is found in the proclamation of the gospel. Through it, we know that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Not only that, we are binding and loosing the kingdom of heaven. It's not a power found in ourselves, but it's a power that is found in God's word, given to us by grace.

This means that we have a weight upon our shoulders to live in line with the gospel. Our lives are testimonies of Christ. Not only that, we must also speak the words of His

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gospel. We must share who Christ is and what Christ has done. That is the binding and loosing. In that, we are able to live by God's power in His grace by His Holy Spirit.)

Final Thoughts: *Who is Jesus to us? That is the most important question we need to answer in our lives. And if we confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, then we are part of God's church. God will build His church on that confession, and through that confession, we are able to bind and loose with the keys of the kingdom. We are able to proclaim Christ so much that even the gates of hell will not prevail against it. This power is possible because of the One who surrendered all power to confess us as His people and who was denied the kingdom on the cross so those keys may be given to us.*