

TOPIC: LET THE CHURCH BE THE CHURCH
St. Matthew 16: 13-19

Today we want to deal specifically with the mission and purpose of the church. We are living in a day and time when the world needs to know that Jesus is still the answer for the world today. The Body of Christ by in large (no particular denomination) has been declining in its power, its influence and representation of what the body of Christ is supposed to look like. We are supposed to be reflections of God. We are supposed to be salt and light in a darkened world to be able to draw sinners to the cross. We are supposed to be “The Church.”

The church is not a building, an institution or an association. The church is the Ecclesia (Greek)⁹ called out ones). Jesus made a general call in Matt. 11:28 “*come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*” We who are Christians answered that call and became a part of “the church.” So the church is actually a body of baptized believers in Christ. We are the body of Christ and as such are an extension of Christ’s ministry in the earth.

In this scripture today, Jesus was talking to his 12 hand-picked disciples. He had been with them, taught them, fed them, worked miracles in their presence and they didn’t even know who he was.

When Peter gave the revelation from God and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” he said to him “blessed art thou Peter because flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you but my father which is in heaven...thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Jesus did not build a foundation on Peter but on the affirmation of the God given revelation that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of the Living God. Jesus said no other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid.

Any church that will be successful and effective in ministry must be built on a solid foundation. That’s where the church begins to be the church, laying their foundation on the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. The foundation built on the fact that Jesus died, was buried and raised from the dead and he voluntarily gave his life as a ransom for us.

We can have beautiful sanctuaries with crystal windows, we can have melodies singing, anointed preaching, powerful teaching and even excellent administration, but if Jesus is not the foundation, it is not church.

We, as the church are supposed to be reflections of God. We are supposed to live our lives to the extent that people can look at us and say, Oh, that's what God looks like. The church in a community is to be a place of healing, a place of deliverance, a place of solace, a place of refuge and so much more. But the church by in large is declining in its influence and power. The church is not respected as it used to be in days of old. People would not sell drugs near a church, would not curse in front of a church, would put their cigarettes out when they passed by.

But now, they break into the church, they sell drugs in front of the church, they curse in front of Christians and the list goes on.

The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Why did he say the gates of hell? In ancient days the strength of the cities were judged by the strength and structure of the gate. The gate was their first place of assault. That is why Jericho seemed so unconquerable because their gate was so solid and strong. So Jesus was letting Peter know that the power of hell cannot overpower the church.

How can the church re-establish its influence in the world? By showing its vital signs.

Have Jesus Christ as our foundation.

Spreading the gospel of Christ and making disciples.

Showing love to all mankind

Refusing to bow to the world's standards by compromising

The church is a place of deliverance, a place of love a place of power, a place of passion, healing, integrity and victory. Let the church be the church.

I believe that whatever is written on the outside of your sanctuary should be reflected inside.

If the name of your church is “The church of Miracles” then miracles should be taking place inside. If the name of your church is “Restoration Tabernacle” then restoration should be going on inside.

Jesus said, “Peter I give you the keys to the kingdom.” Keys represent authority. Which is a derivative of the word authorization. As believers we are authorized to go into the enemy’s camp and do what we have to do to the glory of God.Jesus said in my name.....

In closing, we must remember that each and every one of us are a part of the Church. (The body of Christ).

We have to check ourselves frequently to be sure that we are at the place where God wants us to be and that he can count on us to live in a way that he is pleased and that we are still representing. How do we know if we are alive and representing?

We know in the same way that we check and monitor our health.....by our vital signs.

These signs are to be used to measure the body’s basic functions and if there is a problem in any of these areas, it’s not hard to find out what the problems are.

Temperature
Blood pressure
Respiratory rate
Pulse

Do you still love God (to love him is to serve him)
Do you still have love for your brothers and sisters?
Do you still love and live by his word?
Are you sharing that love with others?

These are our spiritual vital signs. Let us be sure that our spiritual vital signs are intact. When we do this, then we are alive and well and the church can be the church.