



1<sup>ST</sup> EVER SERVICE!

Theme Statement: Jesus is the Savior of the world who came to call men and women to Himself in a special way.

Purpose Statement: To clarify what the εκκλησια is, and invite people into it.

Text: Matthew 16:13-18

Welcome to **church**.

What does that mean... that word *church*?

It's a loaded term nowadays isn't it?

- Sadly Institutional
- Overly Political
- Usually Hypocritical
- Horribly Judgmental

I'll admit that at times the church is, and has been, all of those... not always, but enough that it's a problem

- I apologize (To unchurched and dechurched)

But if we can get past all those things (failures and stigmas) for a minute and ask:

- What is the church **supposed** to be?
  - That would be helpful
- Because we have a chance at a fresh start
  - Our God is the God of new beginnings
- And we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater—because God doesn't
  - Otherwise we'd all be gone already!

**Church.**

- What is it supposed to mean?
- What is it supposed to be?

There is a clue in our text in verse 18, where Jesus says:

- I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it (NASB)
- Or, will not be able to hold out against it (Amplified)

So whatever *the church* is:

- Jesus said He would build it
- And that Hell could not handle it

Let's try to understand... look what Jesus did here:

- Took His disciples to a popular/spiritual place
  - A place of idols
  - Explain...

We are a people who are obsessed with popularity—in fact, we love idols

American Idol Finale—100 Million Votes (Adam or Kris)

- The President was only elected with 69 million
- We are a people who are obsessed with popularity and polls—with idols

What Jesus is doing here is challenging popular idols

- He takes His own popular poll
- **Who do people say I am?** (v. 13<sup>b</sup>)
  - *I know who these popular ones are...* (Emperor worship, etc)
    - *What is the popular opinion about me?*
      - There were many opinions then—as there are today (v. 14)

Peter had the right opinion—by the grace of God

- **You are the Christ (the Messiah) the Son of the Living God** (v. 16)
  - **What that means biblically...**

Based on that reality

- Jesus is gonna build something, that hell can not handle
- He calls it: **The Church**

2 Reasons why that is interesting

1. What that word meant at that time
2. That Jesus calls it His Own

1. What that word meant at that time

- *ἐκκλησία* (an assembly—social, political, religious, etc.)
- **Jesus claims His own assembly—a new assembly—confronts all other assemblies**
  - The Greek word order is unusual and it makes the *my* emphatic
  - R. T. France says Jesus speaks with extraordinary boldness here<sup>1</sup>
  - **The *ἐκκλησία* of me**

2. Jesus calls it His

- The church belongs to Jesus

<sup>1</sup> R.T. France, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament (The Gospel of Matthew)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

## The Church = The assembly around Jesus!

- Not a building
- Not merely a physical gathering—a life gathering—an identity
- Our tendency—
  - To make church (and being the church) about everything else
  - power, personalities, popularity...
    - Including us (our needs, wants, drama)
  - **It has to be about Jesus—by definition!!**
    - *To, for, unto, with, about and around Jesus*
      - The Senior Pastor (1 Peter 5:4)
      - Why we falter when leaders fail

## Christocentric ecclesiology

- = a Christ-centered understanding of church
- Whose church is it anyway?
  - This is what we have lost and need to regain—
    - Because people actually wanted to be with Jesus!
- This changes the way we do church and mission and life (it isn't about us or for us)

## If it is really His:

- **How does this affect the way we approach, handle, attend, and love the church?**
- His Bride!

## As long as we keep Jesus the center

- And the focus of attention
- And the reason
- And the goal
  - Everything will be cool—great in fact!
  - No matter what
  - But when other things/people become more popular than Jesus...

## We gather/assemble around Jesus—an identity, not a building

Maybe you're here today and you don't usually go to church, or you wouldn't call yourself a Christian

- But you're here—you're interested...
- Why?
- Why would you want to *assemble/gather around Jesus*?

## We all assemble around something—and are identified by something

- A social scene, a career, a hobby, a philosophy or ideology, a person, a band, our children, our spouse
- Even if it is yourself... you are the center

But what we find is that none of those other assemblies' seem to answer the big questions in life?

- Why am I here?
- Why do I exist?
- What is the meaning of life?
- Why aren't I satisfied?

You are here today because God loves you and is pursuing you

- You are here ultimately—you exist—were created—to know God
- Created for love... and otherworldly love

God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ

- **The messiah, the Son of the Living God**

What has been revealed to us through Jesus Christ is that we are not God

- We are not perfect
- We are not all-loving
- We are not all-knowing
- We are not all-powerful
- We are sinners
- ... We are not able to save ourselves
  - We are at best—idols
  - Jesus came to challenge idols
    - **What is your life gathered around?**
      - What does that do for you? Will it last?
      - Is it bigger than you? Your problems?

Jesus also came to destroy the works of the devil

- 1 John 3:8
  - ... **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.**

**I will build my church and the gates of hades will not overpower it**

- Hell can't handle it
- It can't hold out against it

What Hell wants to do is handle you—to get you to hold out against Jesus

- Gates = deliberative & retentive
- Satan has a strategic plan to keep you in
  - The force of Sin (pulling you in)
  - But you are not an unwilling victim
    - And this is the problem
    - **Children of wrath, not of God** (Eph 2)

But what Jesus has done—the Cross...

- Hell can't handle—if you won't partner

## 2 Tim 2:26

Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants. (NLT)

### What does the devil want?

- Guilt
  - We all have it
  - If not something is wrong
  - A higher authority tells us we are guilty
- Emptiness
  - Created for God
  - Meaning to life
  - Live for something bigger than yourself
- Eternity

Justification and propitiation through repentance

But who do you say that I am? (v. 15)

End: Jesus be the Center—he will not be second (no idols before me)