

Matthew 16:13–23 | Mark Minnella

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[0 : 0 0] Yeah, so I was thinking about that. I'm always fascinated by all of these weather events. I don't think they're fun, but I'm fascinated by them because I always like to see how everybody predicts what's going to happen.

But, you know, we know God is in control. I had a friend. He recently passed away, but I had a friend. His name was Tim. We were friends since high school, and he lived in South Beach. And so every time one of these storms would come up, Tim said, well, you know, I work in South Beach, and these hotels, they've been here since the 30s.

So they've been through so many hurricanes. He said, yeah, I just go to my favorite hotel. I get up on the third floor and on the backside of it, and I just ride out the storm because the concrete walls are 18 inches thick, and that thing has been through every hurricane.

And so he told me the story of how in 1989, I think it was, they had a bad hurricane coming in, and Tim and his buddies were staying at this Clevelander hotel, and the police officer came in and said, you guys got to leave. Everybody's getting out.

He said, nah, we're going to stay. He said, well, you have to leave. Well, my friend Tim is a big, tough guy, and he had a couple of other guys with him, and the police officer said, I'm telling you, I'm a police officer. You've got to leave. Nah, we're staying.

[1 : 2 4] The guy said, well, I've got a gun, and Tim said, eh, we've got guns, too. Let's not have a gunfight, but we've got food and beer, so you can come back and join us when you're off duty, and he did.

But I also thought of a passage of scripture, and it goes like this. Therefore, if anyone hears my words and puts them into practice, he's like a wise man who built his house on a rock.

The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against the house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

The rain came, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against the house, and it fell with a great crash. As we approach this passage this morning, I would ask that you think about your life and your house and just say, well, what is my life?

What is my life built on? Our passage this morning is in Matthew chapter 16 and verses 13 through 23.

[2 : 3 4] So let's read that. When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that I am? They replied, some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah, one of the prophets.

But what about you, he asked? Who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, you are the Messiah, the son of the living God. Jesus replied, blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my father in heaven.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys to 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. And then he ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders and chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and rise on the third day.

[3 : 4 6] Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. Never, Lord, he said, this shall never happen to you. Jesus turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan.

You're a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns. Let's pray. Father, we just thank you for your word.

Thank you for this passage of scripture that we can learn from it. I pray that we would leave here changed for the better, closer to you. In Christ's name I pray.

So our passage this morning, it starts out telling us the location. And so I have a little illustration, I hope, of a little map of Jerusalem and Israel in Jesus' time.

And so last week, they were at Bethsaida. You see that on the top of the little Sea of Galilee? That's where they were. And now they're headed way up to where it says Mount Hermon there.

[4 : 46] Caesarea Philippi is the name of that town. And they're going to be right at the base of Mount Hermon. So about 20 miles north of where they were. 20 miles, well, a lot of you probably drove 20 miles to get here today.

But think about walking in the desert for 20 miles. That's a little bit of a different story. I know Jeff's going to run 26 miles coming up here. I'll be cheering. I won't be along for the ride.

But 20 miles is a long way to walk in the desert, right? So they're now about 100 miles north of Jerusalem. And Jesus is taking time now. We see a little bit of a shift in the book of Matthew at this time.

It's the third year of Jesus' public ministry. And so what happens is that he is going to be moving from spending as much time with the crowds and the masses.

And he's going to spend more time with his guys. Last week we saw how Jesus did so many miracles. And yet the religious leaders asked for a sign. I think Teddy did a good job showing us that they would never believe.

[5 : 53] No matter how many miracles. No matter how many things he did. And here's really why we see. A person is saved when they recognize Jesus for who he is. But it's a supernatural event.

You see, Jesus says God, the Father, revealed this to Peter. Not flesh and blood. In John 6, 44, it says, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent him draws them.

And I will raise them up at the last day. And so as I said, we see a turning point here. Jesus is going to be spending more time with his closest men. And I think this is good for us because we get to learn a lot of stuff.

Because we would say they're not so smart, but they just didn't get it. And because they don't get it, they ask questions. And then we get the answers. So I like that part. So I'd like to look at four things today, if we could.

Number one, Jesus' question, which has two parts. And then Peter's response. And then Jesus' response to Peter and the rest of them and us. And then the preview of the mission.

[6 : 56] So the question is, who do people say that I am? And their response is, well, John the Baptist. Some say Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. It's an interesting question.

Because by this time, Jesus had done so many miracles. And he taught like nobody else in history. People had to know that he was no ordinary person.

The Pharisees, they said, they attributed his power to Satan. They said, you cast out demons by the prince of demons. And you know, I've always said that if you were around in that day, that's kind of a logical conclusion, really.

If you saw that this guy could cast out demons, if he could cure every kind of disease, blind people saw, deaf people heard, crippled people walked, the dead were raised. He had power over a storm. He never sinned. He could not, he cannot be just a man. No way. And yet many continued in their unbelief. So as we come to verse 15, the most important question of all, who do you say that I am?

[8 : 08] You see, this is the most important question. Because Jesus will either be your savior, or he'll be your judge. The big thing here, Peter's confession of Christ.

We don't know, you know, the scripture doesn't tell us exactly when each one of these men came to saving faith. They were disciples before they were Christians. Okay.

It's kind of backwards. Today it's the other way around usually. But Peter, we know, we say that Peter understood the man, but we'll see he doesn't understand the mission.

He saw who Jesus was, but he didn't understand why he came. What a person does with Jesus will determine where they spend eternity. Is he a prophet?

A preacher? A religious figure? Is he a God? Or is he the God? Each person must decide for themselves what to do with Jesus. You see, if Jesus is who he says he is, then we must obey.

[9 : 12] He told Nicodemus in John chapter 3, Nicodemus was a very religious guy, one of the religious leaders of the day, one of the most important guys. And you know what he said? You need to be born again.

2 Timothy 4.1 Christ Jesus will be the judge of the living and the dead. Philippians 2.10 That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

At the end of this book of Matthew, in chapter 28, it says, Jesus says, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. I've heard that there are some 30,000 religions today.

30,000 religions. Look up here for a moment. I want to say this. I'm not the judge. Jesus is. But I have to tell you this.

His words are clear. No one will be in heaven unless they do it Jesus' way. That's exactly what the Bible says. Matthew 7.13 and 14 says this.

[10 : 15] Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many go that direction. But small is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and there's few who find it.

See, there's lots of ways to go to hell, but there's only one way to go to heaven. John 14.6, Jesus says this. I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

In Revelation 20, verse 15, at the end of the age, it says, anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Lots of ways to go to hell. There's an old song that most of you may not remember, but when I was a young Christian, there was a song by the Imperials, and the first part of it goes like this.

I'm not going to sing it. Don't worry. I would drive everybody out of here. No, it won't be old Buddha that's sitting on the throne, and it won't be old Muhammad who's calling us home.

[11 : 27] It won't be Hare Krishna who plays that trumpet tune. We're going to see the sun, not Reverend Moon. Jesus is a one-way guy. And so when Jesus says, blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah, it's because that day, Peter's name was written in the book of life.

That day, Peter was born again. He was saved. And so I have to ask, is your name written in the book of life? I can tell you that happened for me, March 10, 1979, at 10.30 in the morning, in the bathroom of the dealership I worked at.

That's when I chose to believe that Jesus paid for my wrongdoing. Jesus asked these questions. Peter responds, and we know that this is saving faith because of the response and because it was given to him by the Father.

We don't know if Peter was speaking for all the guys or not. You know, sometimes he was the spokesperson. He was the loudest mouth, at least in the record that we have. And I can identify with that sometimes.

Peter was kind of a, I say Peter had ADHD. He's like the patron saint of ADHD people, right? I mean, well, I didn't mean that exactly. Okay, but let's, all right, look, squirrel.

[12 : 39] Okay, so, but Peter was that guy, wasn't he? Hey, Lord, that'll never be. That's not what I want, Peter. Okay, well. We also have something interesting in this passage.

We have the very first mention of the church. The church is referenced over 100 times in the New Testament. Anybody know how many times it's mentioned in the Old Testament?

Not you. Zero. Zero. Not mentioned in the Old Testament.

Gentiles are mentioned in the Old Testament. It's too small a thing for the, for the Savior to die for just Israel. It's not mentioned in the Old Testament at all. And so, it's called a mystery by some.

Well, I'd like to look at a few things about the church. The Greek word that's used in the New Testament is ekklesia. Ekklesia. I'm not sure how to pronounce that.

[13 : 34] But it just means a gathering, a group of people. So, it was used of a town hall meeting, anything like that. PTA meeting, that would be a group. But in the New Testament, it's used specifically of the people of God.

And so, if we do a study of the church, well, I would tell you we're not going to do that because we would be getting out next year. But I'm going to mention three things. The church is the community of people who know Jesus intimately.

They're saved by accepting his death as the final and complete payment for all the wrong things they have done. That's called sin in the Bible. The word is used in the New Testament for the whole body of believers.

So, every saved person, we call that the universal church. That's made up of every believer around the world. And then, local churches. So, you see the church at Ephesus, the church at Corinth, the church at Philippi.

Those are local churches. Bethel community. We're a local church. And then, second, the church is the community of people who proclaim Jesus confidently.

[14:39] Our saying here is what? Knowing Jesus and making Jesus known. And third, as the church goes into the world to proclaim the message, the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

I've done a lot of studying on this and I can tell you that for probably half my Christian life, I had this wrong and I was awakened by a video I saw some 15 or 20 years ago.

And so, I want to explain this because maybe you, like I was, think that somehow the church is here and the gates of Hades are advancing on the church and that's not the view.

That's not what it means. The church is to be seen as attacking the enemy. In 2 Corinthians 10.4, it says this, For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

You see, unsaved people are in prison. We're free. Free and Christ is free indeed. The unsaved people are locked up. They're in prison. They're on death row. And it's up to us who know the truth to march into that prison and give them the good news to help them know Jesus.

[15:58] So Jesus asked the questions. Peter makes his statements. And I want to look again at Jesus' statement to Peter. Peter, Jesus first met Simon when his brother Andrew brought him.

We see that in John 1.42. And he gives Simon the name Peter or Cephas in the Greek. The word means rock or stone.

Sometimes I think that Peter was a rock head. It was probably a good name for him. I had an Italian grandfather and he used to call me this name, Destadura. And I never knew what it meant.

And I finally asked my father and he said, it means you're a rock head. Thought it was kind of an affectionate thing. I didn't know. But really what we have here, in the original Greek, there are two similar words.

One is petros and that's a small piece of rock, a small stone. And the other is petra. It means a huge rock, a boulder. See, remember at that time, they were standing at the foot of this great mountain, Mount Hermon.

[17:06] And so, what happens is, is there's confusion in the English language because of that. There are several different opinions as to which rock that Jesus is going to build his church on.

However, it was not Peter. If we trace the word rock in the Hebrew, it always refers to God, never man. Five times in the Psalms and once in the book of Habakkuk, God is referred to as a rock.

He never referred to any man as a rock. In the New Testament, listen to 1 Corinthians 3.11. For no one can lay any foundation other than that one which has already been laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now, in Ephesians 2.20, it does say this, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple unto the Lord.

And in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit. So here the church is pictured where Jesus Christ is that foundation, that cornerstone.

[18:13] Then it's built on the work of the apostles and prophets. And then it pictures every believer as stones in the building. And so the other interpretation could be that the church is built on Peter's confession of Jesus.

Okay? His confession as the Messiah. Either way, the church is built on Jesus, not Peter. See, I grew up in a religion where they said Peter was the first pope and Peter was given the keys to the kingdom.

And so now all the popes are successors of Peter and so they now have this divine authority. And that's not the correct interpretation of the passage or the correct interpretation of scripture as the whole.

And then we have Jesus warning. He says, don't tell anybody I'm the Messiah. I'm not sure exactly why, but I think it was a timing thing. He's a hundred miles from Jerusalem and he knows if he goes there, they're going to set the plan in motion a little too soon.

And he wants the timing to be right. Point number four, preview of the mission. This really is the beginning of a whole new section. You'll see that if you're looking in your Bibles, there's a little division.

[19 : 25] But Teddy gave me this passage and so we're going to look at it today. I will tell you that if Teddy was speaking next week instead of last week, I'd have been tempted to give it back to him.

But we're going to look at this today. Starting here, Jesus begins to tell the disciples the whole plan, the real plan.

First, the Hebrew leaders. And we saw that in last week's passage. They were stuck in their religion and they could not see the Messiah. You know, religion keeps a lot of people from seeing the truth. Teddy, you missed my joke, buddy. I had you. So here, right after Peter's confession, Jesus tells them that he's going to suffer at the hands of the Jewish leaders.

And then secondly, that he must be killed. And third, that he must be raised from the dead. And what does our hero do? The hero of our story, Peter, the rock, what does he do?

[20 : 26] Well, he takes Jesus aside and he rebukes him. See, Peter understood the man, but he didn't understand the mission. He saw that Jesus was Messiah, but I guess he thought Jesus didn't understand what the mission was supposed to be.

Wow. We do need to understand, though, at this time, the Jewish nation was looking for their political Messiah. They really were. They were under Roman rule and their religious leaders taught them that Messiah would come and rescue them from this Roman rule and make them a great nation again, like they were in the Old Testament.

And to be fair, without the New Testament, it would be hard to separate Old Testament prophecies about the first coming from the second coming. You know, if you never knew the New Testament at all, how would you separate the prophecies about Messiah's first coming from second coming?

We now know that Jesus came the first time to lay down his life and he's coming a second time in a very different way. The Bible says he's coming to judge the living and the dead.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem that day, we call Palm Sunday, crowds of people came out to greet him and they laid palm branches on the road ahead of him.

[21 : 48] They wanted a king to come and make war and free the Hebrew nation and make them a great nation again. But he symbolized what he was doing because he took a little colt, he took a little donkey and he rode into town on a donkey.

Now, if you think about that in those days, if you were a king and you were coming in to make war, you want to ride a big fast horse. You don't come in riding on a donkey, but they didn't get it. He will be riding a big fast horse if you look in Revelation 19.

That's when he's coming to judge and make war. They didn't understand the mission of the Messiah. He tries to tell them many more times, but it seems it was hard to understand.

Not until the Holy Spirit comes on the day of Pentecost do many of them understand. I pray today that all of us would. Father, thank you for this passage in your word.

Thank you for the truth of your word, the fact that we can stand on it. Thank you for the rock that Jesus Christ is, that I can build my life on it and I never have to worry. Thank you for the guarantees in scripture that we have eternal life because of what Jesus did for us.

[22 : 59] Amen. Amen.