
**“God’s Promises for the Church”
(Matthew 16:18):
Pastor Peter Yi
November 11th, 2007**

Introduction:

ESV Matthew 16:18 ¹⁸ *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

With today being our church’s 30th anniversary, it’s appropriate that I preach about the church. Whenever I speak about the church, it gives me another opportunity to personally study and reflect on one or more dimensions of the bible’s teaching on this thing called church. And it can be helpful for all of us to time and again return to this subject because sometimes we forget the importance of the church. And sometimes we get distracted for whatever reasons into sidebar issues and forget what the essential nature or purpose of the church really is. It may be safe to assume that for many people, church at worst would carry a very bad connotation and for many a mixed bag of positives and negatives and for few of us would it be seen very positively.

Now I don’t know about you, but with all the baggage the church may have, especially Korean immigrant churches, the more I study the church, the more I experience life in the church, and the longer I’m a part of this church, the more I love the church and the more I’m convinced that serving God in and through the church is the highest calling that every person who calls themselves Christians have received.

For those of us who are wired a bit more cynically or perhaps you tend to be more critical of the church I want to say to all of you that there is no such thing as a perfect church. Perfection is the ideal, perfection is our goal, but it will be forever elusive in this lifetime. So the solution is not to go from church to church to church, looking for the most perfect church. The solution is to commit ourselves to this church, our home church, and collectively and humbly, make it a more perfect church.

And there are those of us who’ve become indifferent about church. Our thinking is, “yeah, I’m glad the church is there, I appreciate that I have a place to worship, and have community, but it’s not like I’m ecstatic about the church. Church is a part of me, just not a very big part.”

And so if you fall into one or both of those categories then this sermon is for you us. My aim in this message is that the Spirit of God would revive the passion in all of us a deeper passion and love for the church.

In today’s passage, Jesus is exchanging some dialogue with his buddy Peter. Jesus initiates the conversation by asking him, “What are the masses saying about me? Who do they think I am?” And he replies that some think he’s John the Baptist raised from the dead, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. And then Jesus zeros right into the heart of Peter’s faith and asks him point-blank, “Who do you say that I am?” And here’s one of the few times Peter gets the answer right when he replies, “You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God.”

And Jesus says, “Right on!” “Good answer!” and it wasn’t a lucky guess. Because the Bible says that no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. Jesus knows that so that’s why he says, “It wasn’t any human that revealed this truth to you. It was none other than God the Father.”

And continuing on from this point, Jesus says something really powerful to Peter, about Peter and about the Church.

ESV Matthew 16:18 ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

There are two promises that Jesus gives regarding the church in this short verse.

First, Jesus himself will build his church.

Many Christians get into the trap of thinking this is my church or this is the senior pastor's church. But there's a danger to that because we can begin thinking of church in ways that we are not supposed to. We can think one church is greater than another church because of its size, but nowhere in scripture do we find the greatness of a church based on that criteria. Or some think a great is great because of the popularity of its pastor and so church becomes a cult of personality. But again, show me in the bible where it judges a church based on the popularity of its pastor.

In the bible it seems that successful churches do several things well. First and foremost they preach the gospel both locally and globally. They are holy in speech and deeds. They love each other radically, just to name a few.

So in any case we must not think wrongly of the church. This is not any one or group of person's church, it is the church of Jesus Christ. In the Bible Jesus is known as the foundation of the church, the cornerstone of the church, the capstone of the church, the head of the church, and the husband of the church. These are all significant positions and Jesus assumes them all. Jesus must always have the place of preeminence in the church

So even in this first promise we see a couple of things. The church belongs to Jesus. He is the rightful owner and leader of the church, at each local church and universally across the globe. It isn't ours, it never was, it belongs to Jesus.

And then Jesus says that he himself will build his church. Yes he uses us and invites us into this great ministry. So we join him in building the church, but Jesus himself is the great architect, the conductor, again of both the church locally, and globally. How has he built his church throughout history? Well through the mandate he's given at the end of the book of Matthew. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

1 Peter chapter 2 gives one of the most beautiful descriptions of the glorious church. Please listen as I read it.

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, **5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,
“The stone that the builders rejected?has become the cornerstone,” [\[1\]](#)

8 and

“A stone of stumbling,?and a rock of offense.”

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

That's the picture that describes the church. Who Jesus is: the cornerstone. Who we are: living bricks.

So the church is in good hands. It always has been. It's when we sinful humans meddle and try to do church our way or we try to assume the leadership and position that only Jesus could fill, that's when church's fail.

Second, nothing, not even the power of hell and death will prevail against it.

They say that in life there are only two guarantees: death and taxes. What a negative outlook on life. Isn't that awful? Hey what are you looking forward to? What are you banking your life on? Death and taxes. But I want to propose that there is another guarantee that's more sure than the air we breathe or the ground we walk on. It's more sure than your own existence. It's the church.

Jesus says in these few words that the great and powerful enemies of the church, which are also enemies of human kind and enemies of God, namely hell and death can have no victory over the church. Why is that so? How can Jesus be so sure?

In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so much more than we often think about was accomplished. When you and I think of the death and resurrection of Jesus we think of what? Forgiveness of sins. Personal salvation. And we should because it's true. We were forgiven and we were saved because Jesus died and rose again. But in addition to the personal benefits to those of us who believe there were incredible cosmic transformations that occurred when the Son of God died and rose again.

The Devil was defeated.

The last enemy to be defeated is death says Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. And death was defeated by the Lord of the Church when he rose from the grave.

In the resurrection, Jesus not only secured our salvation, he secured the church's success. Churches can fail, but The Church cannot fail. The church will succeed to the very end.

Conclusion:

Friends 30 yrs of our church's history have come and gone. We don't want to glory in the past. We want to glory in God. And we want to move forward with the unshakable confidence that Christ Jesus himself is building the church and that the church cannot fail, but will prevail to the end. I hope that all of us will accept God's invitation to serve in and through his church.

Let us pray.

Thanksgiving

For the future