

Sermon Notes on Church: Who are we? Matthew 16:13-18

- **Unfortunately**, there is much confusion and corruption in and about the church around the world.
- The **Center for the study of Global Christianity** counts 2,414,697 billion “*affiliated Christians*” in the world who exist in 5.5 million churches in 45,000 denominations who are divided in seven categories (Roman Catholic’s=1.2B; Protestants =572M; Independents = 449M; Orthodox=286M; Evangelicals =353M; Pentecostals/Charismatics = 694M; and Unaffiliated Christians = 114M)
- It is likely that at least 75% of this total is at best questionable or at worst deceived as professed believers (many marginal believers and churches are counted in this number: Mormon; Jehovah Witnesses; Masons; Christadelphians; Unitarians; Christian Science; Theosophists; British Israelites; Prosperity Gospelers; Oneness Pentecostals; Hidden Buddhist Believers in Christ; wandering bishops; Independent Nestorians; occultists; Spiritists; Zionists; Gay/homosexual; schismatic Catholics; Arab radio/TV network and more)
- The church has 13.2 million national workers (citizens); 450,000 foreign missionaries; 5,400 mission sending organization’s.
- **What is the church?** Here’s a working definition

The church is a called-out people of God who have been delivered from sin through repentance and faith in JC from the day of Pentecost until the return of JC. It brings together all true believers, whether deceased and in heaven or living and around the world who gather locally and regularly as a baptized faith-growing, God-worshiping, Christ-exalting, Word-equipping, Spirit-empowering, servant-leading, prayer-relying, mission-advancing, gospel-sharing, unity-preserving, fellowship-engaging, conflict-resolving, love-permeating, saints-serving, generosity-supporting, Lord’s table-commemorating, sin-addressing, holiness-pursuing, hope-expecting new covenant community.

1. **We are a called-out community** (Matt. 16:18: “*church*”)

- The word “*church*” is used over 100x and the word Jesus and New Testament writers use is *ekklesia* (ek = out of: kaleo = to call): called-out ones (Jude 1)
- We are “*saints by calling*” (1 Cor. 1:2), called out of “*impurity*” to “*abstain from sexual immorality*” and into “*sanctification*” (1 Thess. 4:7); called “*out of death into life*” (Jn. 5:24); called out of partnering with the world and “*into fellowship*”

with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9); called out of darkness and "*into His marvelous light*" (1 Pet 2:9); called out of bondage to sin (Jn. 8:34) and into freedom, "*so don't turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh*" (Gal. 5:13)

- We are commanded to "*walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*" (Eph. 4:1)

2. **We are a Christ-centered community** (Matt. 16:18)

- **He is the great confession of the church** ("*and upon this rock*"): Jesus used a play on words to teach His disciples a great truth. Peter (you're a *petros*=a stone) and you just spoke a *petra* (a solid bedrock). This *petra* is the confession upon which the church is built. 1 Cor. 3:11: "*for no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is JC*"
- **He is the great Possessor of the church** ("*My church*"): Jesus makes it clear that the church is His. We are called "*the church of God*" 9x (A. 20:28; 1 C. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 C. 1:1; Gal. 1:12; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15); 3x collectively as "*the churches of God*" (1 C 11:16; 1 Th. 2:14; 2 Th. 1:4); once as "*the churches of Christ*" (Rm. 16:16); "*His bride*" (Rev. 19:7); "*Christ's body*" (1 Cor. 12:27) or "*the body of Christ*" (Eph. 4:12); "*the city of the living God*" (Heb. 12:22); "*the flock of God*" (1 Pt. 5:2); "*God's field*" and "*God's building*" (1 C. 3:9); "*the household of God*" (Eph. 2:19); "*a letter of Christ*" (2 Cor. 3:3); "*the people of God*" (1 Pet 2:10); "*the temple of God*" (1 Cor. 3:16). Jesus Christ is called the "*head*" of the church 4x (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18)
- **He is the great Builder of the church** ("*I will build*"): We are called "*God's fellow workers*" (1 C. 3:9; Col. 4:11; 1 Th. 3:2) and God tells us that each person "*must be careful how he builds on it*" (1 C. 3:10, 12-14). We pray, serve, give, love, forgive, worship, equip, fellowship, correct, restore and the Lord uses all of this in His building plan.
- **He is the great Protector of the church** ("*the gates of Hades will not overcome it*"): The "gates" refers to a person's death, so Jesus is telling us that even one of

Satan's greatest tools (killing believers) will not stop the building of the church. In fact, history reveals it actually pours gas on the growth of the church.

3. **We are a covenant community** (selected Scriptures)

- A **covenant** is a contractual agreement with parties, terms and promises and God identifies the parties, defines the terms and makes the promises.

- **6 truths about God's covenant community manifesto:**
 - a) Community is the **mission** for which Christ came (we were alienated, excluded, strangers, enemies, but in Christ we are reconciled and adopted in God's eternal family)
 - b) Community is the **model** demonstrated to us in the Godhead ("*God is love*"; John 17:22)
 - c) Community is the **mandate** from God Himself (two greatest commands are relational: love God; love others plus 35 "*one another's*")
 - d) Community is the **meaning** of all the church identity-metaphors (body; branches; bride; household; flock; temple; kingdom; Eph. 4:16)
 - e) Community is the **ministry** of the greatest virtue: LOVE ("*the perfect bond of unity*"; John 14:15; 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 13:4-8)
 - f) Life is **miserable** without community (Ecc. 4:9-10; Heb. 3:13)