

Church? Who Are We? (Matthew 16:13-20)

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[0 : 00] Now let's turn to our Bible verse for today's sermon. So let's open up our Bibles. Matthew chapter 16, verse 13 to 20.

If you don't have a Bible, there's some black ones in front of you in the pews. Okay, so I'll be reading from NIV. Follow along. When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, Who do people say the son of man is?

They replied, Some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. And still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. But what about you? He asked. Who do you say 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 of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.

[1 : 08] And whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. That's the word of God.

Moxie. Thank you. Hi church. What do you immediately think when someone told you about church?

A building? A what? And do you know PCBC, how many years old now?

Anyone remember? Guess? Huh? My hearing is not good, sorry. Huh?

28. Give me more. Huh? 33. 33. Already. Okay. Can I have, actually, does this work?

[2 : 16] Not sure. Okay. Alright. Sorry. My bad. Alright. Now this is taken three years ago.

Alright. Now look at the picture. Many things have changed. Some people are not here anymore.

Alright. And when you look at it, how do you feel?

But I tell you what, over the, how many actually were here when the church began? Anyone? You might be, but you were a baby.

Eva, were you there? Were you here? Oh, you were here. Right. I actually saw some old photos of you. Right? You were, maybe, you were actually in a drama, was playing a queen or something, a princess or something.

Right? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, over all these years, people came, people go. Right? And especially, like, where a church, an ethnic church overseas, obviously, there'll be changes.

[3 : 31] People going back to Hong Kong, people going to Australia, people come over. You know, they're bound to be people coming and going.

Okay? But, it's a good thing to know, Jesus never leave. He stays put. And that's why, even though when we face changes in church, we can be assured, the church will never change because the Lord Jesus is here.

So, let's have a look and just learn together. Actually, who are we? Church.

Are there any differences between us and, like, judo club? Or a chess club in Pekaranga? Or a swimming club?

What difference? As we become members, what, well, there's not much privilege here.

[4 : 45] You don't get discount when you buy a certain thing. But you have obligations and responsibilities. You need to come for a quarterly meeting. Oh, I have better, I can better use my time.

But why do we do that? Why do we need to commit? So, we better understand why, who are we?

Okay? Now, this is the last of the statement of faith, the series of statement of faith that we have in our constitution. We don't need to remember that, but it's good to know, right?

So, this church was established in accordance with the provisions given within the principle of church in the New Testament. It is hence referred as New Testament church, who is a spiritual body initiated and organized by a local group of regenerated believers in a given community. Christ is worshipped as the head and the members is the body, in which everyone is equal in all aspects of rights and responsibilities.

[5 : 59] So, this is church. It marks the difference between us and some other local clubs because of Christ.

Christ. We all have, we all are different, okay? And we don't need to achieve certain achievements before we actually can join this prestige membership.

The criteria is by faith, believing Jesus as our Lord and Savior. That's the criteria, okay?

So, when we understand church, we know that church is never, never a, it's always with challenges and, but challenges come with opportunities.

I mean, the church, when you say the church, it's more like, yeah, what we have just read in chapters in Matthew 16. It's more like, it's not just a church here in this place, okay?

[7 : 17] A church here we call Pekaranga. Even next door, we have the same Pekaranga Baptist, but it's not Chinese. And the church next door to us is a Samoan congregational church.

It's all different. It's not even a Baptist church, okay? But we are all belong to Jesus. We call church, okay?

So, this passage here, Matthew 16, verses 13 to 20, it tells us that Jesus has stated the identity, the mission, but we also, there are some caution for his followers.

But then, Jesus also promised assurance of victory in midst of all the cautions and challenges. So, what is church for us today?

As we sit here, if we have been baptized and joined PCBC, I think it's a good, good reminder for us here today that we belong to this group of people.

[8 : 26] We belong to Jesus. And we can take courage. Even though we face all the difficulties and challenges as a group of people called church.

Pekaranga is a local church that belongs to a global church, okay? But we all have different challenges, but also in midst of all the challenges, we see opportunities.

And we can stand strong because the Lord of the church, Jesus, he promised us assurance of victory.

So, we can stand firm. So, today, we see, like, in the whole world, all right, here, we are just one of the church in Pekaranga.

How many churches in New Zealand? Anyone know? You can Google that, all right? But even just the Baptist church, just the Baptist church, there's 140-something Baptist churches in the whole of New Zealand.

[9 : 36] But there are many other denominations as well. Okay? So, we are called Pekaranga Chinese Baptists, okay?

This is the English congregation. Sunday morning, there's a Sunday Cantonese congregation. And Saturday night, there's a Saturday Cantonese congregation.

We all belong to one body. Even though we don't see each other as often, I would encourage us, we can meet each other more often, like combined service.

Look forward to that. Christmas, New Year, all right? Join in. And Christmas carols, join in. And we feel, we know that we belong to a bigger body of Christ, all right?

But even that, we know there's a global church. A local church is only part of the global church.

They're all calling Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

[10 : 35] Even though we don't see each other, even though we speak different languages, even we worship differently. But we all belong to Jesus. So, today, we will look at this church, church, in four different ways.

One, we see the definition of the church. And we see the declaration, what does the church declare? And what the Lord of Church has delegated to us.

And also, we see there are some disruptions for us. But how do we actually overcome? So, firstly, definition.

We all know the word church in Greek. I think you've heard it many times. It's called ekklesia, okay?

So, it's a kind of a compound word. Ekk means out. Kasia means calling. So, it was originally not a religious word.

[11:41] Okay? When Jesus spoke to the people, you know, you are church. And the disciples immediately knew what Jesus was saying.

So, it's not a religious body. It was more like a local council. During the Roman times, there are people, certain people that were qualified, being called out from a group of communities, to join in to this particular council meeting.

So, that is the name, that's the word that Jesus used. So, it really meant that somebody was set apart.

Okay? Set apart. Now, this set apartness, not because of their status or their qualifications, but this set apartness, the separation of this particular people called out from the rest, is later on we know there is a declaration.

Okay? So, this word, Ekklesia, it really meant called out people. God has called out his people.

[13:02] Actually, it's not just in the New Testament. It was in the Old Testament as well. When God has chosen Abraham, Genesis 12, right?

I will choose you and you become a blessing. And out of Abraham, the people of Israel was promised to be elected, chosen people, so that God will bless them, but they themselves will obey what the Lord has called them, and they become blessings to others.

So, this is the same in the Old Testament. When God has called us to be his people, and we are chosen, we are privileged, but also we have responsibilities to demonstrate, to proclaim, to share the love of God to others.

So, church, this is who we are. We are the called out people of God. That's why church is not a place we go to.

Often, especially in Chinese, you know, we say we go to church. We don't go to church. I mean, we go to a church premises.

[14:42] We go to a church building somewhere, 209 T. Rakhal Drive. All right? But I am church.

You are church. Wherever we are, we are church. Even though we did not have this building, and we only had this building about 26 years ago, but our church is 33 years old.

So, in many years, we borrowed next door building. But even we borrowed, we did not have our premises, we did not have our venue.

We were already a church, a body, PCBC, right? We never had a building of ourselves, but we were a church.

So, really, next time when we think about church, let's think about people, not just the building itself.

[15:40] So, as we work together, as we worship together, and as we minister together, I think this is a sober reminder for us.

We are people over structures or administrative procedures. We need to care for the people.

We need to, yeah, just to, people is more important than structures or things. All right?

And Jesus promised to us, when two or three gathered in my name, there I am with them. It's good to have a thousand people in church, but even two or three, Jesus is among us.

Jesus is here. All right. And not everybody just, oh, I just want to come.

[16:44] I want to come. And then I belong to the church. Yes, we can attend church services. We can be amongst Christians. But there is something we actually, we need to believe, we need to declare before we actually belong to this body.

And that is in verse 16. Simon Peter answered, you are the Messiah, the son of the living God.

Now, how did Simon come to this conclusion? And why did Jesus ask? Now, if you read the context, they were actually in this place called Caesarea Philippi.

This is chapter 16. But if we read, if we read the end of chapter 15, they were in a place called Magadan.

Here. And from here, they traveled up all the ways to Caesarea Philippi. How far? 40 k's.

[17:55] That is how far. That is from here to Pukecowie. You walk all the way down to Pukecowie. And Jesus takes you down there and asks, who do you think I am?

Why can't you ask me in Pekarenga? Why do you want to take me all the way down to Pukecowie and ask, who do you think I am? That is because that place you can actually see.

Caesarea Philippi. That's where the Caesar, that is the Roman emperor, built his city, Philip, right, the Caesar. And that is where a lot, a very intense emperor worship there.

And we don't understand, we don't worship our prime minister. We don't even worship our mayor, right? We detest him. No, no, we should not.

Yeah, we should pray for them. Right? But during those times, if you don't worship the emperor, it's a crime. If you don't declare Caesar as Lord, you can put in jail.

[19 : 05] So, and Jesus took these, his disciples to where, a place where the emperor worship was so intense, it's not, then we appreciate when Peter declared, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

You are Lord. Now, that, that is something. I mean, for us, to worship Jesus in church, no problem. You go out to Queen Street on Sunday, on Friday nights, and you type your guitar and Jesus is Lord, you may be prepared to get some people to laugh at you and throw some banana skins or whatever.

But, great, sometimes I see people doing that. Great. I remember at once, I was actually, I was still studying in Bible College, and they had this church involvement week.

And, I, on the, in that week, I was sent to Otara, a group of us. So, we had, was attached in the Otara Baptist Church.

[20 : 17] and they had, usually they have a, had a Friday night outreach. It was right in the middle of Otara Mall. And, in the outside, there was, there was a little platform there, I still remember.

They said, Albert, let's go up and we'll, we'll sing, we'll sing praise and worship. I said, I'll just, I'll just stand behind you guys. I wouldn't know what anything throw at me, you see.

And, that's the courage we need to take. It's easy to, to, to, to say, Jesus is Lord where the environment is safe.

But, are we willing to declare Jesus is Lord when they, we are put into a secular environment and an adverse environment?

Can we still stand up and say, Jesus is Lord? Some prizes to pray. to pray. Last week, um, uh, open door at, on Saturday and Sunday, ah, not Saturday, next week, he'll be, uh, preaching on Sunday about this persecuted Christians from the Islamic countries.

[21 : 30] He just said, I just, I haven't committed any crimes. I just found Jesus. I just want to give my life to Jesus and then I was getting persecuted and I was put to jail and my family kicked me out.

that is the courage we need to stand up. Am I, is my faith strong enough to declare Jesus is Lord? Peter, in midst of all these people, he declared, salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Look, in New Zealand, even in New Zealand, when you say God loves you, everybody say, okay, thank you very much. But you mentioned the name of Jesus, it's a little bit different.

Because everybody says God, there's all different kinds of gods. If you say God loves you and they would appreciate that, because that is not as kind of sensitive.

[22 : 42] But when you mention the name of Jesus, you might get different responses. responses. But are we clear, are we certain that in midst of all this chaos, the sin in our inner world, salvation only found in the name of Jesus.

And can we be steadfast to share that message. Of course, we need wisdom. We don't intimidate others deliberately.

But if we are given the opportunity, are we willing to stand up for what we believe, who we believe? And exactly, Jesus delegates this to us.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. And whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Now, what is that? Firstly, we know this keys, this keys actually does not belong to church.

[24 : 05] The church was given the keys. So we don't have the power to bind, we don't have the power to lose. It was only the keys of the kingdom. So what's this keys?

The keys, we all know today, I mean, keys are a little bit different now. We use our cards and you use a little tag and then you open the door, right? But during those times, it was key that was actually unlocked.

And for the rabbis, the Jewish teachers at the time, they knew keys were to unlock the wisdom of God. So Peter and the disciples knew exactly what Jesus was meaning.

So really, they were given the power, given the privilege to open up the wisdom of God.

That's what? That is the salvation of Jesus. The only salvation that would lead people to God's abundance, wisdom, salvation.

[25 : 11] salvation. And this key, what was plural, numbers, was given to church. So the church, we need to use this wisely to unlock the hearts of the people so that they could hear the gospel and

they're willing to hear, they're willing to accept, they will be loosened.

If they never had the opportunity to hear, the lives remain bound. So the keys have been given to the church and we need to use it wisely.

That's why as a church, evangelism or missions is something that we need to, not just enjoying ourselves.

We have given the opportunity, we have given the keys, we have given the responsibilities and we need to reach out whether it's ministry projects that we do or even God has sent us in amongst our people and at our work and our schools with our neighbours and amongst our relatives, families, we are to unlock the hearts of the people so that they will come to know Jesus.

Their lives will be loosened. But lastly, it's not so easy if we want to evangelise because there is an opposition, there is disruption and Jesus told Peter, I tell you, Peter, on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades and who on earth is gates of Hades and it says the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

[27 : 25] Some translations translated as the power of Hades the forces of darkness so we know something there is something that comes against the people of God and the gate of Hades actually there was a place called gate of Hades and it's somewhere around in Palestine I have not been there but when I shared this photo and actually some people actually have been there they told me yes I was exactly I've been there okay and it was something like it was it was it was not true of course and people believe in traditions as a gateway that leads you to hell to the gates of

Hades but obviously there's something people never been there never been there never came out so that was kind of superstitions and it was kind of mystery for a lot of people but Jesus used this as to illustrate there's something evil something dark that come against that forces that come against the people of God and true in the Bible we know the enemy of God Satan obviously is not equal status he's been subdued by God but nevertheless Satan is real he will come against us and I'm not saying that everything attribute to him I just feel unwell today Satan attacked me I'm not saying that but beware there are satanic forces there are evil powers that will come against us so we need to pray we need to stand firm we don't need to be afraid we can overcome by the power of Jesus you see right through the church history there is always challenges there's always things that come against the church when the church was born in Acts 2 and Jesus has promised that spirit will come over the church and people with power the word of God will go forth from Jerusalem from Judea Samaria to the end of the world if the power of the Holy Spirit upon them surely you can do that but not without challenges not without disruption I mean PC PC the last 30 something years we had our ups and downs there are times there are moments that many will feel very heart broken we feel so sorry to

God what we have done it was not the power of God we would have no more PC PC alright so it really it is a sheer miracle that the church still survive and even thrives in midst of the challenges temptations and even failures why the church still exists and thriving today one third of the church of the world population Christianity is not the church it's how good or how well we operate it's the Lord it's the Lord of the church because Jesus said I will tell you that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church not on Peter but what he has declared same as you and I not upon me not upon you but upon our belief my declaration

Jesus you are Lord you are Lord you are saviour you are the son of the! living God on this declaration that Jesus will build his church so it's Jesus builds his church through you through me that is why the gates of Hades will not overcome now if you read we studied book of Acts some years ago you see where there are opportunities there are always challenges right the church was born the power of the Holy Spirit upon them thousands repented great but then there were threats and oppositions but because they're willing to submit to the Lord their unity and strength but then there was internal problems they overcome it and seizing the opportunities spreading the word of God and then oppositions martyrdom but nevertheless the gospel advanced beyond

[32 : 59] Judea when even persecution and martyrdom you see and there was always oppositions disruption but God always stayed on top the higher the devil the greater our level not our level but God's level if we're willing to submit to his power you see and that's why originally it was only in Jerusalem but with all these challenges the gospel had gone beyond Jerusalem Judea to Samaria and to the end of the world so we don't we don't yes we we we we we are very concerned and we we see all these negative things that happen to church persecution deviation temptations corruption rationalism rationalizations

I mean come against church but it's always been like that right and out of that God can consolidate church God can reform the church God can revitalize the church God can even through the church to evangelize the world so this is us don't need to pray God remove all these challenges all these terrible stuff don't need to pray like that but rather we pray Lord out of these trials tribulations Lord let the church be transformed what we are experiencing we ask God to do something new and you never know God can reform transform PCBC English and transform

PCBC as a church because he is the one to build the church not me not us so to conclude I like to use this passage Joshua 1 7 I remember I preached this sermon at the very first time we had the trial for English service 6 or 7 years ago yes Charles trials challenges but the word of God never changed he is still here we have changed a lot we have changed a bit but Jesus is here still may the word of God speak to us let's read this together be strong and very courageous be careful to obey all the law my servant

Moses gave you do not turn it to the right or to the left that you may be successful wherever you are do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth meditate it on day and night so that you may be careful everything written in it then you will be prosperous and successful prosperous and successful in God's term not my term and I believe he will give us prosperity and success let's pray father I just want to thank you for your word thank you for you you never change our circumstances change our church people come and go but lord you you never change I just want to thank you lord for your promise so encourage us with your word and speak to us and direct our lives as an individual and also as a church lord may we do your will according to your will lord we want to stand and declare to the world that

Jesus you are the Christ the son of the living God and because you built the church the gate of Hades will not overcome it lord we will stand firm and we will be we just lord we're here send us may our lives be fulfilling your will lord thank you Jesus in your name we pray amen