

## Radical Restoration

Christ the Center  
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### CHRIST THE CENTER Matthew 16:13-28

Let me invite you to open with me in your Bibles to Matthew 16. I received something last week from the 9 AM First Grade Boys Small Group. What the folks who lead the small group had done is they had gone to these first grade boys, and they asked them questions about the Senior Pastor. I want to share with you some of these responses. The first question was, "Who is our new Senior Pastor?" One kid said, "I know him, but I don't know his name." Another said, "David Platt, and I knew before last week." Somebody's parents let the cat out of the bag on that one. Another guy said, "I don't know, but he is moving." One of the first grade boys said, "He is really fun." This one I couldn't really understand. One kid said, "I think it is that goofy guy on the unicycle." Just for the record, I have never ridden a unicycle before. Another said, "Dr. David Platt."

"How did the church know that Dr. Platt should be our new Senior Pastor?" One person said, "Because he had done some stuff here before." Another person said, "They got a big group of people and picked which one would be best." Another person said, "There was a sign." One kid said, "He kept asking the other pastors so many questions." I guess I was campaigning in his eyes. I like this one. One kid said, "Because he had been our pastor for a week already." "He is funny, nice and preaches really well." I like this one. "He was practicing here and he was really good." Thanks for training camp over the last four months. "He had the most votes." "Everyone liked him a lot, and they prayed."

They said, "What question would you ask Dr. Platt?" Here're the questions from first graders. The first one, "How old are you?" Even the first graders want to know why the pastor is so young. "What is your favorite animal?" "Will there be another Circus Family Fun night?" The top thing on the agenda, okay? "Have you been a pastor before?" "What is your favorite sport?" "When did you know that you wanted to be a pastor?" "Have you seen *Over the Hedge*?" For the record, I have not. "What college did you go to?" "What is your favorite movie?" "How good will you preach?" This is yet to be seen.

Then they asked them, "What does a Senior Pastor do?" First person said, "Well, they tell people that don't know God about God." "Help people." "Tells everyone about God." "Teaches people how to love." "Tells us about God and Jesus, prays and sometimes baptize." One kid said, "I don't know how to explain it. It is too hard. He teaches adults in that big group."

You know, I don't believe these first graders know, but that is a question that it is a subject to a lot of debate today and discussion in the church world. "What does a pastor do? Who is the pastor? What is the role of the pastor?" A lot of people see the pastor as the CEO type model. That is how the pastor leads. Is the pastor is CEO? Is the pastor a shepherd? Is the pastor a spiritual leader or advisor? Is the pastor a business manager, manager of a corporation? What does a pastor look like? There is a lot of different discussion about what the role of a pastor is. I don't want to dive into that whole discussion this morning, but I

want to make one thing pretty clear. I am not the CEO of The Church at Brook Hills. I am not the head of this church. I don't call the shots at this church.

So, "David, you are the pastor. Somebody's got to call the shots. You call the shots." Ultimately, I do not call the shots at this church. I am not a leader of a corporation and this is not David Platt's church. Ladies and gentlemen, Jesus Christ is the head of The Church at Brook Hills. He is the CEO. He calls the shots. This is His church, and ultimately, I am convinced from Scripture that my job's responsibilities and my role boils down to one main thing. That is to bring your attention and your frank affection to the glory of Jesus Christ and to see Him for who He is. Because I am convinced, if I can do that, you will be compelled to make disciples of all nations, and you will be driven by a passion for Him to make His glory known in all nations. So, that is my job. That is my responsibility.

So, as we begin to look at what the structure of the church looks like, how we can organize best to accomplish this mission? This is the most appropriate place for us to start with looking at what it means for Jesus to be the head of the church. What does that practically look like at The Church at Brook Hills? I believe Matthew 16 gives us some answers to that question. We will start in verse 13. The Bible says,

*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 Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, 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, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.*

*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, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 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 are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

## Four Non-Negotiables for The Church at Brook Hills ...

Now, in this passage of Scripture, I want us to see four non-negotiables for The Church at Brook Hills if we are going to be about this mission, and if, as a community of faith, we are going to go on this journey together. You have got some notes there in your Celebration Guide. I encourage you to pull those out. I want us to look at four non-negotiables for The Church at Brook Hills. Every single one of these revolves around the person of Christ and His role as the head of the church.

### **We must know Him intimately.**

First of all, number one, we must...we must know Him intimately. We must know Jesus intimately. This passage begins, really, with the discussion between Jesus and His disciples about His identity, who He is. There they are kind of on the outside of Caesarea Philippi, and Jesus says, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

"The Son of Man" is a term that Jesus would often use to refer to Himself throughout the Gospels. They would say, "Well, some people say, 'John the Baptist.' Other people would say, 'Elijah'; other people would say, 'Jeremiah' or 'one of the prophets.'" Basically, it is a picture of a lot of confusion about who Jesus is at that point. A lot of people think He is John the Baptist reincarnated, or Elijah reincarnated, or Jeremiah reincarnated, or one of the prophets. So, at least He is a pretty good guy, maybe even a godly guy, but we are not exactly sure who He is.

So there is a lot of question, at this point, about who Jesus is. Well, I wouldn't make a direct correlation between that day and ours. Obviously, we live in a culture where there is a pretty strong tendency to have the same questions. "Who is Jesus really?" Whether it is the Da Vinci code, the Gospel of Judas. Whatever it is in our day, or whatever it was ten years ago or twenty years ago or 200 years ago, there have always been questions about who Jesus is. A lot of people are willing to say He is a good guy. A lot of people are willing to say He is a godly guy, does a lot of great things. However, who do we really say He is?

What I want you to see this morning, when it comes to knowing Him intimately, who we say Jesus is, will determine everything about how we follow Him, and I want us to grab hold of that truth right there. Who we say Jesus is in our lives will determine everything about how we follow Jesus. If we say Jesus is a good teacher, then we will follow Him as such. We will listen to some of things He has to say and follow them somewhat. If we say He has done some good things, maybe even has some good ideas, we will give Him attention on Sunday mornings and walk aside and live our lives like we want. However, if we are going to say, "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; the Lord, the God of the universe", then that changes everything about how we live. Who we say Jesus is will determine everything about how we follow Him.

Even last week when we talked about this imaginary Jesus that many times we create, a Jesus who is content with our materialism and our excessiveness and individualism, He is okay with living our lives according to the standards of the world. It is very easy for us to create Jesus to be who we want Him to be or who we desire Him to be. However, what Jesus is saying here from the very beginning is that we have to know who He is truly in order to follow Him. This is huge.

We get so subjective when it comes to spirituality and faith in our culture, and we start to think, "Well, if I want to experience, even in the Christian life, if I want to experience all the Christian life had, then I have got to work on mustering enough faith and getting the right

feelings and doing all of that in order to really follow Jesus." So, along the way, we miss out on the fact that it is really not how much faith we have; it really comes down to what the object of our faith is. How well do we know the object of our faith?

Let me give you an illustration. Jim Shaddix, my mentor down in New Orleans, he is actually here in Birmingham, and he will be here in the second service. I remember he and I were preaching up in North Mississippi. This was a couple of years ago. Two different places in North Mississippi, but we were preaching on Friday night, and we had to be back in New Orleans early the next Saturday morning, and I was going to have to come back Saturday night to preach up there in North Mississippi again. It is about a four or five hour drive. So, there was no way to put it together. I called the Youth Minister. I said, "I don't know how this is going to happen." He said, "Well, I got a guy in my church who has a plane." I said, "Okay..."

So, I started thinking, "You know a private plane is going to take me from North Mississippi to New Orleans. This is big time! Okay?" I got up early Saturday morning. Jim and I, we go there about four or five in the morning. Go out to this air strip in Winona, Mississippi, all right? The guy is sitting in his truck asleep at that point, the pilot. So, we kind of go knock on the door and wake him up. "Ready to fly us?" So, he gets out and kind of gets the plane ready. We get into this. There's room for three of us in there. This guy on my left. I am in the front seat and Jim gets in the back there.

We are coming around to the air strip, so to speak, and as we are turning on ready to get into our take off mode, all of a sudden my door pops open. The guy looks at me, and says, "Is that your door?" I say, "Yeah, that is my door. It is open." He said, "Ah, I forgot to lock it." So, he gets out and goes around, and I look around behind me. Jim's eyes are huge. The guy locks the door, comes back in. I said, "I don't want to be rude or anything, but just out of curiosity, what if that were to happen about 10,000 feet from now. Would there have been a problem?"

You know, I begin to think as we took off and flew in that plane, it really doesn't matter how much faith I have in that plane. When the right wing falls off of that plane, and we are going down, it is not going to matter how much faith I have. What is going to matter is what I put my faith in. You see, it really doesn't matter how much faith we have. What matters is if we put our faith in the right thing. You can have a lot of faith, even throughout your Christian life, in the wrong Jesus and miss the point altogether. What we have got to do is look at Scripture and know Christ for who He is.

You see that next blank there. Our goal is not great faith. That is not our goal, to have great faith; our goal is to have just a little bit of faith in a great God. You see the difference there? What does the Bible say? If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, what will happen? You can move mountains. It is just a little bit of faith in a great God. There was a preacher one time, an evangelist, who would travel, and he spoke in different places, and one person came up to him one time, and he said, "How do you know, as you travel all the time, that your wife is faithful to you?" He said, "I know my wife is faithful to me. It is not a problem." He kept going on and on pressing it. Over and over again, he kept asking that question. "How do you know, really know. What do you do to make sure she is faithful to you when you are gone?" He kept saying, "I just know she is faithful to me." The guy had asked enough. "Why, you are a man of great faith." The guy looked back at that man, "I am not a man of great faith; I am a man with a great wife."

There is a big difference there, between having a lot of faith in a little god and just a little bit of faith in a great God. That is what I believe my goal is as leader as the pastor of this

church, is to show you Christ week in week out. Not to get up here, come up here and give a speech. Not to come up here and give some ditty where you walk away and say, "That sounded good." My goal is to come up here and open the Word of God and show you a picture of Christ and show you who He is, because, I am convinced, that if you can see who Christ is, it will change your lives; it will transform your lives. Just a little bit of faith in that picture of Christ.

I want to show you a couple of quotes that are really kind of foundational in my whole philosophy, theology in preaching. Up here on the screen, you will see them. One is a guy named James Stewart. He said this...he said, "If we are not determined that in every sermon Christ is to be preached, it is better that we should resign our commission forthwith and seek some other vocation." If I stop showing you Christ, then you can stop listening to me; I need to find another job if I am not displaying Christ to you on a week-by-week basis.

Charles Spurgeon took it another step further. He said,

We preach Christ. What is the Holy Ghost to do with our preaching if we do not make the Lord Jesus glorious? If we do not lift Him up high in the esteem of man, if we do not labor to make Him King of kings and Lord of lords, we shall not have the Holy Spirit with us. Vain will be rhetoric, music, architecture, energy and social status. If our own design be not to magnify the Lord Jesus, we shall work alone and work in vain.

That is a good word for us in the church today. All the music and all the talk and all the nice buildings are in vain if Christ is not at the center, and if He is not driving everything. The goal every Sunday morning is not to come in here and have a good feeling; the goal is to seek Christ, to glorify Christ, to honor Christ, and to have our lives changed as a result of that. We must know Him intimately. We must know Him for who He is.

### **We must trust Him completely.**

Second, we must trust Him completely. We must trust Him completely. Now, we come in here, Jesus has asked these guys, "Who do you think I am?" Peter stands up as a representative of the disciples. He says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." He makes a confession of faith in who He is. "Christ" literally is the term that would refer to the Messiah, the long-awaited Messiah at that point. Peter is getting it here. He hadn't grasped it completely, who Christ is, as we see later in this passage. As a representative of the disciples, he says, "We know you are not just John the Baptist. You are not just Elijah. We know that you are the Christ. You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

So, then they begin this dialog. Jesus replied, *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, 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."* Now, those two verses are some of the most divisive verses in the history of Christianity, because this is one of the passages that really divides Evangelicals and Catholics. Catholics look at this...the Catholic Church looks at this passage and says, "This is when Jesus instituted Peter as the Pope, so to speak, as the leader of the church." There is a succession that comes from that. Therefore, a year ago when Benedict comes on board, he is the next guy who is in the line of Peter. They trace all the way back to him as the leader of the church.

So, really, the question is who is the rock in this passage? Is it Jesus? Is it Peter? Who is in charge here? Who is the one on whom the church is built? You can see that in the importance of the Pope in the Catholic Church. I want to say to you this morning that I don't

believe that the church should be built on me or anybody else. I believe the church is built on the foundation of Christ. Who is the architect of the church? The architect, the builder of the church is Jesus. He said, "I am the One who is going to build my church."

Now, we will get what the rock, I believe, means in just a second, but we have to start with the fact that the church's architect is Jesus. He is the One who is building this thing. Some people have asked me, "What do we call you as our pastor? Do we call David? Do we call you Dave? Do we call you Pastor? Do we call you Doctor? Do we call you Reverend? Do we call you Reverend Dr. Pastor?" You know, if you are into titles, you can go there. You can call me whatever you want. I have been called a lot worse, but don't call me Pope. I am not the Pope. I am not the one on whom everything is based here, okay? Jesus says, "I am going to build my church."

Now this is huge. Yesterday at my house, there were some guys who were working on building a deck. I am going to be honest with you, upfront with you this morning. I am so delinquent when it comes to building things like that. I know I am just kind of...there are some men in here who are really disappointed right now, and for that, I apologize. However, I am just not...that is not my strong suit. I don't know how to build a deck. I had a nail gun. I was playing around with it a little bit. Kevin Carroll took it out of my hands. It is not my strength at all.

So, these guys...I wouldn't even know where to start building a deck, which is probably one of the reasons they were out there, because they knew that I would really hurt myself if I was out there. So, they go about this. I have no clue about how to build a deck, but these guys who knew exactly how to do that. They start putting it together, putting all the pieces together, and now, there is a deck outside my house.

What I want to say to you this morning...likewise, I want to be honest with you. I really don't know how to build a church either. For some of you, that is bad news. So, you are thinking, "We really blew it. Why did we get this guy to be our pastor?" I guess it is kind of cold of me to come one week later and say, "Okay, I really don't know how to pastor. I don't know how to lead a church, how to build a church."

However, I want to show you something. Hold your place here in Matthew. I want you to turn with me over to John 6. "He doesn't know how to build a deck. He doesn't know how to build a church." Look at John 6. I want you to look with me at verse 37. I want you to see this with me...I want us to use this verse, and then I want us to vault into a little bit of a tour of the book of Acts. The church's architect is Jesus. John 6:37,

*"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

Now, what I want you to see here in John 6 is Jesus saying, "I am in the business of drawing men to myself. That is what I do. That is what the Father's will is for me to do, and all that He entrusts to me, I draw to myself." I want you to see it in John. Jesus is in the business of drawing people to Himself.

Now, with that foundation in the Gospels, turn with me over to Acts 2. One book over to the right. Look at Acts 2. Now, I want you to look at the very end of Acts 2 in verse 42. This is a

passage we are going to dive into, I hope, more in depth later in the year. However, I want us to see this is the very beginning of the church. This is where the New Testament church begins. Acts 2:42. This is basically a paragraph that summarizes the church. It says,

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.*

Now, listen to this verse: *"And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."* Who is building the church in Acts 2? Who is adding the people? The newest program? The newest gimmick? No, it is Jesus. *"The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

Turn with me over to Acts 11. Look at Acts 11:24. This is the church in Antioch which is really the first sending base for the New Testament church in the book of Acts. Look at Acts 11. Look at verse 24. This is talking about Barnabas when he had come to the people of Antioch. It says, *"He was a good man..."* Barnabas was a good man. *"...full of the Holy Spirit and faith..."* Listen to this, *"...and a great number of people were brought to the Lord."* The same type of verb there. They were added; they were brought to the Lord. Who brought them? Barnabas? No, Jesus brought them. That is what we see setup in John. It is what we see in Acts 2. The Lord is adding to their number. They are brought to the Lord by whom? By the Lord. The Lord is drawing people to Himself.

Let me show you two more instances. Acts 13. Look at verse 48. Acts 13:48, *"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed."* All those whom God was calling, God was leading, all of them believed. One more instance. Acts 18. Look at verse 9 in Acts 18. This is Paul in the middle of Corinth. It is a very tough place for him to be doing ministry at this point. There is a lot of paganism all around him. He is thinking, *"Maybe I should leave."* Verse 9 says, *"One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you...'"* Listen to this, *"...because I have many people in this city."* Paul stayed for a year and a half teaching them the Word of God. This is before Corinth had a lot of Christians. Jesus comes Himself in a vision to Paul and says, *"Paul, I have a lot of people here that I am ready to add to my church."*

Now, based on that, what I want you to see is we have a Savior who is in the business of building His church. He is in the business of drawing people to Himself. I am convinced, based on these passages in the book of Acts and that foundation in the Gospels, if we would just align ourselves with His Word and do what He says is important and give ourselves to what He says is important, I believe our Savior is looking to add people to a body that He can trust with His Word. We can trust what He says to do.

This is what I love about Acts 2. They devoted themselves to these things and the Lord added daily to their number those who were being saved. I believe with all my heart, God has people in the city of Birmingham that He is ready to add to a church that He can trust with His Word, that He can trust with His glory. I believe that God has people around the world that He is ready to draw to Himself through a people who He can trust with His Word,

trust with His mission and trust with His glory. I want to lead us to be that people. Jesus knows how to build the church. We don't have to read the newest church growth books to figure that out. Jesus has got that under control. Let's line ourselves up with what He says is important, give ourselves completely to Him and trust Him to do the adding, trust Him to add the blessing.

You see that? That comes down to two things. He builds His church, number one, by His grace. He builds His church by His grace. This is not something that we earn, that we can do enough things, then we will be the church that we need to be. God does this by His grace. He adds people to His church. Why does He do that? Because the One that gives the grace, gets the glory. Don't miss that. The One who gives the grace, gets the glory.

Here's the worst thing that can happen in the coming days. It is for the people of The Church at Brook Hills to go out and tell people about what great music there is, or what a great preacher there is. "Come to this church because it has great music and a great preacher." Because here is the deal: If that is why people come, then another church will rise up later on with a better preacher and better music. People will just go to that one, and will go from church to church to church. That is what we do in Southern culture. We go from church to church to church according to where the greatest preacher is, where the greatest music is.

What happens when the center of the church is not great preaching or great music? What happens when Christ is at the center of the church? Then people go out and the word will be out, and I pray that the word gets out that, at The Church of Brook Hills, Christ is being exalted, and Christ is being honored, and Christ is doing things to those people that nobody else could explain apart from His hand. Then, we will have gotten the point. I trust Him to do it because the One who gives the grace gets the glory.

Second, He does it not only by grace, but through His people. Notice what Jesus says to Peter here, and we are going to get to the rock thing in just a second. However, He says to Peter, who He knows is about to be one of the main leaders in the church. In Acts 1 through 10, he is the leader in the church. Jesus says, "It is on this rock I am going to build my church." He is entrusting Peter. He is saying, "Peter, you are going to be key in this thing."

I am convinced that He says the same thing to us today. You in this room are key to advancing the kingdom of God. He is going to build His church through our lives. Notice that He doesn't say He is going to do it based on programs, and He is not going to do it based on the new techniques we come up with. He is not even going to do it based on web sites or music. All those things are good, but He is going to build His church through changed lives. People in this room who love Christ, who have a passion for Christ, and whose lives are being transformed by Christ, that is how He is going to advance his church in Birmingham. That is how He is going to advance His church in all nations. Through us. Through His people.

Here is the incredible truth of this passage. "I will build my church." The church is not a building. The church is in this passage, "*ekklesia*", is a word that basically means the, "called out ones," the people. "I am going to build my people." We belong to Him. We are His. That is the picture He gives us here, and it is such an incredible picture that unfolds throughout the book of Acts.

Just to save time, I won't ask you to turn there, but I want to read you a passage from Acts 9:1-5. Now, I want you to follow along. This is when Saul who had been persecuting all the believers gets a vision of Christ. I want you to hear what happens. It says,



*Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"*

*"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.*

*"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.*

Did you catch that? You can almost miss it here in Acts 9. Saul has gone out. He is taking believers and putting them in prison. He is persecuting them. He is doing all these things to the church, and Jesus comes to him and says, "Saul, why are you persecuting..." Notice, He does not say, "Why are you persecuting the church?" Or, "Why are you persecuting my people?" What is He saying? "Why are you persecuting me?" It is good, isn't it? I don't preach to people who are being persecuted. Jesus comes to Saul and says, "If you are messing with them, you are messing with me. These people belong to me. We are one together. They are my body." What an incredible picture!

Ladies and gentlemen, that is us. We belong to Him, and He wants to use us to proclaim His glory and to advance His kingdom. I say we trust Him to do that. I say we trust Him with the church. I say we trust Him with our lives. We have got to know Him, and to really trust Him completely.

### **We must proclaim Him boldly.**

Third, we must proclaim Him boldly. We must proclaim Him boldly. Now, this is where we get into the rock here. To summarize the discussion: Who is the rock in Matthew 16? People will say it is Jesus kind of referring to Himself, "On this rock I am going to build my church." We see in 1 Corinthians 3 that Jesus is the foundation of the church. 1 Corinthians 10:4 talks about how Jesus is the rock. Ephesians 2:20 says He is the chief cornerstone. So, we know that, in a sense, Jesus is definitely the rock.

Other people will say, "This is intensely personally for Peter. He is the rock on whom this church is going to be built." I would say, based on the context of this passage and what we see unfold in the book of Acts, it is a little bit of both here. You have to put the context here together. Connect the dots in this passage. Obviously, Peter is not that strong yet. We see that after this, he is rebuked pretty hard by Jesus. It is not a good position for the one who is going to have the church built on to be put in at that point.

However, at the same time, Peter is the one who just stood up to the disciples, and he said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." That is when Jesus says, "On this rock, I am going to build my church." I believe the picture that we are getting here in Matthew 16 is Jesus saying, "I am going to build my church on this rock." The rock of the church is the people of God proclaiming the person of Jesus Christ. That is the rock upon which the church is built, and it is built on the saving death and resurrection of Christ.

However, we are not just stopping there. If you and I in this room who know that, who have Christ dwelling in our hearts, and are going out and proclaiming that, this is exactly how the church is advanced in the book of Acts. In Acts 2:36, Peter comes to the end of the first Christian sermon, and he says, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Both God and Messiah. The exact same thing that we saw here in Matthew 16

is exactly what Peter preaches in Acts 2. Then, a few thousand people come to know Christ, and the church is started. That is the picture here.

How is the church advanced? How does the church grow? It grows, and it is advanced through men and women from this room going out in the marketplace, going out in the neighborhood, and proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ and telling people about His greatness and His goodness. That is how the church will be advanced. I pray that will be the strategy that we adopt as a family of faith here. That we won't depend on having a right program or having this or that lined up, and then we can really grow as a church. We will grow as a church when the individuals in this room get serious about telling other people about the goodness of Christ. I cannot go into the places where you live and you work. Whether it is a gated community that I can't get into, or whether it is your access card at your workplace that I can't get into, I can't go to those people, but you are with those people for a reason. The church will experience the blessing of God and experience the purpose of God when we give ourselves to this rock. Us going out and proclaiming the goodness of God in Christ.

I want to do everything that I can to help equip us to do that, but I am convinced, and I want to say this from the very beginning, that the primary evangelistic outreach to the church is not going to be people just coming in here for a worship service. I pray that people come to Christ week in and week out in our worship services, but the primary way we are going to reach this community is not by having good worship services; it is going to be by us getting serious and going out into the community and proclaiming the goodness of Christ.

That is the rock of the church, and Jesus says the gates of Hades will not overcome it. The gates of Hades is basically a term that refers to death in that day, and He says, "Death is not going to overcome it." How come death wouldn't overcome? Well, the guy who said these words is about to rise from the grave after He dies. Then, He is going to take His people with Him. Jesus guarantees the success of this mission. That is why it is the rock of the church, because when the people of God are proclaiming the person of Christ, they are in on a mission that is not temporal. They are in on a mission that is completely eternal. We must know Him intimately, we must trust Him completely, and we must proclaim Him boldly in our culture.

### **We must obey Him sacrificially.**

Finally, number four, we must obey Him sacrificially. We come to the end of this passage in Matthew 16, and Jesus says these harsh words that we even thought about last week. *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."*

Here, let's connect the dots from Hebrews 13 outside the camp last week and Matthew 16, if we are going to find our life, we are going to lose it. What does that mean? I have this in your notes there. I want to help you put some practical handles on how this looks. How can you forfeit your life and actually find it in the end? How does that happen? Why should we sacrifice everything for this mission? Why should we say, "My entire life and my family's life is going to revolve around Christ and His mission?"

That first blank there: Our sacrifice always leads to His glory. He must become greater, we must become less. Our sacrifice leads to His glory. When we lay down our lives, we say it is not going to be about us any more. It is not going to be my dreams and my plans and my ambitions, it is going to be about Him. When He is lifted up, our sacrifice is His glory. We got that picture? Easy enough, right? Our sacrifice leads to His glory.

Well, second, His glory leads to our satisfaction. When God is our passion, and when He is the One who drives us, who motivates us, who compels us in our lives on a day in and day out basis, then His glory equals our satisfaction. We are most satisfied when He is being honored and glorified in us. That is why...that is why the guys in Indonesia, who are in the middle of an earthquake-ridden city, who are planting churches throughout that city, taking the gospel in the Muslim dominated nation, but who have very little, and who are experiencing persecution are some of the most satisfied people I know in the world. They are satisfied because God is being glorified through them. They don't have a lot of the things that we have, but they know their satisfaction is not found in those things. Their satisfaction is found in the glory of God being made known through them. That is a completely different way to look at life.

Our sacrifice leads to His glory; His glory is our satisfaction, and, as a result of that, you put those two together, that means our sacrifice leads to our satisfaction. Whoever loses his life will actually, in the end, find it. So, here is the good news. When I call you, based on God's Word, to lay down your lives and your family to make the glory of Christ known in all nations, and you begin to think that is tough, and you think, "It means I am going to have to miss out on a lot of things", I am not calling you to do something that will bring harm to you, or that will, in the end, cause you to miss out on something. I am calling you to lay down your lives so you can experience more; so you can experience what life is supposed to be.

Students, when I say throw aside the drugs and the drinking and the sex, throw aside the image and popularity and the things the world says are important, throw aside those things, I am not calling you to give up the joy you can have as a teenager. What I am calling you to do is to sacrifice that which doesn't bring you joy for that which brings ultimate joy, ultimate satisfaction. If you want to experience what God intends for you as a teenager to experience, then lay it all down and experience the life of making disciples of all nations. That is where joy and satisfaction is found.

When I call you men and women to say in your life, "It is not going to be about building a resume or building a career; it is not going to be about having the best retirement fund that I can have." When I call you to do that, I am not calling you to miss out. I am calling you to let go of that which doesn't really matter in the end, and to experience what really counts. So, our sacrifice winds up leading to our satisfaction. This is a pretty good economy that God has got us setup here. Our sacrifice actually leads to our good, because God is being glorified through us, and that is where the most satisfaction is found. We must know Christ and trust Christ then proclaim Christ, and ultimately, to obey Christ sacrificially.

## **So What Now?**

Now with that said, I want us to do something a little different in response to the Word this morning. You have got some blanks down there at the bottom of your Celebration Guide. So what now? I put there, "Identify one step you can take to know Him more intimately, trust Him more completely, proclaim more boldly and obey more sacrificially." So, here is what I am going to invite you to do. In just a second, I am going to pray for us. Then, across this room as a community of faith, we are going to spend some time in prayer and reflection and thinking through these questions. You have got some space there and on the back where you can write out some things. I want to encourage you to take full advantage of this time before the rest of the day gets going, and say, "Here is what I am going to do in my life."

One practical step that I am going to take to know Him more intimately, to trust Him more completely, to proclaim Him more boldly and obey Him more sacrificially.”

After I pray, these guys are going to be up here and lead us in song just like they led us earlier, but we are not going to be singing; we are going to be responding. We are going to be praying. Whether that is in our seats writing things down, or whether it is coming down front, I want you to feel the freedom throughout these couple of songs just to come down here to spend some time before the Lord, just you and Him, with your family and Him, and I want us to have a time across the room to reflect what it means for Christ to be the head of the church, the head of our lives, and we respond in obedience to that.

I know that for some of you that means, for the first time, saying, “I want to begin a relationship with Christ. I want to know Christ.” I want you to know, if that is you, you come here this morning, and you don’t know Christ, you have never been forgiven of all your sins through what He did on the cross for you, then I want to encourage you that our sacrifice is our satisfaction. If you want to experience all that life has, then let His love take over in your life. Let His grace overwhelm you. Ask Him to forgive you for your sins and say, “I want to give my life to following you.” There you will find what true life is all about.

Will you pray with me? God, as we have seen in your Word this morning, you are worthy. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and we want to be a church who sees you for who you are and who obeys you with all that we are. I pray that across this room in this time of response...God, I pray this morning, you would make us a church that looks to you as our head and says, “We want to know you more intimately. God, show us how to do that. We want to trust you completely. God, show us what that means in our lives as individuals and in the church as a whole. God, that we want to proclaim you boldly. God, put people on our hearts that you have entrusted to us. We believe you have people in this city. God, use us to lead people to Christ this week, and God we pray that you would lead us in this time to obey you sacrificially, to lay down even those things that for a long time we have been holding on to.” So that you might be glorified, and in the end, we might experience your satisfaction. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

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