

Matthew 16:13-28

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Date: 03 July 2016

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[0 : 00] As I stated previously, this morning is a commissioning service for those who will begin to meet next week as CFC Oakwood.! That means a change for us here too. We've just been Christ Family Church up until this point, but beginning next week we'll be CFC Dahlongega.

So, a bit of a change there as well. And as this is going to happen, and as we've been talking about it for quite some time, and visiting together over it the last couple of weeks, I recognize that the fact that this is happening is a bittersweet reality.

There's such great good in sending out people to take the gospel in greater ways to another community. And we're going to have to say goodbye, at least in part, to some of our faith family. And these people will be missed surely. Now, they're just in Oakwood. We're not sending them across the ocean. We're going to find ways to get together and see each other, but it won't be quite the same.

And I hope together as a church, as we do this this time, and I hope do it again and again and again, as we continually focus outward and not inward, as we are more concerned about how far and not how big.

[1 : 19] It won't be the last time that we see churches started out of our church, both CFC Dahlongega and CFC Oakwood. And as such, I think it's prudent this morning to step away from our verse-by-verse exposition of the book of Acts, just to take some time to remember together what church is and why it exists.

And I'm really thankful in preparation for this that nothing this morning is rebuke, but just reminder, just for us as a church, to remember foundational things that make us a church and foundational things that will make CFC Oakwood a church and however many churches exist beyond that we get to touch as a result of the Lord's work in the life of our community.

So let's look at Matthew chapter 16. I'm going to read verses 13 through 28. Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, Who do people say that the Son of Man is?

And they said, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He said to them, But who do you say that I am?

Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

[2 : 59] 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. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then He strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ. From that time, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, Far be it from You, Lord. This shall never happen to You. But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan.

You are a hindrance to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Then Jesus told His disciples, If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

[4 : 08] Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay each person according to what He has done.

Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. Beloved, this is God's Word to us.

It was written for His glory and our good, and we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. So, what is the church and why does it exist?

We could spend the rest of the year answering these questions. I certainly can't do that exhaustively over the next 45-ish minutes. My attempt is only to answer these questions very briefly this morning.

There are many organizations today that call themselves churches that do not fulfill the biblical requirements of a true church.

[5 : 14] So what is it that makes a true church? There's much to be said about the nature of a true church. But this morning from our text, I just want to point out six things that true churches have in common.

So at least these six things. This is not exhaustive by any stretch of the imagination, but at least these six things true churches have in common.

And I intend to keep my comments brief concerning each point very atypically so that we'll have time together to pray for the CFC Oakwood people as well as some time to say goodbye to them at the end of the service.

These six points will be alliterated. I've come to really enjoy alliteration. I think probably because I like to read John MacArthur. You've heard Charles Spurgeon be called the Prince of Preachers. I have dubbed John MacArthur the Prince of Alliteration. But I also find that it's helpful to remember the points, particularly as I think about them across the week. And so you're going to find six alliterated points.

[6 : 24] Common things that true churches hold. So number one, we have a common confession. Number one, we have a common confession.

Beginning in verse 13 down through verse 16. We've traveled now into Caesarea Philippi and Jesus asked the disciples, who do people say the Son of Man is? And they reply with the various responses that are coming.

Everybody's wondering, who is this Christ that has come and He's now doing all of these miracles amongst us? And there's been many guesses as to who He is.

But He says, who do you say that I am? And Peter responds, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And we have this common confession.

If we are true believers and if we are part of a true church, then we must recognize that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, the One who was sent, the One who was prophesied about, who was sent to the earth, the One who came and lived a perfect, sinless life, who never gave up His deity, but He existed fully as man, hypostatically, 200%.

[7 : 36] The only time that that above 100% ever makes any sense. Never tell me to do something 120%. That makes no sense. But Jesus existed 200%.

He lived a perfect life, but He died a sinner's death. He took the wrath of God that was due us in Himself as He hung on the cross.

He was buried. Three days later, He was raised. Spent 40 days with the disciples and then ascended. And He's seated now at the right hand of the Father. He's interceding for us now.

He's reigning over us now. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. We must have this common confession. Any church that does not believe that Jesus is who the Bible says He is, who wants to relegate Him to something less than God, who wants to make Him our buddy rather than our King, is not a true church.

We confess with Paul that Jesus is the image of the invisible God and that all things were created by Him and through Him and for Him.

[8 : 49] Colossians 1, 15 and 16. We confess with the writer of Hebrews that He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.

And He upholds the universe by the word of His power. That's Hebrews 1, 3. We confess with Peter and John that there is salvation in no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4, 12. In John 6, 60...

Excuse me. I'm way off on my... That's not a reference at all for you. What a strange edit I did. In John 6, let me say that. In John 6, Jesus asked the apostles if they also intend to abandon Him. Remember, He's been talking in John 6 about the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

[9 : 48] And people think that's weird. And a bunch of the people who have been following Him who were called as disciples leave Him and Jesus asked the apostles if they also intend to abandon Him. And our confession is the same as Peter's.

Here we go. Verse 68-69. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.

And so we have a common confession. Secondly, we have a common communication. And I must admit, I stole this one from MacArthur.

Communication, to keep it a C. Verse 17, And Jesus answered, Peter, Blessed are you for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Peter did not make this confession by his own cleverness. Jesus did not say to him, well, finally, I've been giving you all of the clues for who I am and you finally have sorted it out.

[10 : 58] You've sat down and you've done the puzzle and you've figured out who I am. The Father, God the Father, revealed it to him.

How did he do so? He did it by revelation, but specifically, he did it by the Spirit and the Word. He did it by the Spirit and the Word.

Peter, knowing his Old Testament Scripture, knowing the prophecy about who the Christ was to be, although he misunderstood, he didn't quite get it perfectly. We'll see it just a bit later in our text.

By the revelation of God, helping him to understand with seeing the fulfillment that Jesus is the Christ. He wouldn't have called him by this title, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Later, John 6, you're the Holy One of God. Had he not known his Scripture, God uses the Scripture in order to bring about the revelation of Himself.

[12 : 04] We have, beloved, begun by the Word. This is this common communication. We've begun by the Word. 1 Peter 1.23, Peter writes, You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and abiding Word of God.

Not only have we begun by the Word, but we are being made perfect by the Word, by this common communication. John 17.17, Jesus' prayer, sanctify them in the truth.

Your Word is truth. So we have this common communication. the way in which the Lord communicates to us.

These two, this beginning confession that Jesus is the Christ and this understanding as a church that the Scripture is the way in which God has spoken and now continues to speak are pillars for the church.

Churches don't believe this to be true. They are not true churches. We discard the inerrancy of the Scripture. We discard the authority of the Scripture. We discard the sufficiency of the Scripture.

[13 : 23] And we are going to live in all kinds of error. We may even worship the right God, but worship Him very wrongly.

We have a common communication and this guides the way in which we function as a church. This guides the way we're going to function as a partnership of churches.

We've talked a bit recently about church autonomy, which is to say that churches, we believe, should be self-governing.

It's the simplest form to say that churches should be self-governing. So CFC Dahlonga will have leadership and CFC Oakwood will have leadership. That is to say that, some of you may not get this reference, but I will not become the grand poobah of CFC churches.

I got a couple of chuckles. That's a Flintstones reference. The Flintstones, Fred and Barney were part of a secret order called the Loyal Order of the Water Buffaloes.

[14 : 26] And their leader was the grand poobah. If you prefer a Star Wars analogy, I will not become the viceroy of CFC churches.

We will be autonomous churches partnering together directed by God's word. Final authority. To further make that point, verse 19, Jesus says, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be

loosed in heaven.

And this is a very interesting thing that he says. It's an often misunderstood thing. And of course, this morning I can't spend a lot of time on it, but let me say this to you. The way that these words bind and loose were used in this day would be to say to forbid or permit.

Without making a long proof of that to you, forbid or permit. And if we are to translate these phrases literally word for word, it's really awkward in the English language.

It's very awkward. Like I'm thankful that the translators didn't translate it this way because this would be the word for word literal translation. It would go something like this. Whatever you loose on earth shall having been loosed in heaven.

[15 : 42] Which is to say, those things that you see approved by God, those things that he has spoken to you, knowing the mind of God, that you forbid or permit, you have access to the kingdom.

You've been given access to the mind of God. And so those things that have bound in heaven should also be bound on earth. And those things that have been loosed in heaven should also be loosed on earth. I believe that what Jesus is saying is obey God's word.

We're giving you access to it, right? It's being granted to you. Father, Son, and the Spirit wrote a book and gave it to us that we would obey it.

John Calvin once said, if a church does not have sound doctrine and exposition of scripture, it's not a church. church. So we have a common confession. We have a common communication.

Thirdly, we have a common commission. A common commission. Verse 18, Jesus says, 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.

[16 : 54] This is misunderstood by many people to be Jesus saying that Peter will be the first pope. And we know that there is some reality to Peter's leadership.

Strong leadership. The mouthpiece of the apostles. The one that preached on the day of Pentecost. The one who is the spokesperson when the apostles are imprisoned in the early days of the church. Certainly Peter was part of the building. Certainly he is one of the apostles. The foundation on which the church is built. Jesus is not referencing some papal rule in this case.

what he is saying is he will build his church on the confession that Jesus is the Christ. People who have a common confession who believe that Jesus is who he said it is.

It's that that Jesus will build his church on. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I've told you before that I, and I don't understand why, but I've often misread this verse.

[18 : 00] Not fully gotten the picture of what Jesus is saying. And what he's saying is that his building of the church, Jesus' building of the church, is like a military conquest.

That it's going forward. That it's pressing in. And that hell is on the defense. That hell has put up gates. And those gates will not stand in the way of the advance of the gospel.

God makes war and God wins. A picture of this with some finality is found in Revelation 7 9.

John writes, After this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number. And I love that phrase. Don't even try. It's a great multitude that no one could number.

Men and women turn to the worship of God from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands.

[19 : 06] Praising God, praising Christ, their sin, guilt, washed away, clothed in the righteousness of Christ. The common commission.

True churches recognize this. True churches are kingdom focused. We are concerned about conversions. We want to see people come to faith in Jesus Christ.

We're not primarily concerned about making something new and cool and hip that's going to draw someone's attention from some other fellowship. We're primarily concerned about conversion.

Why? Because God's primarily concerned about conversion because He's making war and the gates of hell will not stand against it. God doesn't need us beloved to accomplish this.

We remind you that you're not so special that God needs you. Jesus says I will build my church. Praise the Lord He has decided to use us to accomplish that.

[20 : 10] We get the great joy of participating in that kingdom advancement. Romans 10 beginning in verse 13. Paul writes everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

But then he goes on to say how then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without

someone preaching?

And He's not talking about what I'm doing now necessarily. The sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ done by all those who are His. Verse 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. We have a common commission beloved that all of us are to share.

It's a sad thing that so many churches don't press that expectation on their members. They don't say this is how Christians live. It's not a thing that we hope that we'd like to add to your Christian experience.

[21 : 19] But followers of Jesus Christ share the good news of Jesus Christ. This is why we will not view the start of another church as a sad thing.

I know it has some sad element. I'm feeling that too. But we're not going to view it as a sad thing. We're not going to see it as division but rather multiplication. Get that word in your mind.

This is multiplication. It's not division. The point of the church is not to hold our friends close but to scatter the kingdom wide.

So we have a common confession, a common communication, a common commission, and a common conflict. So beginning in verse 21, Jesus begins finally, he's starting to tell them about what's going to happen.

And he begins to tell them in a repeated fashion throughout the gospel accounts. Peter has proclaimed Jesus as the Christ and he seems to help clarify for them what that's going to mean.

[22 : 27] Verse 20, an interesting thing that Jesus does, he strictly charges the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. And he does so because of the wide misunderstanding about who the Messiah was going to be.

When we studied Mark, I talked about this a lot, that the Jews thought the Messiah was going to come and conquer and rule in this realm. That he was going to come and he was going to militarily overthrow Rome and restore Israel to its former glory in this realm.

They misunderstood the promises. They seem to glance over all of the prophecy about his suffering and his death. Peter's counted amongst that, right? Because Peter brings him aside when he starts to talk about all the things that he's going to have to suffer, that he's going to die, that he's going to be raised.

Peter says, oh no, not if you're the Christ. This can't possibly be. And Jesus responds to him in a strong, strong way, get behind me, Satan.

Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me. Why? For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Now, it would be silly to believe that Satan had manifested Peter, that it was actually Satan that Jesus is talking about in this case.

[23 : 47] So note that Jesus equates lies with both Satan and man. He's saying the way that you're thinking right now, Peter, is not the way of God, the things of God, but the things of man, and that Satan is tied up into that.

He's the prince of lies, the great contorter of truth. This was the original sin as the result of Satan's involvement twisting the truth of God.

He didn't actually say you would die, did you? This is his weapon in the world. This is the way in which we struggle now as believers, right?

To walk in the way of God, to believe the truth of God and not the truth of the world. So, Jesus equates lies with both Satan and man.

This is our conflict. It's the very same conflict that Peter's experiencing here. Listen to Jesus' words to the scribes and the Pharisees in John chapter 8. This is verse 39 through 47.

[24 : 49] They answered him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said to them, if you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did. But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.

This is not what Abraham did. Satan. They said to him, we were not born of sexual immorality. We have one father, even God.

Jesus said to them, if God were your father, you would love me. For I came from God and I am here. I came not on my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say?

It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin?

[25 : 54] If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God. And so you see that our conflict is a conflict against truth and lie, or for truth and against lies.

And we have to recognize that this is a spiritual conflict. Paul writes in Ephesians 6.12, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Beloved, our great trouble is not spiritual warfare in some weird intangible way. Our great conflict is the lies that are being told to us by this world, which is being manipulated by the one that it worships, and that is the devil.

That is our conflict. The very same conflict that Peter is experiencing here, right? Following the truth. I've already told you what that is, right? We have a sure thing in the scripture itself, because of that common communication.

So we have a common conflict. Fifthly, we have a common calling. Beginning in verse 24, then Jesus told the disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take of his cross, and find me.

[27 : 20] Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall the man give in return for his soul?

It's interesting how God always seems to work in opposites. We've talked a lot about apparent paradoxes. An example of that is this statement is false.

Try to work that one out in your mind. They seem to set against one another. That actually is a paradox, not an apparent paradox.

This is an apparent paradox. Not actually, but it seems to be on the surface. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Beloved, let me remind you that this isn't just bearing through some typical thing with some patience and some grace.

Being in school is not your cross to bear. Working for a boss that you don't particularly enjoy is not your cross to bear. I think it can include that, but it's not just that.

[28 : 31] Taking up your cross is a call to die. It's a call to self denial. We are to be deniers of our own identity and our own self determination.

We are to place ourselves under the lordship of Jesus Christ. We are to become his bondservants. Because of the great grace that he has given to us, we in response, of a loving response, say to him, take my life.

It's yours. It belongs to you. I want to serve you with every bit of it. Because we've been ransomed! with him in all things.

We have a common calling. You don't have to ask the question, what am I called to do? You're called to have faith in Jesus Christ, and you're called to follow him. Do that faithfully.

Do that by the word of God, and then beyond that, the gray areas, do whatever you want. If you're obedient to this, you're following Jesus, marry who you want to, work the job you want to, you'll sort it out.

[29 : 40] Because we've been ransomed by Christ, we now identify with him in all things. Paul writes in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

We have a common confession, communication, a commission, a conflict, a calling, and finally, a common confidence. I did it, all C's.

Good reference here, verse 20, I mentioned it already with some explanation. Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. He didn't want to be taken to be set up as king.

And if you read the gospel narratives, you'll find other places where he's speaking and he suddenly slips away. And the explanation is because they wanted to take him by force. And they're trying to take him and set him up to be the Messiah as they thought he should be.

So Jesus is talking about a heavenly kingdom that has implications and realities here, but a heavenly kingdom. Then he goes on to say in verse 27, for the Son of man is going to come with his

angels and the glory of his father and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

[30 : 59] He's going to come and establish his kingdom. He's going to come as a judge and as a conquering king. Originally I had this as we have a common kingdom because the sound alliterates but that K was really bugging me.

But we have confidence do we not when Jesus returns to judge because we'll be found in him not because of things we have done but because what he has done on our behalf.

1 John 2 verses 28 and 29 and now little children abide in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

If you know that he is! righteousness has been born of him. The fact that we have been made righteous is evidenced in our living and gracious response to the gospel.

I love 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 9 and 10 as a reference to the book of Hosea. Having once been not part of a kingdom we are now part of a kingdom.

[32 : 13] I hope that tomorrow as you celebrate Independence Day and love your country please do that you love in higher order the kingdom of God. Peter writes 1 Peter 2 9 and 10 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 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 and so we have a common confidence a common confession a common communication common commission a common conflict and a common calling but the true church has a lot in common doesn't it praise God that Jesus said and he is accomplishing his promise that he will build his church and praise

God that he has lovingly made us his own and employed us in this process let's pray together