

# I Will Build My Church - From All Peoples

by John Piper

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*Christ's triumphant, authoritative promise to build his church from all the peoples of the world, and his unwavering commitment to gather the church through the death of himself and his people.*

**Duration:** 45:18

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:13-26, Matthew 24:14-15, Revelation 5:9

**Topics:** "Global Evangelism", "Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a purposeful life for God. He encourages listeners to rise above the trivialities of daily life and make a significant impact for God's kingdom. The speaker also highlights Christ's unwavering commitment to gather the church from all nations and peoples, emphasizing the need for global evangelism. He views the challenges posed by jihad as a gift to the American church, as it calls believers to wake up and actively make disciples. The sermon concludes with a call to action, urging listeners to consider their own role in spreading the gospel and potentially leaving their own people group to reach others with the message of Christ.

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## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org) Our scripture test this morning is from Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13 to 26. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he began asking his disciples, saying, Who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist, and others Elijah, but still others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

He said to them, But who do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then he warned the disciples that they should tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time Jesus Christ began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, God forbid it, Lord, this shall never happen to you. But he turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan, you are a stumbling block to me, for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's. Lord Jesus Christ, you have told us now in this word that you are going to build your church.

And so I'm asking, risen living Christ, that in your mercy you would give heed to us now and fulfill that promise in this hour, not just to build Bethlehem in strength and humility and love and grace and spiritual power, but that through what you're about to do in this service you would build your church among the unreached peoples of the world. I ask, Father, that you would call college students and children and teenagers and people in the middle of their careers and people who are about to be retired or who are retired, that from all those groups there would be a summoning from their present position into a going to the unreached peoples of the world in this service. This is your work.

You told us, pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers. So you are the great sender. We are secondary.

You are primary. You call, we confirm. And so grant, I pray, that calls would be issued through my mouth in the name of Jesus.

Establish us as ascending church, make us strong in it and call out in this service from those who are over there in the overflow space, Lord. And for those in this room here, grant, I pray that. Your voice would be heard in this service, in this text and through this message.

And a call would be issued irrevocable and the people would find themselves in a decade to come. Serving in a place they never dreamed. Supporting, speaking the gospel to people who've never heard it and who desperately need to hear it that they might live.

So we're asking for a mighty work now in this service. In Jesus mighty name. Amen.

I listened to Oscar's message as soon as I got home on Thursday and was not disappointed. You remember if you were here last week as we began Missions Week, Oscar issued a call of summons to prepare shepherds and elders for churches among the unreached in the age of Jihad. By avoiding unnecessary controversy and by being saturated with the Bible and by taking up a courageous place to speak the word somewhere in the world.

And then he said the outrageous thing, the truly outrageous thing that Jihad is a gift to the American church because it calls the bluff of nominal American Christians. And tells us to wake up and make disciples and plant churches lest we be made disciples of Islam or other aggressive evangelistic enterprises. It's a gift to us, he said, because it blesses us with economic insecurity and thus helps us to move toward the wartime lifestyle we should have been living all along anyway.

He said it was a gift to us because it helps us identify with the rest of the world who doesn't live in Disneyland and have had the insecurities and the threats all along. And maybe now for once we'll know how to shepherd shepherds who could serve in that real church. And he said it was a gift to us because it would help us to center our discipling upon our homes instead of this building because it and John Piper can get blown up anyway.

So you better not lean too heavily on the building or the preacher because that's going to disappear one of these days. And if you don't have a home based way of doing discipleship for your children and for the

people's won't get done. And it's a gift to us, he said, because after all, isn't it the resurrection that matters in the end anyway? Well, well, well, God bless you, Oscar.

I hope I can be faithful to what you have begun now to pick up where he left off. I want to issue a call this morning. It will be people who've come into the room already persuaded that you should cross a culture and take the gospel to an unreached people.

You know that. And that's where you're heading. And so you'll come.

The other group are people who've come into the service thinking maybe, maybe. And in this service, God touches you, speaks to you, does something in you so that it feels like, wow, I must really seriously consider this. Because I think God is working my life to loosen me from where I am to get me to another place, to another people.

And you're going to come and I'll pray for you, whether that's of God or not. And then the others will be people who didn't come into this room with missions on your radar screen. You, in fact, which you could walk out right now because you don't care at all about this issue.

And you will be touched, perhaps before the service is over, that this is not only something that the church should be very concerned about, but that you should be very concerned about and that God might in fact have a call on your life to leave your people group and go to another people group to carry the gospel. So that's my aim, is to get those people assembled, pray over them and see them mobilized and strengthened and empowered to disappear out of our midst for the sake of the kingdom in the years to come. Three points related to this text.

I'll tell you what they are, then we'll take them one at a time. Number one, Christ's triumphant, authoritative promise. I will build my church.

I'll do this. That's number one. Number two, Christ's unwavering commitment to build it, to build his church, to gather his elect from all the peoples of the world, not just westerners and not just white and not just black or red or yellow, but every shade, every shape, every tribe, every tongue from all over the world.

He's passionately committed to this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic church. Third, Christ's radical way of winning the nations, namely by the death of himself and the death of his people. That's the way he'll do it.

Not with bombs and not with swords and not with bullets. Point number one, Christ's triumphant commitment to build his church. Verse 15.

Who do you say that I am? He asks. Peter answers on their behalf. You are the Christ that is the Messiah, the son of the living God.

Jesus answers, says to him, verse 17. Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, Petros, and on this rock, Petra, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it or prevail against it.

I'm going to build my church on you, Peter, you as my apostolic, authoritative spokesman of the gospel, you as the bearer of the power of God and the salvation, the gospel, you as an inspired spokesman of the risen Christ and his gospel. On your apostolic ministry and apostolic word, I will build my church and the

gates of hell will not prevail against it. Now what I want to drive home from these verses on this first point is how triumphant and authoritative this is.

Let this sink in. This is the risen Christ talking here. This is the one who took his seat at the majesty of the right hand on high.

This is the one who holds in being the universe moment by moment by the word of his power. This is the one who will split the skies someday and return and make all creation his own. Every knee will bow.

This is the Christ, the King of kings who says, I'm going to do this. I'm going to do this. I'm going to build my church.

So, the building of the church of Jesus Christ from all the peoples is not ultimately dependent on missionaries. It is not ultimately dependent on churches. It is not ultimately dependent on pastors.

It is ultimately dependent on one thing, Jesus' faithfulness and power and commitment to his word. I will build my church. Missionaries are crucial.

Pastors are crucial. Churches are crucial. They are not ultimately crucial.

One person is ultimately crucial. We are penultimately crucial. He is ultimately crucial.

He uses us. But if we don't get on board, he leaves us and moves to another. And he will get it done.

He will get it done. I love the authority of Jesus. It makes my spine tingle.

Even when there is no music, it makes my spine tingle. The Apostle Paul was very jealous that Jesus get this glory. So he was careful in the way he worded his own ministry.

Listen to how he talks. This is Romans 15, 18. I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.

Do you hear what he is saying? I won't speak of anything except one thing, what Christ wrought, what Christ accomplished, the obedience that Christ brought about, the faith that Christ won from the peoples, and in this little, through me. Yes, missionaries are crucial. Yes, pastors are crucial.

Yes, you are crucial, but not ultimately crucial. Christ accomplishes it. We speak the word.

He performs the word. And if he doesn't perform it, it's dead. There is a tremendous authority here and he means to get the glory for it.

Matthew 28, the book ends this way. All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, you missionaries, go therefore, I have all authority, I will build my church.

Go and make disciples. I have authority over the powers of darkness. I have authority over the devil.

I have authority over hell. I have authority over Hades. I have authority over governments.

I have authority over terrorists. Let's put a point on it. Was Jesus Christ the King, with all authority in heaven and on earth, building his church on September 11 in New York? Remember, your ways are not our ways and your thoughts are not our thoughts.

How unsearchable are your ways, oh God, and how inscrutable are your judgments. What if God, the Christ, saw the planes flying towards the destruction of thousands of people and the upheaval of the nations? And what if, at the same time, he saw 200 million untouchables in the Hindu caste system? And what if he saw that in our day, his centuries-long work to dislodge them from their bondage as the Dalits of India was about to arrive? And what if he saw that they were wavering between converting out of Hinduism and its bondage to Islam or Christianity or Buddhism? And what if he saw that the murderous destruction of thousands of people in the name of Islam would swing 200 million people away from Islam toward Christianity? Was he building his church? What if, with a view to the everlasting joy of millions, he did not blow his breath against those planes like he did on the Sea of Galilee when he said, be still and nature obeyed? One thing is for sure, I will build my church. Nothing will stop it.

That's point number one, and it's a call, perhaps. It's a call. You want to be a part of something invincible? You want to rise up out of the trivialities of what you do with your life, day after day, dinking around with CDs and putzing around with Frisbees, to do something mighty for God in the power of the risen Christ, so that when you lay your head down to die, you can say, it's been invested well, even if you died age 28.

Point number two, Christ has an unwavering commitment to gather the church from all the peoples of the world. Not just westerners, not just white, not just black, not just red, yellow, every shade, every language, every tribe. This is so obvious from Matthew 28, 19, Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, all the peoples.

Matthew 24, 14, this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all the nations. Romans 15, 11, Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, let all the peoples praise Him. Revelation 5, 9, You were slain and by your blood this ransom men for God, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

The Lamb will have the reward of His suffering. He did not die in vain. And if He died to inherit every tribe and tongue and people and nation, the Lamb who was slain will obtain the reward of His suffering.

Satan cannot stop it. Disobedient Christians cannot stop it. Terrorists cannot stop it.

Islam and Buddhism, Hinduism, secular Americans cannot stop it. He's the king. He reigns over the world.

And He will plant and build His church. Now I have a very special burden this morning to make this plain. That Christ the Risen One has a burden and a commitment and a passion and a longing to win people from every Muslim people group in the world.

You know, Islam is not monolithic culturally, linguistically, nationally. The largest Islamic country in the world is Indonesia. 228 million people.

Sundanese, Mandurese, Malays and on and on. Almost the entirety of North Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt. Almost the entirety is Muslim.

With all those people groups. Indian people groups, Chinese people groups, Central Asian people groups. Muslim, a billion of them.

Hundreds and hundreds of people groups under the sway of Islam. And Jesus died to rescue millions upon millions of them from those people groups. The reason it is such a big issue is because of the question that was raised by Jesus in his text.

Who do men say that the Son of Man is? And the reason this is so urgent for Islam is because Islam gives the wrong answer. In fact, it is remarkable that the answer they give is in the text and it's called wrong. It's in verse 14.

They answered Jesus. Some say that you're John the Baptist and others you're Elijah and others Jeremiah. Or one of the prophets.

One of the prophets. Jesus is not just a prophet. That's a wrong answer.

That's a wrong answer. Muslims do not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. They do not believe that he was crucified and raised for our sins and that he's the one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus.

They do not believe that every day or that someday every knee will bow and confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And therefore, Islam brings great dishonor upon Jesus Christ because they do not ascribe the glory to him that belongs to his divine, mediatorial, crucified and risen, saving name. There is one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 2.5. There is one way, one truth, one life, Jesus Christ and no one comes to the Father but by him, John 14.6. He who has the Son has life and he who has not the Son does not have life, 1 John 5.12. Therefore, missions is absolutely necessary.

Why? Because John 3.36 says, he who believes in the Son has eternal life and he who does not obey the Son does not have life but the wrath of God rests on him. If you don't believe in Jesus as the Son of God, you don't have life and the wrath of God rests on you. But how shall they believe in him who they haven't heard? And how shall they hear without preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.

Missionaries are crucial. Missionaries are crucial. Ambassadors of the King, emissaries of the King are crucial among the peoples of the world.

The gospel won't get there any other way and the gospel must be known, heard and believed in order to be saved. These people that we call missionaries, that name is one of the highest titles that could be put upon a person. People of whom the world is not worthy no matter what they struggle with or how they struggle.

I know missionaries in this church are very self-effacing people. I know that they say, don't put us on a pedestal. I know that they say we struggle just like you with lust and Bible reading and courage, just like you do.

And I know that's true and I don't care whether it's true. I say the name missionary is one of the highest, most glorious titles that could ever be put on a broken, justified sinner. And of them the world is not worthy.

And what that means when I say the world is not worthy of them is real simple. I take that text right out of Hebrews 11. It means they're a gift to the world and the world doesn't deserve them.

And they go anyway, just like Jesus came anyway. So, that's my second point. And it's a call.

It's a call. There's nothing very glorious about being a missionary. It's just mainly pain.

It's mainly hurt. It's just very Christ-like. Very Christ-like.

Number three, last point. Christ's radical way of winning the nations is by the death of himself and the death of his people. Now, where am I getting that and what do I mean by that? Verse 18, first Jesus and then his people.

In the middle of the verse it says, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overpower it or prevail against it. What are the gates of Hades? Hades is the place of the dead in Jewish thought. The gates of Hades are the gates that hold the dead in.

If you go in and you die, it's history. You're done for. The only hope would be if the gates could be ripped off or opened.

And what Jesus is saying here is, I will build my church and I'll build them out of dead people. And the gates of Hades are going to stop me. I'm going to open that gate and I'm going to get the dead.

I'm going to get the dead. Now the question is, how did he do that? And how do you join him in doing that? How do you get the bars off the gate of death so that you can recruit dead people to be a part of your church? Verse 21. He's just made it plain that he's the Christ, the Son of God.

All authority is his. He's going to build his church. And then he says, From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples how he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and the scribes and be killed.

This is what Islam denies. I read the section in the Koran last night just to confirm it. And I read several Islamic scholars who argue for it.

They deny that he was killed on the cross. It was a substitute person who got put up there. The argument goes that they honor Christ more in this way because the Christian teaching that God would allow him to be so defiled and so dishonored as to die the death of a criminal is so beneath Jesus Christ that Christians are the ones who dishonor Christ, not Islam.

He was snuck away. God took him into heaven. He'll come back again someday.

He'll join with getting everybody to honor Muhammad. This is exactly the same stumbling block that the Jews had and the Greeks had. Christ crucified foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews.

Why? You cannot have a crucified Messiah. And you know what? If you don't have a crucified Messiah, you don't have a gospel. At the very point where they believe they're rescuing Jesus from dishonor, they are perishing.

Jesus, hear this now, say this to all your Muslim friends, Jesus endured the dishonor of the Father, not because he was dishonorable, but because we are dishonorable. And the only hope for us dishonorable, sinful people is that a perfect, risen, living, substitutionary Christ could bear my dishonor and my sin and my hatred and my evil and my wickedness and then burst the bonds of Hades and come out and by faith alone justify me. That's my only hope.

That's the gospel that we take to all the Muslim peoples of the world. Try to help them see that Christ is not dishonored in this. Christ is mightily honored in this.

Matthew said he's going to be killed. You see that in verse 21? He's going to be killed and be raised up on the third day. Now that's the answer to the question, how the gates of Hades will be opened.

How does he do it? He says, okay, there's one way into Hades. Death, I give myself. The keys of death and hell hang on the inside of the door.

I will go in through death. I will take the keys out of the hands of Satan. I will unlock the door.

I will push it off its bars and I will walk out and bring my people with me. And it says in Revelation 1, verse 18, the keys of death and Hades are in his hand. He shuts, no one can open.

He opens, no one can shut. This is the triumphant, I will build my church and I will build it with dead people. I will build it out of people who think the iron gates of death and hell have shut against them in this life, shut against them in the next life and I will bust that door off its hinges and there will be no more death and no more pain anymore where I reign and where people submit to me.

And now the last question, how do you join him? If he builds his church by dying and rising, how do you join him in building the church? He tells you in verse 24, Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. The cross is an instrument of execution. He is not a crabby boss at work.

If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

To follow Jesus means to join him on the Calvary road that leads to death and then out of death. Into death, out of death. Whoever loses his life will find it.

Lose it, find it. Go into death, come out of death. Lose it, find it.

Die so you can live. Here's the way Paul put it. This is Galatians 2.20. I am 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. You've got to die.

I am crucified with Christ. You've got to die. Nobody can come after me unless he takes up his cross and follows me.

Try to save your life? You lose it. And he goes on to argue, what will it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your life? In other words, if you say, I don't want to do that because if I do that, then I won't be able to gain all this stuff. I mean, if I go, if I be a missionary or if I give too much away to support missionaries, I can't have all this stuff.

He says, well, what are you going to do with that stuff? What will a man give in exchange for his life? God doesn't trade. You can't get your life with stuff. You get your life one way, lose it.

In the service of Jesus. And I don't think that means everybody should go. I said it once, I say it now, I'll say it one more time in a minute.

There's a losing of life that keeps you right in the business where you are. Freed from the need for the stuff. Let it go.

And then we could send them all. We could send them all. You know what? The Calvary Road looks like in America is no easy question.

Is it? What does the Calvary Road look like in Disneyland? Well, we're not legalists here. I don't give lists. I just say it's a hard road.

It's a dangerous road. It's a bold road. So Christ died to save His church.

And He calls His people to die to save His church. To find His church. To gather His church.

Whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will find it. And they will bring others through the gates of death into life with them. Amen.

Now, here's what I want us to do as we close. Hear the people that I want to come. Number one, if you came into this room knowing you're called to cross a culture to missions.

I'm just thinking about people on the front end of the call. You came in deeply assured that's where God is leading you. You're not there yet, but you're going.

You come. Amen. The second group are people who came thinking that was probably the case, but not sure.

And you've heard more of a confirming churning in your heart right now. You come. And then the other group, and this may be the largest group, I don't know.

People who are not sure, but what's happened in this service is a remarkable awakening of a sense that God wants you to very seriously consider the likelihood that you should leave the plan or leave the place and go to some unreached people when you get the necessary training. And the reason for having you come is so that you can say that out loud and then I can pray for you that God would confirm that or not. So just come right now.

Just come on up from wherever you're sitting and line up across the front here from wherever you are. I'll just wait a minute and then I'll pray for you and we'll be done. And notice how we'd love to help follow up here.

We want to pray with you. We want to work with you. We want to do ever we can do to get you from where you are to where God wants you to be.

And I know some of you standing here are just not sure. You just sense a real sense of urgency that this could be your life's calling. And I want to ask God to make that clear or not.

And those of you, I'm assuming that the people who are sitting out there now are either bent on being good senders or you're disobedient. Because those are the only three options. You can be a goer, you can be a sender, or you can be disobedient.

No bystanders, no spectators, just goers, senders, or disobedient. And it's a good thing to be a sender at home working hard at your job and it's a good thing to be a goer. So no second class citizens.

Although I do betray my prejudice that the name missionary is about as high a name as you can put on a human being with all their struggles and all their imperfections. I love them very much. And so let me pray.

Oh God in heaven, look down upon these folks right here. For some of them this is a trembling moment of what am I doing here? For others it's the consummation of years of prayer and a deep solidified sense of call. And then for others all over the map in between.

So what we're praying, I'm voicing and the people, the senders are praying, is confirm oh God. Confirm your work in these people's lives. Solidify the sense of call.

Give clarity to what the next steps should be. If it's ten years, I remember Oscar saying when he came to Bethlehem in 1985 he thought I'm going to come here, I'm going to get trained, I'm going to go out, be out here in a year or two. And then it was ten years before Oscar went.

And now he's gone. So Lord it may be ten years. But Lord whatever it takes, keep them on the track.

Oh forbid Lord that the world would choke out their sense of calling. Surround them with other believers Lord who burn inside for the glory of Christ among the nations. Purify their lives of sin.

Give them some victory Lord over the sins they think are unfitting them for the field. Help them to know that we're strugglers all on the field, off the field. And grant I pray oh God that you would fill them with your Holy Spirit right now.

Give them gifts and give them graces that they need to follow through with your call on their life and become fruitful emissaries of the gospel of grace among the nations. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message to give to others but please do not charge for those copies or alter the content in any way without permission.

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