

# Just Jesus - Matthew 16:13-19

by Jon Courson

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*The Church is built on a personal relationship with Jesus, not on ministry, study, or other things.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 16:13, Matthew 16:18-19, Hebrews 2:11

**Topics:** "Church Importance", "Jesus Christ"

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## Description

Jon Courson emphasizes the importance of the Church, drawing parallels between objections to attending church and attending a baseball game. He delves into Matthew 16, highlighting four reasons why the Church is essential: Jesus takes pride in His Church, Jesus prevails through His Church, Jesus protects by His Church, and Jesus is the priority of His Church. Courson explains how Jesus sees His people with pride, prophetic vision, and positional righteousness, and how the Church plays a crucial role in God's plans for redemption and transformation.

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## Transcript

As we do every year for his birthday, Peter John and I traveled to the Bay Area last August to see the Oakland A's battle the Cleveland Indians. Quite honestly, however, although taking in a ballgame has become a tradition for Peter and me, I'm not sure I'm ever going again. You see, I have some big problems with big-league baseball.

Every time I go to the coliseum, I'm asked for money. And none of the people sitting next to me introduced themselves. The manager never paid a call on me, never welcomed me to the coliseum, and didn't even know my name. And then there's all those hypocrites in the stands, like the ladies polishing their nails and talking about what everyone was wearing. Behind me were some fanatics who were worse than the hypocrites. Every time Jose Canseco got on base, they stood up and cheered and looked silly. And the umpires? Some of their calls were ridiculous. I'm sure I know more about baseball than they do. As for Peter, I don't want to force him to go to major-league baseball games any more. I'll let him decide for himself when he's older.

Now, if someone said that, we would think he was crazy. Those reasons are all bogus. And yet, why is it that no one protests when those same objections are raised concerning church? Those are the exact reasons people give for not going to church: too fanatical; too hypocritical; too much talk about money; the pastor didn't call on me; the people weren't friendly; I'll let my own kids decide eventually.

Our generation, it seems, has rejected church. In fact, I remember seeing a bumper sticker in the 60's which sort of summed up our generational mentality: 'Jesus Yes. Church No.' And a lot of people are in that place. 'Yeah, I'm into Jesus, but I'm not into the Church. No way.'

I'm here to say that I am really into the Church. You might think, 'Well of course you are. You're a pastor.' But let me tell you -- I am not into the Church because I'm a pastor. I am a pastor because I am into the Church.

The passage before us in Matthew 16 is very important for it is the first time Jesus Christ uses the word 'church'. There is a principle of hermeneutics called the Principle of First Mention, which says: You will usually find key foundational understandings about a subject in the first place it is mentioned. Thus, when Jesus first mentions it in Matthew 16, we find four reasons why the Church is essential.

Jesus takes pride in His Church.

. . . upon this rock I will build my church . . . Matthew 16:18

The language is important. It speaks of a possessiveness, of an intimacy with us. Jesus didn't say, 'I will build a Church', or 'I'll put up with the Church.' He said, 'I will build My Church.' Jesus is proud of His people.

For both he that sanctifieth [Jesus] and they who are sanctified [us] are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. Hebrews 2:11-12

The writer of Hebrews declares Jesus is proud of us. Not ashamed of us, He sings praise to the Father right along with us in the midst of the congregation. Why isn't He ashamed of us? Because He sees us in our potentiality.

When Jesus first called Peter, He said, 'I call you Petros, 'Small Rock', because I'm going to change you from one who is unsteady to someone who's solid, stable, useful.'

Jesus sees us potentially. Jesus doesn't see us with our present flaws, but in our potential usefulness.

Jesus sees us prophetically. Because we are already in heaven, seated with Christ, He sees us as already perfect.

Jesus sees us positionally. Jesus sees us robed in His righteousness, washed with His blood. Our sins, failures, and shortcomings are completely out of His sight and gone from His memory.

So He looks at us potentially, prophetically, and positionally and sees us as perfect. Incredible! This past week the Lord has dealt very deeply in my own heart along these lines, telling me to look not on the outward appearance, but on the heart -- the way He looks at me.

I have discovered I have a tendency to judge people according to their actions, but to judge myself according to my intentions. And the Lord spoke to my heart, saying, 'Jon, your world would be a whole lot sweeter if you reversed that. Judge yourself by what you do, but judge others by what they meant.'

Wouldn't it be radical if we looked at people that way? At their intentions rather than their actions? That's the way Jesus looks at His Church. He says, 'I see your hearts, and I'm proud of you.'

Jesus prevails through His Church.

. . . and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18

For many years, a lot of us thought that the Church was a refuge, a fortress where we could hole up until the Lord came back. The gates of hell would not prevail against us if we huddled together within the Church singing, 'Hold The Fort Til The Lord Comes'. But that's not what Jesus meant.

Gates don't prevail in and of themselves. I mean, how many of you have ever been attacked by a gate? No. Jesus is saying, 'The gates of hell will not hold back My Church. I am going to prevail through My Church. I will storm the gates of hell, where people have been held in bondage, where there has been darkness, discouragement, disease and death. I will prevail through My Church.' When Jesus wants to touch someone in love or talk to someone about salvation, He storms the gates of hell through us, His Church.

Jesus protects by His Church.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matthew 16:19

Dr. Kenneth Wuest gives this proper translation: 'Whatever shalt be loosed on earth shalt be loosed even as it is in heaven.' Jesus protects by His Church, giving her the keys of His Kingdom.

If you look at Tammy's keychain, you will see the same identical keys I have on my keychain. I'm her bridegroom. She's my bride. And she has the same keys I do. Why? Because we share authority. We rule together over our Volkswagen fleet and our house. We are one.

So too, Jesus Christ, the Head, has given His bride, the Church, the keys to His Kingdom. What does this mean? In Matthew 18 and John 20, this same concept is reiterated. Matthew 18 deals with relationships, while John 20 deals with the forgiveness and the retaining of sin. What Jesus is saying is, 'I'm giving authority to the church, to bring together or to loosen, even as it is happening in heaven.'

If people within the Church are having problems with one another, they are to work them out individually. But if they can't, it's a matter for the Church to deal with corporately. It's not that we make those decrees ourselves; but through the Word by the Spirit, the Church can speak with authority, unlocking God's truth and revealing God's heart.

You see, those who say, 'I don't need Church. I'll just do my own thing. I've got my own ideas about the Gospel and about worship,' are vulnerable to anyone who comes along saying, 'Let's go to Guyana, or to Waco, and we'll start a whole new movement. Who cares about Church history? Who cares about theology? Who cares about collegiality? We'll do our own thing.'

That's what happened with Jim Jones/David Koresh. Hundreds were killed because they strayed from the protection which comes from the Church, the authority of binding and loosing. And thus, there was death. Any Christian who ignores the Church will become vulnerable to needless bruises and wounds. The question arises: 'Why have so many people in our generation rejected the Church?' I suggest one reason:

Jesus is the priority of His Church.

Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? Matthew 16:13

Jesus had come to Caesarea Philippi, 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. At Caesarea Philippi, where the waters of the Jordan begin, there is a massive rock face -- sort of like a miniature El Capitan. It's one of the prettiest spots I've seen anywhere in the world.

There, Jesus gathered His boys and asked this question: 'Whom do men say I am?' His disciples then repeated the theories concerning Him that were floating around Israel . . . 'Some say You're John the Baptist.'

John the Baptist came on the scene, saying, 'Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand. You soldiers, quit oppressing the people. You tax collectors, quit extorting from the people. You fathers, be good to your children. Get it together. Repent.' When Jesus appeared, He began His ministry with the same words: Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. So, reasoned some, because of His moral teaching and call to repentance, Jesus must be John the Baptist, returned from the dead.

Others said, 'No. He's Elijah, returned from heaven. Haven't you seen the miracles He's done? The lepers are cleansed. The blind see. The lame walk. Miracles happen. He must be Elijah.'

Others said, 'No. He's Jeremiah. Haven't you seen the care He shows to the lost, how they move His heart, how He weeps over them? He must be Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet who cared so tenderly for the lost sheep of Israel.'

'No,' others said. 'He must be That Prophet,' referring to the prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:15, who would come and fully explain the Law of Moses. Scripture records that the people marveled at the gracious words of Jesus saying, 'No man speaks like this man.' Truly, the common people heard Him gladly. Surely He must be 'That Prophet'.

As I look around the country and the world, I see churches built upon one of those four misconceptions . . . There are those who say, 'We're going to build our church on John the Baptist. That's who Jesus is. We'll call it First Moral Majority Church. We'll tell our community to repent. We'll picket 7-11. We'll write our congressman. We'll organize and let our voice be heard in the community. We'll tell people to get it together morally. And we'll meet together to activate believers, to mobilize Christians, to get them going.'

Others say, 'No, no, no. Our church is going to be built upon Elijah. That's who Jesus is. We'll call our church Miracle Center. It will be filled with miracles, signs, and wonders. People will see the glory and power of God fall at every single meeting. It's going to be heavy!'

Others say, 'No, no, no. Our Church is going to be built upon Jeremiah. That's who Jesus is. We'll call our church The Evangelical Expression. We'll have a million-dollar mission budget. We'll offer classes in door-to-door evangelism. We'll spread throughout the community, expand throughout the world globally, and we'll reach the world evangelistically. Like Jeremiah, we'll weep over the lost.'

'No, no, no,' others say. 'Our church is going to be built upon That Prophet. We'll have three-hour marathon Bible studies Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights. We'll have seminars and syllabi. We'll become hermeneutically flawless, exegetically excellent. We'll offer Hebrew, Greek, Chaldean, and Aramaic. We'll parse each verb. We'll know each doctrine thoroughly. We'll become a great teaching center.'

Look at our text. Jesus responded to none of these suggestions. It was only when Peter said, 'Thou art the Christ -- the Christos, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Son of the living God,' that Jesus said, 'Upon

this rock I'll build My Church.' The Church which is not a platform for ministry or political activity or intellectual curiosity -- the Church which simply says, 'We want to know Jesus personally' -- is the Church Jesus will build.

When people say, 'Jesus, You're not simply a motivator for us politically; a teacher to us intellectually; a power for us miraculously; nor a program for us in mission ministry. You're Everything. You're all there is. We just want to know You. We want to love You. We want to walk with You and learn about You and become more like You,' Jesus will build His Church upon their confession. And when a group of people come together and say, 'Jesus we love You. We're impressed with You. We want to learn of You and walk with You,' guess what happens? The community around such a group begins to change.

A sheriff in Jackson County who is not a believer wrote me saying that as far as he is concerned, the Fellowship is the best thing that ever happened to curb the drug problem here in the Applegate Valley because so many of the top drug producers in the valley have become converts. Are we marching against marijuana? Are we politically active? No. It's just that wherever Jesus is, the surroundings will be influenced very definitely.

Where Jesus builds His Church, there will be signs and wonders. Power will be experienced -- not with fanfare, nor for itself -- but in a supernaturally natural way. Where Jesus is the Christos, loved and honored, there will be evangelism -- not because of a need to be a part of some program for ego-gratification, but rather because people will want to share what they have discovered in Christ. They will be in love with Him and will find themselves talking about Him -- taking every opportunity to share the One Who means so much to them.

The person who is rock-solid in this life and on into eternity will be the one who says, 'Jesus, it's You personally. Not ministry. Not study. Not anything but You. I appreciate You, I love You, and I'm committing myself to You. Jesus, You're everything to me.' That's my prayer for us. That's my prayer for you. In Jesus' Name.

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