

The Essentials: The Church

Session 7: KEYS

Matthew 16: 13-25

Opening Collect

Together: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Read: Matthew 16:13-25

Opening Thought

In our passage, Jesus tells Peter that he holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven as a symbol of genuine authority and access, and yet, Peter does not fully understand; Jesus dramatically calls him Satan (!). What we see in this passage is the way Jesus bestows a posture of authority *and* service to the church. Where studied Scripture's language of God's people as a flock—not remarkably flattering!—here we see how the church also receives something special, a gift of free access to the Kingdom of God and a positions of leadership and service. This dynamic is at work in several places throughout the Bible, notably when God places “the key to the house of David” on the shoulder of Eliakim (Isaiah 22:22), and in Revelation where the church of Philadelphia receives the key of David because they have kept God's word and not denied his name (Revelation 3:7).

Discussion:

1. What do keys do? Why are they an item of authority?
2. Why do you think Peter receives the keys? Is he special?
3. What Jesus says to Peter in v. 18 clearly seems to be a validation of Peter's understanding about Who Jesus is—the Messiah. Why is this declaration a kind of key or power?
4. What does Jesus' statement in vv. 21-23 teach us about the nature of authority? How does the expression of his authority compare to that of the Scribes and Pharisees?
5. What do you think this passage says about the authority and/or power of the church? How would you describe the church's authority?

Check in and Closing Prayer

Matthew 16: 13-25

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

²¹ From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.