

INSIDE OUT: God's Calling, Our surrender

God's Calling to the CHURCH: Matthew (16:13-19; 18:15-20)

When you walk into your embassy in a foreign country – you are standing on your own sovereign soil, even though you are in France. The local church is the sovereign expression of the Church universal, a part of the heavenly colony of God's redeemed people. The Authority given to the Apostles by Jesus, then to the New Testament *Apostolic* Church assumes God's authority on earth as stewards of His Glory, His Purpose, and His power to accomplish His will – as tested through Scripture; **The Church now represents God on the earth as His ambassador** (Eph. 6:20) **READ 2 Cor. 5:17-20:**

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *this person is* a new ^gcreation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and ^hHe has ⁱcommitted to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ **Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” Who are you representing to your family, work, neig

- A. **What is the Church?** The church is NOT a Sunday meeting you attend or a place you enter (bldg.); rather, the **Church is our identity** – as those who are redeemed in Christ; *Universal*
- B. **WHO is the Church?** The church IS YOU: God's family! The authoritative Christian Body of gathered, baptized believers who comprise the people of God - who represent God & His glory to all nations & peoples of the earth.
- C. **The Church exists because of its relationship to the Triune God. It exists to carry out the Lord's will to Glory God by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).**
- D. **The Church is the continuation of the Lord's presence and ministry in the world.**
- E. **The Church is to be a family fellowship of believers who display the spiritual qualities of their Lord.** The Church gathers for **WORSHIP** and **WORK** (Ministry); We *gather* for worship, word, discipleship, & fellowship – we *scatter* for ministry, evangelism, and mercy. We exist to LOVE God and Love others through supernatural ministry
- F. **While the church is a divine creation, it is made up of imperfect human beings. It will not reach perfect sanctification or glorification until the Lord returns. If you find a perfect church, don't join it because you'll mess it up. = Beautiful Mess=kid's painting**

Mt. 16:13-18 Now when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and *still* others, Jeremiah, or one of the *other* prophets.” “Jesus said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus 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. ¹⁸ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this ^lrock ***I will build My church***; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” [*]Jesus states that the Church is *His*. And the HE will build His Church. Jesus has designed, created, and died for His Church (US); He's the Head of Ch.]

***Hades* = death; death & sin will never overpower the Church (the living redeemed), but rather the Church will be *anointed* and *authorized* to bring the gospel & to bring life & hope to the walking dead (spiritually); to evangelize dead hearts set on *hades* as their destination]

Vs. 19: “I will give you [Peter] the **keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have**

been loosed in heaven.” This authority was first given to Peter (because of his confession/proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God). Peter is the leader of the disciples and represents the disciples in God’s task: Peter (disciples) are tasked to take the gospel confession to the Gentiles (Acts 10:34-35). Now Jew and Gentile shall have access to God equally – and all an equal standing in His Church. (women.gentiles.poor.=equal) -Jesus authorizes Peter to build the Church, the assembly of God’s people who will identify with Him through His Son Jesus, a society with definite boundaries tied to shared beliefs and rules, with a common purpose to admit the believing into God’s kingdom, while excluding the unbelieving. [the keys open/shut gates: =lock and unlock gates/doors into the entrance into the Kingdom] **Peter’s confession is the KEY to the Kingdom of God** – it is the key to giving life/death. [“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”] IF one accepts Peter’s confession, then the gates of eternal life are open/unlocked for him. If one rejects, then the gate is locked. ****Sports Jersey; in stadium; cheering; passionate; but NOT on the team. Not on the roster. Spectator vs. Player.** (Which are you? IN or OUT?)

*The authority given to the Apostles (plural) extends to salvation, doctrine, & discipline: Matthew 18:15-20 “If your brother sins^[k], go and ^[l]show him his fault ^[m]in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every ^[n]fact may be confirmed. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly I say to you [Plural, Apostles ... Church], whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.²⁰ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” = The *keys* represent Christ’s given authority to the Church to admit or exclude any person upon the true confession of Faith that Jesus is the Messiah, truly God, Savior, & Lord.

*****Babysitter: parents gone =babysitter has their authority to protect child, serve, & discipline** -Through this authority given to the Church, Jesus means “**to build [and unite] a single people together upon a single foundation [Jesus] with a single profession [Lordship] so that the world might know who rightly speaks for Him.**” = the Church universal & triumphant

1. Jesus establishes the **Church** Universal, and **authorizes** the local church under His headship
 - 1) to **Worship** and **glorify** God through proclaiming the gospel to both the Church (sacraments/ordinances) and to the *lost* world (ministry & evangelism);
 - 2) to **Protect**, proclaim, and preach the **Word of God** (weekly discipleship);
 - 3) to **Recognize** (affirm) those who belong to Jesus with each other in **love**;
 - 4) to **Unite** them to Himself (the Church in a local expression) through Believer’s Baptism,
 - 5) to oversee their **Discipleship** in spiritual growth (maturity), leading them to *serve* others
 - 6) to raise up **Leaders** to protect the unity of the Church from imposters & dissention;
 - 7) to lovingly **Discipline** the wayward, with a view toward spiritual restoration (Acts 20:30).

Mission: *To Love God and others as we make disciples of all people.*

Vision: *“We see Thirsty souls restored, Lives changed, and Joyful people worshipping Jesus Christ.”*

APPLICATION:

Our calling at the WELL (as a local Church) in this area of North Texas is to be a Church united for: Worship, Holiness, & Joy, to be a loving community, to mature one another in Christ, to serve, to witness, to lead and influence this generation to know, love, & follow after Jesus; but perhaps most importantly, the calling of God for the WELL (for you) is to **PRAY** & entrust your life, your hope, and your help to the Lord of the Church!

On one of his visits to the Continent, Charles Spurgeon met an American minister who said, "I have long wished to see you, Mr. Spurgeon, and to put one or two simple questions to you. In our country there are many opinions as to the secret of your great influence. Would you be good enough to give me your own point of view?" After a moment's pause, Spurgeon replied, "My people pray for me" (in Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* [Banner of Truth], p. 44).

Jesus has charged His Church with representing God and speaking on behalf of Jesus – as delineated in His Word. A church member living in unrepentant sin needs to know that the Church speaks for Jesus. Jesus will come to vindicate the Church’s warning against unrepentant sin. Likewise, a non-Christian who rejects the gospel needs to know that the Church speaks for Jesus; Jesus will vindicate the Church’s call to repentance all those who need salvation. The point is that the world should heed the Church’s promises and warnings because Jesus has given the Church the authority to speak in His behalf as His ambassador, until He returns and claims what is His own.

The babysitter has the authority of the parents to lead and protect their children until they get home. Sometime, the babysitter gets it wrong, but that does not excuse the child from obeying the sitter AS obeying his parents in proxy.

The call is general (in that all churches are called to accomplish a few, core functions faithfully) and specific (in that each church is called to do the “one thing” God has equipped and positioned it to do best).

Calling All Churches

There has always been a core of religious “business” for which God has made his people responsible—in every age; seven core functions every church must address in order to be the church.

The first two functions remind us that we are called to live vertically, to “reach up.” The church reaches up through worship and holy living to commune with God. In worship, we adore him. In holiness, we dedicate our lives to him.

God’s people are called to worship.

A regular recognition of the vertical dimension of our lives—so foreign to the flat and spiritually-oblivious world in which we exist—is a key function for the people of God. God wants his church to look up. He demands regular, emotive, God-honoring and life-changing worship whereby we acknowledge that God is on his throne and we are at his feet.

God’s people are called to be holy.

It is easy to confuse holiness with ethical living, doing the right things, avoiding sin. But holiness is bigger than that. Holiness involves developing a taste for God, a hunger for righteousness. It involves the notion of separating ourselves for—dedicating ourselves to—godly living. It implies an active pursuit of godliness motivated by spiritual passion and distaste for the sinful and profane. When God’s people take holiness seriously, we please our holy God and open ourselves to his blessings. When we grow casual about holiness, we demonstrate through careless living a careless disregard for him.

He demands regular, emotive, God-honoring and life-changing worship whereby we acknowledge that God is on his throne and we are at his feet.

The next two functions remind us that we are also called to live horizontally, to “reach in.” God’s people are called to love each other and grow each other up in Christ.

God’s people are called to be a loving community.

In a world characterized by loneliness, isolation, and self-centeredness, God’s people provide a striking contrast. At least they should. We are called to be intimate communities, bound together by common faith and common blood. We are to love each other, live in harmony together, forgive, encourage and serve, lay down our lives for each other, share our possessions. We belong to each other in many and profound ways.

God’s people are called to mature each other.

We (all of us) are called to make disciples. Not just converts or clueless clones of ourselves. People who are trained and equipped for life in the kingdom. People who grow up to look like Christ. When the church attends to this business, people are grown into the image of Christ, and the future of God’s community is protected. When this function is ignored, God’s people struggle and falter.

The final three functions remind us that we are called to live in the world and for the world, that there is a “reach out” dimension to the church. Through service, we minister to the world’s hurts. Through witness, we testify to the world’s Savior. And by being “salt and light,” we dare to make a difference in this present darkness.

God’s people are called to serve.

God has always expected his church to be an outpost of compassion, caring for the needs of others, and pouring itself out in service. When we engage in selfless ministry, we partake in both the nature and the work of our Lord.

God’s people are called to witness.

We are called to bear witness. Jesus (who defined his own ministry in terms of “seeking and saving the lost”), commissioned his church to “go into all the world.” The early church turned the world upside down with its vigorous testimony to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We can do no less.

We are called to be intimate communities, bound together by common faith and common blood.

God's people are called to influence their world.

Finally, the church is called to be "salt and light," to share Christ's lifestyle through example, confrontation, and persistent teaching. Sometimes our contact with the world has little to do with bringing people to faith, or alleviating needs, and much to do with making life in the world more palatable.

When a church today pursues effective worship, holy living, intimate community, intentional maturation, sacrificial service, powerful witness, and substantive influence, it is pursuing the essential business of the kingdom. It is responding faithfully to the general call of God to all churches at all times in every place.

To ignore any one of these impoverishes the church and disregards a mandate from our Head. God calls his people to function in each of these areas. There are no options where this essential business is concerned. You cannot take some of it and leave the rest. A healthy church will address each function thoughtfully, creatively, and effectively.