

1. This morning we are going to combine two trains of thought simply because they go hand in hand.
2. We have been talking on Sunday mornings about the mission of the church and why we exist as the church.
3. We have discovered along the way that **our primary mission as believers is to love God and bring him glory and honor.**
4. And the way we bring him glory and honor is by being obedient to what he has called us to do which is to love him, love others and to love the lost.
5. Bringing God glory and honor is not just about what we believe it is about the way we love.
6. So we as individuals are called to carry out God's mission, and when we as individual believers carry out our mission in a way that is pleasing to God then we stand a better chance of being the type of church that is pleasing to God and that is to be a church that is missional.
7. What does that mean? It simply means to be a church that focuses on making sure it is aligned with the mission that God has for it.
8. We said last Sunday that we focus on being missional when we come back to a focus on Christ.
1. Christ's mission determines our mission. Jesus said in **Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."**
9. Because Jesus said it was his mission to seek and save the lost, we have to know that it is our mission as the church to seek and save the lost, not only in Batesville Arkansas but around the world.
10. We exist as the church for the purpose of seeing people saved and delivered and set free from the bondages and consequences of sin, and to ensure that those new believers are made into healthy disciples of Jesus Christ.
11. We exist to see that happen here in this city, in this county, in this region, in this state, in this country and around the world.
12. That's why we are the church. Everybody say church.
13. That word church is a very interesting word. I want us to consider a bit further the church.

14. The original Greek word used to describe the "Church" throughout the New Testament is **ekklesia**. (you know I don't use Greek words very often)
15. To the Greeks this word simply referred to an "assembly of people". What is interesting is that it could be a town council meeting or any other type of meeting. It was people gathering together.
16. However in the English language we have a completely different concept of what the church is.
17. In the English language, there are at least 4 common uses of the word "**Church**" today. The word church is used to describe:
- a. **A building or meeting place**. Many people refer to the building in which the congregation assembles as the "Church."
 1. A man may say to his wife, "I am going down to the Church to pick up my coat, that I left there last night," fully aware that no other individual will be in the building at the time he arrives.
 2. People in America today may refer to a building as the "Church" whether there is a worship service going on or a BINGO game.
 - b. **A denomination**. It is very common to describe a collection of churches which have assembled themselves together as some kind of organization as: The A/G church, The Baptist Church, The Methodist Church or The Presbyterian Church. Then there is the...
 - c. **The universal church**. This is a reference to all members of the Body of Christ in all places at all ages. In Matthew 16:18, Christ says, "I will build my Church." The Church is everywhere and in all times. Then finally there is...
 - d. **The local church**. This is the geographical or local representation of the universal church in a given area.
 1. Romans 16:5 "Greet also the church that meets at their house..."
 2. I Corinthians 16:19 "Greetings from the Churches [plural] in Asia. Aquila & Priscilla, together with their church [singular] that meets in their house . . ."
18. Now, what is interesting is that of the 4 common usages of the word "Church" in the English language, only 2 can be supported from Scripture.

19. The word “Church” or “Churches” appears in the New Testament 104 times; from the same root word.
20. In every single case the word church is used to describe either the universal Church or the local Church. It is never used in Scripture to describe a building or denomination.
21. The point is that the word “Church” **always describes people, not buildings or organizations.** These two usages (buildings & denominations) are actually slang words.
22. Now, it’s not necessarily wrong to use the word “Church” to describe a building or denomination – as long as we never forget that the Bible always uses the word “Church” to describe people.
23. That is highly important to understand as I read our text.

TEXT: Matt. 16:13-18 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, **"Who do people say the Son of Man is?"** ¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. **"Who do you say I am?"** ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."** ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock **I will build my church,** and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

TITLE: **Letting Christ build “His” Church.**

INTRO:

1. This is a very familiar passage of Scripture that reveals several significant insights about the Church.
2. To fully understand and appreciate this passage of Scripture -- we must understand the setting or context in which it occurs.
3. According to verse 13 this passage takes place around Caesarea Philippi.
4. **Caesarea Philippi** was a very significant city approximately 25 miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee. Very near the present border between Israel and Lebanon. That ought to capture our attention because it is this very same area that is constantly in the news as they fight over territory.

5. What is significant about this location at the time of Christ was that there were very few places in the Middle East where people practiced more religions than the city of Caesarea Philippi.
6. Historians tell us that this area was literally covered with temples to the Syrian God **BAAL**. As a person came into the city, which was built on a hill side, he could probably see at least 14 temples to Baal from the highway.
7. If you will think about the Old Testament you will recognize the name of Baal. It seemed like over and over again the children of Israel turn from serving the true God to serving Baal. In this passage, as Jesus is talking with his disciples, probably, many temples to Baal were in view.
8. Not only did people in Caesarea Philippi worship Baal, but this city is said to be the **birthplace of the god PAN--the God of nature**.
9. In fact, this city so identified with the God PAN, that for many years the city was called Panias in his honor. You say well what in the world does that have to do with us today?
10. One popular singer in the 70's named John Denver sang about being "Born again in his 22nd year" --not being born into the Family of God, but being born into nature-pantheism. In other songs he sings about the "trees and the flowers being his sisters and his brothers."
11. Many people who were involved in the hippie movement of the 60's or the back to nature movement of the 70's turned to Pantheism as their religion and now it is called **NEW AGE**. Many bookstores even have a New Age section of books today.
12. The point is, this religion of Pantheism was very much alive in Caesarea Philippi in Christ's time, is still very much with us today.
13. But there were still more religions practiced in Caesarea Philippi. There was **ALSO** a great temple built to the **Roman God Caesar**. Now we know where the city received part of its name.
14. This was a city that worshipped the Roman Caesar as God. A general named Philip greatly expanded the temple and renamed the city Caesarea Philippi, for Caesar and himself.

15. There were literally these **Synagogues** or places of worship everywhere.
16. It was as if Jesus deliberately waited until this moment to ask the two significant questions found in our text.
17. He sets Himself against the backdrop of at least three of the world's religions--with their great temples plainly in view--and asks to be compared to them.
18. For him to begin His questioning at this significant moment, it was as if he was saying, Compare me to BAAL, compare me to PAN and Pantheism, compare me to the worship of Caesar, compare me to the worship of the Pharisees AND SEE IF I AM NOT THE TRUE GOD!!!!!!

19. Listen to the questions Jesus asks. **Matthew 16:13 "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"**

20. Basically what Jesus was saying to his disciples was who do the people think I am? What is the result of my work so far?
21. What do the people on the street say about me? What is the result of my Preaching? My Teaching? My Working of miracles? The healings? Who do men say that the Son of Man is?
22. He wanted His disciples to evaluate the situation. He wanted them to have in clear focus who the people, the masses, thought He was. That's important because there are some people who think that as the church we shouldn't worry about what the world thinks.
23. That we should do what we want to do, what pleases and makes us happy and that's all that matters. Unfortunately that type of thinking doesn't fit into how Jesus related to the world. Jesus wanted to know what people thought of him.
24. But notice with me how Jesus describes himself in verse 13. He says who do people say the "son of Man" is?
25. This phrase son of man is Jesus' favorite title for Himself. It appears at least 82 times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And 81 of those times Jesus is using these words, "SON OF MAN" to describe Himself.

26. The only time it is used by someone else, is when someone asked Jesus what he meant by the title. To understand what Jesus meant by this title "Son of Man" we need to look back in the Old Testament to Daniel 7:13-14 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a SON OF MAN, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of days and was led into His presence. 14. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped HIM. His dominion is an EVERLASTING DOMINION that will not pass away, and His Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."
27. Jesus used the term SON OF MAN to describe Himself and His authority. He was the one Daniel saw in this prophecy. Daniel recognized that all mankind will serve Him, and His Kingdom shall not end.
28. By using this title, Jesus was proclaiming His Divine Messiahship!!! He was saying all 81 times-- I am the Messiah Daniel prophesied about, I am the SON OF MAN- I have power over all the nations.
29. What's interesting is that the people's response missed the point of who Jesus really was. Matthew 16:14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
30. The people were really trying to pay honor to Christ with these titles. They were saying that Jesus Christ was a voice from God.
31. God had been very silent for 400 years and all these answers were saying that God was once again speaking to His people through a prophet--Jesus. They were offering that Jesus Christ was a voice from God.
32. But Jesus was trying to get them to understand that he was more than just a voice from God.
33. He was not just a prophet! He was not just a teacher! He was not just a miracle worker! He was not just a great leader! He was God in the flesh.
34. About 40 years after Jesus questions his disciples near Caesarea Philippi, the Apostle John makes this statement.
35. John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
36. The people misunderstood who Jesus was. It still happens today. That is the great dilemma of our world today. People still miss who Jesus is.
37. But in order to make sure the disciples didn't miss who Jesus was his next question is more personal.

38. Matthew 16:15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

39. That is the real question. Who is Jesus to you? Instead of asking another general question about what others think he searches them for a personal answer.

40. Basically what Jesus is saying to them is: you've been with me, you have walked with me, you have seen the healings and the miracles, you have heard my teachings, you have listened to my preaching, you have seen the opposition, you have seen me when I was tired and hungry, you have seen me laugh and you have seen me cry.

41. In light of all of this, who do you say I am?

42. And in verse 16 Peter gives the response that puts it all into perspective.

Matthew 16:16 "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

43. The word Messiah and the word Christ are the same word. One is from the Hebrew and the other from the Greek--but they both mean the ANOINTED ONE. They mean exactly the same thing. MESSIAH - CHRIST - ANOINTED ONE.

44. In the Old Testament there is an event that takes place where Samuel anointed David to be King.

45. Throughout history, Kings were ordained to office by anointing-- and they still are in some parts of the world.

46. The Messiah, The Christ, the Anointed one is God's Divine King over man.

47. Now Matthew in his book (and from our text) pointed this out because his account of Jesus was specifically directed to the Jews. He very much wanted to show them that Jesus was the long-expected Messiah, the Son of David, and the King of Israel.

48. With this answer Peter was saying: You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One for whom we've all been waiting.

49. But Peter doesn't stop there. He goes on to say, "You are not only the Messiah, but, the son of the living God". Not Baal, not Pan, not Caesar but the messiah, the son of the living God.

50. And it is with that declaration by Peter that Jesus makes a very important announcement. **Matthew 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.**
51. Jesus says to them I will build my church. This announcement by Jesus is the very first time the word church is used in the New Testament.
52. Jesus didn't announce his church until his disciples understood who he was, the messiah and the Lord.
53. You see we cannot separate the church from Christ's lordship. It is his church and he is the one who builds it. He did not reveal the church until they saw him as Lord. The church belongs to Jesus Christ.
54. You might wonder, well what does that have to do with us in 2021? What does that have to do with this series of messages, or our focus on a particular missionary or ministry each Sunday? It has everything to do with us and our focus on missions.
55. Some people say they want to see the church grow and experience revival but they want to run it and decide how it will happen. Some pastors say they want the church to grow and experience revival but they want to run it and decide how it will happen.
56. But when we think and operate that way we prove that we have misunderstood Matthew 16. **It is Christ's church and he is the Lord of his church.**
57. The church cannot be the church if it is not under the lordship and headship of Jesus Christ.
58. That means in many cases we have to give Christ his church back. Why would you say that pastor?
59. Remember the illustration of the research done on churches in America. Only three out of 20 churches are growing in America but two of the three that are growing are simply gaining people from the 17 that are declining.
60. Only one in 20 churches in America are growing because they are seeing people come to Jesus as savior.
61. That may be an indicator that Jesus isn't in a place of Lordship over His church. We have to give him his church back.

62. Because in his church the mission, the goal and the purpose is to seek and save the lost.

Conclusion:

1. What is interesting is that in the beginning of most churches, the church is seen as Christ's church. However over time most churches tend to drift from a mindset or culture of "Christ's church" to a mindset or culture of "our church".
2. How can we know what the culture of Batesville First Assembly is? Really what we are asking is how can I know what my mindset is?
3. We can know our mindset or culture by asking some questions.
4. **Our church vs. Christ's church.**
5. In an "Our Church" culture it's about me. It's about tradition. It's about insiders.
6. In an "Our church" culture it's about becoming a club. It's about being a consumer.
7. In a Christ's Church culture it's about others, it's about faith, it's about outsiders.
8. In a Christ's church culture it's about becoming a servant, a minister, a missionary.
9. What is your mindset?
10. Our daughter Kayllen lives in Pennsylvania and she is a part of the largest Christian production company in the world.
11. They do 11 performances each week. Currently the bible story they are telling is of Queen Esther from the Old Testament.
12. The theater seats about 2,000 people and they nearly sell out all 11 performances.
13. It is an amazing ministry and we are so proud of her. However, if we are not careful, the church can somehow morph into a theater type setting.
14. In the theater the entertainment is up on stage, and the crowd simply watches the entertainment.
15. The crowd doesn't serve, the crowd comes to be served.

16. In the theater the crowd buys a ticket, comes and gets entertained, and then leaves with no further obligation.
17. In the theater the crowd hears the story of Jesus hundreds of times, but doesn't share the story of Jesus even one time.
18. Forgive me for stating the obvious, but **we are not a theater, we are the church.**
19. In the church, I am not the entertainment and you are not the crowd.
20. In the church, the focus is not on the stage, the focus is on Jesus Christ God's only son.
21. In the church the focus is not on how we feel, the focus is on what Jesus has done for us.
22. In the church the focus is not what will please us, the focus is on what will please our savior.
23. In the church we don't come to be served, we come to be servants.
24. In the church buying a ticket by giving in the offering isn't the end of our responsibility, it's just the beginning of our responsibility.
25. In the church we shouldn't be content hearing the message of Jesus for the hundredth time when there are those in our community who have never heard the message of Jesus one time.
26. In our world that moves in the total opposite direction of what I have just described, it will not be easy to be the church. But it is possible to be the church.
27. If we will give Jesus his church back and let him be Lord.
28. Come around the alters. Spend some time with the Lord.
29. Is Jesus Lord of your life? Do you live to carry out his mission?
30. As the church, do you relate to Jesus like a spectator or a participator?
31. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and us be what Jesus intended.