

The Church's One Foundation

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Date: 16 May 2021

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn to our reading this morning in Matthew's Gospel. Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 16. And Willie is continuing his series here in Matthew's Gospel.

So Matthew 16, and we're reading from verse 13 to the end of the chapter. Matthew 16, and I'll read it from verse 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?

And they said, Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He said to them, But who do you say that I am?

Simon Peter replied, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

[1 : 16] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, Far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you. But he turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan.

You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Then Jesus told his disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

[2 : 37] For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?

Or what shall a man give in return for his life? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

Amen. May God bless to us his word this morning. Well, turn with me, if you would, to Matthew chapter 16 in the passage that Paul read for us, all about the church's one foundation.

Well, our world in 2021 seems to be a very fragile and frightening place, doesn't it? Indeed, well before the pandemic, one professor of sociology wrote that the non-stop production of narratives of doom has caused a teleology of doom, a great ending of doom to become imprinted in all our public deliberations, fostered by what he calls professional fear entrepreneurs, working overtime to evoke the specter of a scary world.

[4 : 19] And so powerful is this force in our society that he says, the defining feature of the current Western 21st century version of personhood is its vulnerability.

And if vulnerability is the defining feature of our human condition, then it follows that being fearful is its normal state. Well, if that was true a few years ago, then my goodness, we have seen the culture of fear magnified to the nth degree over this past year or so with the incessant bombardment of professional fear entrepreneurs in the media and in the new breed of celebrity scientists that seem to have so much power over us these days.

But friends, the truth is that our world will always be a fearful place unless we understand what it is really all about and where it's all going. At the core of modern fear, says another academic, is

ontological insecurity and existential anxiety.

What is life? What does it all mean? Where is it all going? Well, that and the answer to that is what the Christian gospel is all about.

It is revealing precisely these things. And this passage before us, right at the heart of Matthew's gospel, is at the very heart of that story because it points us to the great rock that alone is immovable and unshakable amid the shifting sands of time and of human history.

[5 : 56] And that is the solid rock of Jesus Christ and his everlasting kingdom. And here we're told the message of how that kingdom is being built even now today by the authority and by the power of the king of the universe himself, the Lord of time and space, Jesus Christ, the son of the living God, as verse 16 here names him.

And what a rock of security, what a place of real safety that is for a fearful and worried world. If you want to understand human history, past, present, and future, you simply cannot do so until you have grasped that its goal, its climax, its ultimate purpose is what is declared here in verse 18.

Do you see? I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The church of Jesus Christ is the goal of all human history.

It's the focus. It's the purpose of Almighty God from all eternity and nothing will ever stop it. And until you understand that, you can't possibly understand this world far less your place in this world. That's why Jesus spent so much time teaching his disciples about his church, about his household, in these central chapters of Matthew that we're studying. His church is his heavenly kingdom community here on earth.

[7 : 34] And its task, as we saw last time, is to take the heavenly bread of life to the whole wide world. But the question arises, you see, by what authority and with what kind of power is this advancing heavenly army to march under?

And it's to these things that Jesus turns here in this famous passage in front of us today. It's a great turning point in Matthew's story.

Remember back in chapter 4, verse 17, it begins at the start of his ministry when we're told from that time on, Jesus began to preach, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Well, look at verse 21 here. It's the same formula. From that time, Jesus began, well, to show his disciples how that kingdom comes.

You see, only through his suffering, his death, and his resurrection. And so, verses 13 to 20 here are the climax of everything that's gone before.

[8 : 35] Jesus proclaiming his identity, who he is. And here at last, we see it grasped by Peter. You, verse 16, are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And then, verses 21 to 28, Jesus gives an immediate interpretation of what that really means.

He must suffer in order to accomplish the work that he came for. And the rest of Matthew's gospel explains what that will mean.

But notice these two great themes, who Jesus is and what he is doing. They come together in the context of Jesus teaching about his church and about how the blessings of heaven are going to reach the whole wide world in this age through the church.

You cannot separate Jesus Christ from his church. You can't have the one without the other. Some people want to do that, want to have Jesus, but don't want the church. No, says Jesus.

But equally, you can't have a truly Christian church without the real Jesus Christ and the gospel of his cross as absolutely central.

[9 : 46] He alone is the builder and has total authority over his church. And his work alone, the cross, is the foundation of the church.

And the true apostolic gospel of the cross is the only power in his church, now and always. And that's what this passage is telling us, loud and clear.

But it's a passage that's often been misunderstood and even abused. So we need to look at it carefully. And we're going to do that this morning under two main headings as we look at these two sections.

The only true authority over Christ's church and the only true power that it wields. So first of all, in verses 13 to 20, we see the only true authority over Christ's church, which is the transcendent authority of the Son of God in heaven.

Now these verses teach us two very important things. First, that Jesus alone is the unique architect and builder of his church. And so it's ruled entirely under his heavenly authority.

[10:54] but secondly, that he gives his personal authority on earth to his church through the unique apostolic ministry, which will be the foundation, the bulwark of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

And that means that the authority of heaven on earth will be exercised until the end of the age in one way alone. And that is through the apostolic gospel ministry.

of the New Testament. So first, let's focus then on the heavenly authority of the church's unique architect and builder. The Christ, verse 16, the King of heaven.

He alone is the unique architect and builder of his church. Everything hinges here on the true recognition of who Jesus really is.

And so in verse 13, we see this dark question. And it's the same question today, isn't it? The question. Who do you say that the Son of Man that Jesus is?

[12:01] Notice not, do you believe in God? Or do you believe in life after death? But who is the Jesus of history? It's a very specific question.

Well, what was the people's verdict? Verse 14. Well, in fact, it's much better informed than most people today because these people had been confronted with the evidence about Jesus.

Most people today in our society never have. They've never bothered to look. Or else they have tried to look and the church has failed to show them the real Jesus.

But when you do examine the evidence, you cannot help but see that Jesus is special. And these people saw that. Look at how they replied verse 14. Well, he's John the Baptist.

He's Elijah. He's Jeremiah. All these great prophets of history. Monumental figures. But all of them, of course, were dead. Now, these people are not fools.

[12:58] They know that the dead don't rise. Don't think that these people were just ancient simpletons. The truth is, most of these folk would have spoken at least three languages and were probably much more culture than most of us.

They knew that the dead don't rise but the point is, they knew that no mere natural explanation would do to explain Jesus. The only way they can articulate it is that he's supernatural.

Must be like one of these great ones having come back from the dead. But notice verse 15. Jesus won't stop at generalities. He's not satisfied with the general feeling.

So he says, what about you? Who do you say that I am? He puts them all on the spot. The you there is plural. It's exam time. They've seen it all. They've heard it all.

Far more than all the crowds. Now though, it's a moment of truth. Well, the scene isn't generally too encouraging. Look back at verses 9 and 11. They're pretty slow in the uptake generally, these disciples.

[14:06] Do you still not perceive? How is it you still don't understand? It's more the remedial class than the top set. And yet, look at verse 16.

Peter answers on behalf of them all and he gets it 100% first time. You are the Christ. The son of the living God.

We get it. Controlling the winds in the waves. Banishing disease and demons and even death itself. Things only God can do.

We've seen it. And we've heard on your lips, Jesus, things that only God can say. Demanding our worship. Forgiving sins.

Yes, you are the Messiah. You are the son of the living God. You are the king of heaven. And you see, Jesus says immediately, yes, blessed are you for seeing this.

[15:12] Blessed is the mark of divine approval, isn't it? Remember the Beatitudes. It's God himself who has revealed this to you, says Jesus. Who's blessed you with his true sight.

Of course, not without evidence. Faith like this is not a leap into the dark. It's been made plain. It's been made obvious to them in everything that Jesus has said and done.

But still, finding God in Christ is always really a case of being found by God through Christ. It's an act of divine eye-opening. It's a special revelation from God himself.

In fact, the account in Mark's Gospel, chapter 8, illustrates that so graphically, doesn't it? With the miracle of the blind man having his eyes open, which Mark juxtaposes to this statement. And that's important, isn't it, for us to always remember.

We present the evidence about Jesus, the evidence written, preserved for us in Scripture. We reason, we persuade, we explain, we exhort. But we know that only God in heaven can open eyes that are blinded by sin, can release people who are held in the power of the devil.

[16:26] We can't bring the dead to life, can we? Only, verse 17, only the power of the Father in heaven. So we must do our work of sharing the evidence about Christ, but we must always be crying out to God, to open eyes, to open hearts.

But you see, verse 18, as soon as Peter confesses Jesus' true identity, Jesus immediately goes on to affirm his unique authority and what it is he is doing on this earth.

He's building his church. That's his mission. Nothing new about this word, the church, God's church, his ecclesia, his household.

It's the word that Jesus used in chapter 15, verse 24, the household of Israel, the church of Israel. It's a word used all through the Old Testament, the Greek Old Testament, about the assembly of God's people.

But what is astonishing here, do you see, is that Jesus calls it his church, his household, his family. He himself is the head of God's household.

[17:39] That's a staggering claim. But once again, we've got here two of the great themes of Matthew's gospel so clearly. That the story of Christ's kingdom is a story of continuity, with the whole story of the Old Testament.

It's not new. It's about God's household, God's people, God's Israel. And yet, it's not just a continuing story, it's the climax of that story.

All God's household is being redefined for the long-promised fulfillment, with Jesus, the Son of God, at the center, and as its head.

The whole old order of history, the days of the prophets there, verse 14, that's passing away. John the Baptist was the last of the prophets. Remember back in chapter 11, Jesus said, from the days of John, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing in the person of Jesus.

He and he alone is the climax. He is the architect, the builder, of the true and the everlasting household of God. And he alone, therefore, is the unique authority who gathers the true people of God around himself, around his personal call.

[19:02] Jesus is the unique authority in God's household. Now that he has come, faith in him, obedience to him, is the door of the kingdom of heaven.

There is no other door. That's the point. It is an exclusive message. No way around that. And so obviously, then, it is a divisive message.

Because if you refuse God and Christ's kingdom, if you reject his household, then there must be a parting of the ways.

That's what we've seen, isn't it, all through these chapters, increasing division. The natural house, of Israel, rejecting the head of the house, Jesus, and therefore Jesus, having to reject them.

Look back to verse four for that phrase that we've seen again and again. So Jesus left them and departed. Friends, don't ever think that you can reject Jesus Christ, the king of heaven, with impunity.

[20:17] to reject him is, to reject the authority of highest heaven. But others, of course, do trust him. Many outsiders, many Gentiles, many sinners, the most unlikely material, and yes, out of these, Jesus will build his church, his household.

He promises in verse 18, the gates of hell shall not prevail against that. Yes, many organized manifestations of the church may be overthrown and destroyed.

They have been throughout history. We're seeing that decay all around us today and no doubt it will become far worse, certainly in our western world. But Jesus' true church will never ever fail.

It will never die out. Whatever scorn, the cynics in our society might heap on it. No power of hell shall overcome it, or those who are in it.

Because its safety and its security doesn't depend on those inside, but on the power and the authority of the architect and builder himself. He was his keeper and he is the king of the universe.

[21:31] He's the king of heaven. Isn't that a comfort to us? In a world of swirling anxiety and fear, there is total and ultimate safety and security in the household of Jesus Christ, now and forever and ever.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. A true believer in Christ can never fear COVID, nor fear cancer, which is far more likely to end your earthly life than COVID is.

fear. Nor need we despair even at our own corruption, at the sin and the failures within us that so often floor us, make us despair, make us feel as if the powers of hell are winning in our life.

No, he whose word cannot be broken, we sang, formed you for his own abode. On the rock of ages, founded, who can shake your sure repose?

Nothing can, not even the gates of hell, says Jesus. With salvation's walls surrounded, you may smile at all your foes, foes without and foes within.

[22 : 48] Nothing will ever destroy the church of Jesus Christ, and nothing will ever destroy you if you're part of his true church, if you take refuge on this rock and within his walls.

because the Christ, the Lord Jesus, the King of Heaven is its keeper. He's the unique architect, the builder of his church, and he will protect his church with all the authority of Heaven itself.

That's the first thing we must grasp, Christ's heavenly authority. But of course, his heavenly kingdom, you see, has begun here on earth, with his coming.

And he manifests that kingdom authority on earth now through the community of his kingdom, that is, through his church. And these verses, therefore, also show us very clearly a second thing, and that is that the earthly authority of Christ's unique apostolic bulwark has been given to us.

Jesus has given his church the keys of heaven through the unique apostolic bulwark of the church. And through their authoritative gospel alone.

[24 : 06] My dictionary defines bulwark as a solid wall for defense, a bastion, a fortress, a stronghold, a rampart. Remember the Lord's prayer, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as in heaven.

The church is to be the arena on earth where heaven's values, where heaven's words, where heaven's authority, is found. But how is that going to come about today?

Well, look at these verses, verse 18. Jesus is the architect and builder. He's the founder. He's the authority. But he is founding his church on earth on the apostolic witnesses that he has chosen, Peter and the twelve.

That's vitally important, isn't it? Back in chapter 10, Jesus shared his earthly mission with these twelve. And so it's, verse 18, you see, it's on this rock, on the foundation of the apostles and their unique delegated authority from Jesus.

It's on that foundation that his church shall be built. And there's been a lot of confusion about this phrase, on this rock.

[25 : 24] The church of Rome lays its whole claim to the papacy on this verse. But not even Sherlock Holmes could find that sort of idea present in these verses, I'm afraid, as Peter as the first pope.

First of all, the text itself here says nothing about Peter's primary authority, does it? Peter's answering here as the spokesman for the twelve. Jesus puts the question to them all in verse 15. It's plural. In verse 20, he addresses them all. It's plural. plural. And these words about the keys and about the binding and the loosing that it signifies, you find them again in chapter 18, verse 18, clearly addressed to all the twelve.

And if Peter was being singled out here as the primus among them all, then the question that the disciples all asked to Jesus in chapter 18, verse 1, when they say, who is the greatest in the kingdom, that wouldn't make any sense, would it?

So the text gives no evidence of Peter being appointed as special. And nor does history give any evidence of Peter being the leader of the church in Rome, the first bishop of the church of Rome.

[26 : 34] In fact, the New Testament shows us quite the opposite. Quite apart from being an infallible authority, Peter himself is rebuked very firmly, isn't he, in Galatians chapter 2 by the apostle Paul for being in the wrong.

And look at verse 23 here, Jesus rebukes Peter very strongly. What does he call him? A servant of Satan. But Jesus does not call Peter the vicar of Christ on earth, he calls him the antichrist in this verse.

So it would be quite clear that there's no foundation here at all for anything like the papacy. But Jesus does refer to Peter himself here as the rock.

It's a play on words. Petra is the feminine noun, meaning rock. Petros, the masculine version, the name Peter. And Jesus is answering Peter, is representing the twelve as a whole, as a body, and crucially he's answering him and his articulation of this apostolic confession of Jesus.

It is Peter as confessor of the true Christ who is the rock. Not Peter the man by nature, he's just the feeble sinner, as verse 23 makes so clear.

[27 : 49] Peter was the natural spokesman, he was the leader of the band in a way, and he's representing them all. Verse 19 clarifies things for us where Jesus says he'll give the apostles the keys.

Yes, he's addressing Peter as the representative, but again, as I've said in verse 18, we get the same sort of thing to all of them. But what does this mean? What does it mean, the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

Well, keys open doors, don't they? They open gates. And that will be the unique role of the apostles of Jesus, to open the door of the kingdom of heaven to the world through their apostolic witness. They are going to be the opposite of the scribes and the Pharisees, the national teachers of Israel. What did they do? Matthew chapter 23 verse 13, they shut up the kingdom of heaven's doors in people's faces.

Luke 11 verse 52, they take away the key of knowledge of God. But Christ's apostles will open the doors of the kingdom to the world.

[28 : 52] And in fact, Peter himself did have a key role in every stage of the unfolding mission of the church in Acts as the gospel went out from Jerusalem, do you remember the day of Pentecost, to Samaria?

Peter was there at the Samaritan Pentecost in chapter 8 of Acts, and to the Gentiles. Peter was there with Cornelius, the Gentile, in Acts chapter 10, when the gospel came to them.

And the same keys, you see, of the unchanging apostolic gospel still are what open the doors of everlasting life, wherever that gospel is proclaimed today, all over the world.

That is heaven's authority wielded on earth to open the way to heaven. Heaven's gate is opened wide by the keys of the son.

They expect their authority to be heeded. If you look at the footnote, you'll see that the tenses there in verse 19 are future perfect. It's hard to articulate in English.

[30 : 27] But it means that whatever they permit or prohibit will be what has been prohibited or permitted in heaven. In other words, as Jesus promised his apostles back in John 16 verse 13, he will give them authoritative revelation, leading them into all truth once and for all for the church.

So that what they will order and what they will command and instruct in the church for all time will be what they are passing on of the authoritative ways of heaven. And that's where all authority for the church on earth has been placed by Christ himself forever in the apostolic teaching of the New Testament.

The apostolic succession isn't something that's passed on by the hands of popes or bishops or presbyters. No, it's passed on through faithfulness to the apostolic teaching and writings in the scripture.

Peter himself was perfectly clear on that. He had absolutely no illusions that he was some sort of infallible cornerstone of the church. Just have to read his letters in the New Testament. In 1 Peter 2, he talks about Christ as the chief cornerstone of the church.

But of course, yes, he's equally clear that the apostles do speak and write with the full authority of Jesus Christ. So after his death and the other apostles' death, he tells the church, you're to remember the commandment of our Lord and Savior through your apostles, 2 Peter 3, verse 2, because they speak for him with all the authority of the King of heaven.

[32 : 06] The only true authority over Christ's church here on earth. So we need to remember that, don't we, when we find ourselves perhaps struggling with some of the things the New Testament writes to us, the apostles say, some things we find difficult perhaps, when they command certain things about sexual conduct, or when they command certain things about the complementary role of men or women in the church, for example, or other things that are increasingly at odds with our contemporary culture.

The apostolic witness is Christ's appointed unique bulwark for the church. It's solid wall of defense against all error and all straying.

there's only one true authority over Christ's church here on earth. That of Christ, the church's architect and builder, and the unique apostolic bulwark that we have through their apostolic witness to him.

But there's more to this passage than just this about the authority in the church. Look at verse 20. Don't you find that strange? Wouldn't you think that after Peter's confession in verse 16, Jesus would say, great, yes, you've got it at last, now go and tell the world.

But he says the opposite. He says, tell no one. Why on earth would he say that? Well, because they haven't yet got it all, have they?

[33 : 41] There's a vital second lesson that they have to learn, without which you cannot safely preach Christ and his kingdom. You need to understand not only where the only authority is for the church, but you need to understand also the only true power in Christ's church, which is the transforming power of the Son of Man on the cross.

And that's what verses 21 to 28 are all about. Jesus and his church has power on earth, but it's not the power of the earth. Jesus has transcendent authority as the King of Heaven, as the Son of God in glory, but his transforming power to save is as the servant of the world, as the Son of Man on the cross.

And the disciples have to learn that the church on earth is only born through the power of a crucified Savior, and it will only grow and be nurtured through the power of crucified people who are in his image.

The only true power of the church of Jesus Christ on earth lies in the word of the cross and in the way of the cross. So from verse 21 on, you can see Jesus drums that into his followers, beginning here, again and again.

Because of who he is, not despite who he is, he must go, he says, and he must suffer, and he must be killed and rise again. Because that is the power of God at work on this earth, building his church.

[35 : 31] A Christ, a Messiah without the cross, without a death to atone for sins, must not be proclaimed. tell no one that, says Jesus.

Tell only the full truth, only this truth, this terrible truth, or else, or else, look at verse 23, what he says to Peter, your gospel is not just deficient, it's demonic.

Get behind me, Satan, he says. That's what Jesus says to that kind of gospel. It's not progressive and liberal, that kind of gospel. It's pernicious, it's lethal, that kind of gospel.

A message about Jesus that doesn't carry at its very center his death for sins. It might sound like the gospel, it might look like the gospel, but no, it's not the gospel at all. You might proclaim Jesus as an example, as a friend, as a teacher, as a leader, even as some kind of kingdom builder.

But it is by his cross alone that he's a savior for sins. And if he is not a savior for sins and from the wrath of God, then he's no savior at all, and this is no gospel at all.

[36 : 48] Matthew's gospel proclaims that right at the very beginning, doesn't it? From the angel to Joseph, he will save his people from their sins. And J.C.

Ryle says, if we're wrong here, we're ruined forever. And if you won't preach that, says Jesus, don't preach at all. Anything else is a lie from Satan himself.

No matter who says it, even if it's Peter himself as it was here. Or anybody else today, however popular, however influential they might be in the professing church.

And no matter what their motive might be. Peter here was very sincere, wasn't he? He was very well meaning when he remonstrated with Jesus.

No, no, not the cross. But Jesus is absolutely clear. It's demonic, even from the best of motives. Because it was a man-made version of the gospel.

[37 : 51] Verse 23, do you see the things of man? And all such so-called gospels, man-made versions of the gospel, are demonic because they leave people in their sins.

They leave people under judgment. They leave people under the wrath of God. They leave people in bondage to Satan. No cross means no mercy, no forgiveness. It leaves only the cup of wrath and judgment and hell and nothing could be more devilish than to obscure the only way of salvation from that terrible future.

Mercifully, of course, the apostles were made absolutely clear, weren't they, in Jesus teaching after his resurrection. So Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1, we preach Christ crucified.

Yes, it's foolishness to sophisticated Greeks. Yes, it's scandalous to Jews, just as it would be to Muslims today, to speak of God on a cross.

But, says Paul, to those who are being saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. The only true power in Christ's church is the transforming power of a crucified Savior.

[39 : 20] And the message of the gospel of the cross where the Son of Man yielded his life and atonement for sin and opened the life gate that all may go in.

All who receive this power of God for salvation through the apostolic gospel that opens that door of heaven. And Jesus also shows us here that if Messiahship without a cross is demonic, then so also

is the idea of discipleship without a cross.

Look at verse 24. That too is a message that has to be completely exposed. Before you proclaim me as Savior, you must learn what you're calling people to as my disciples to take up their cross and follow me.

You can't become a Christian without your own crucifixion. You can't find the power of eternal life with Jesus without losing life in this world.

You see, it's the very opposite of this world's idea of power. It flies in the face, doesn't it, of all the things of man, of all human religion and philosophy.

[40 : 36] In this world, the way on and up is on and up. Materially, to a better job, to better houses, to better cars, to a better pension and so on.

Or intellectually, to better education, better experience, better learning and so on. Or an influence in whatever way, in society, in politics, in celebrity. The way up is up.

But with Jesus, the way up is down. The way of life is the way of death. The way of power is the way of the cross.

Which looks to all the world like the very antithesis of power. It's the way outwardly of facing scorn and derision and flogging and spitting with Jesus figuratively and perhaps even literally.

as you turn your back on all of this world's values for which the world will hate you. Make no mistake.

[41 : 43] And inwardly, killing pride and ambition. Admitting that everything that you built your life on previously was wrong, was evil, was satanic.

As you turn to Jesus alone and you walk with him and his way, the way of the cross. But that is the call of true discipleship says Jesus.

And unless you're willing to preach that, unless you are willing to preach a call to real repentance, to the loss and the way of earthly loss for everything in order to have heaven's gain, unless you preach that, then do not preach at all.

Tell no one. But that is no gospel at all. No cross, no Christ for Jesus. And no cross, no crown for any disciple anywhere.

Look at verses 25 and 26. You cannot have the rewards of this world's ways and find the true reward of the kingdom of heaven. For whoever would save his life will lose it eternally.

[42 : 52] But whoever loses his life for my sake in this world's terms will find it. Because the transforming power of heaven at work in this world is the power of crucifixion, of death, of sacrifice.

crucifixion, of death. So it was for Jesus who brought his church to birth through his cross. And so it is for everyone who would come after him.

It's going to be hard in this world to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 16, in this world you will have tribulation.

Make no mistake. But of course he went on to say but take heart for I have overcome this world. Look at verse 27 here.

It's a wonderful promise. For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of the Father. And then he will repay each person according to what he's done.

[44 : 03] And if what you have done in this world is to take up your cross to follow Jesus then friends his promise is that there will be joy unspeakable for you on that day.

Many of those hearing Jesus then would soon see the power of the kingdom of heaven unleashed and its rule unleashed through the church of the ascended Christ as Jesus ascended to glory to his heavenly throne.

That's what verse 28 refers to here. He's quoting from Daniel chapter 7 about the Son of Man's enthronement. This isn't about his second coming and they saw the effect of Jesus enthronement. They saw that kingdom power at work. They shared in its advance by the authority of the apostles gospel and by the power of crucified lives which were abandoned to the cause of Christ.

That's what we're seeing in Sunday evenings in the book of Acts. And his church is still advancing exactly that same way today all over this world the same way because there's no other way for the church of Jesus Christ to grow save under the only true authority that of the king of heaven himself and his commandment to his church through his apostles and in the only transforming power which is the power of a crucified savior leading leading crucified people in his train.

[45 : 45] So friends the question for us is very very simple if we want our church to be part of that unstoppable kingdom growth will we here in the throne will we together submit to his word alone

and will we serve in his way alone amen let's pray together oh god the strength of all that put their trust in thee mercifully accept our prayer and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee grant us the help of thy grace that in the keeping of thy commandments we may please thee both in will and in deed through Jesus

Christ our Lord amen He beating him