

9.15 St Barnabas
11.00 St Marys

The BIG Story 5

17/9/11

Pray

So today in **the Big story** we start the new testament
Our theme is the kingdom of God
And our passage begins at Matthew 16.13 which you will find on page 983
Of the church bibles

and I should like to begin by asking **Who do you say Jesus is?**
Which is pretty much what Jesus asks in *Matthew 16.13-17*

Read It

And Peters answer to the question is
You are the Christ the son of the living God
The Greek word *Christ* is the same as the Hebrew word *messiah*
And means literally the anointed one

Now **the popular expectation** of the Jews at the time of Jesus
Was that the messiah would come
to free them from the oppression of the Roman occupying army
And so when Peter said you are the Christ
He was probably expecting that Jesus would free them from the Romans

BUT the expectations of the majority of people was set far too low
God did not only want freedom for the jews, he wanted freedom for all people
And he did not only want freedom from the Romans
He wanted us all to be free from our addiction to sin

So Peter was right in his use of language
But had miles too low an expectation of how powerful God is
And what he might like to do through Jesus

And something similar probably applies to the other title Peter uses for Jesus
When he says ***you are the Christ the son of the living God***

The King was understood by the Jews as being the adopted son of God
Which is what Psalm 2.7 says – where we read
Psa 2:7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:
He said to me, You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

And Peter seems somehow to have made the link
The messiah, like the king is the anointed one
And so the messiah like the king is the son of God
And amazing intuition which Jesus strongly applauds

And yet we know that Jesus is the son of God in a much greater sense
Because as the creed says
Jesus is God of God light of light very God of very God begotten not created

There is a whole extra layer of meaning to what peter said
Which at the time he was probably not aware of
But we now know that Jesus is indeed **the second person of the trinity**
Quite simply **He is God**

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And I guess the same applies to us
We are here in church today because we believe that Jesus is God
But I guess for many of us like Peter **our God is still too small**

I think it was Andrew Murray who said **The power of our prayers depends almost entirely upon our conception of God**

So How big is your God?

I would like to encourage you to pray big prayers
For things like the schools to do well
For full employment in our area
And for the church to grow as more and more people recognise Jesus as God

The second point I would like to make is **Jesus Created the church**

In verse 18 we read

Mat 16:18 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.

Jesus created the Church

It may well be popular to be critical of those in authority

And it may well be popular to be critical of

the long standing institutions of our society

But people are being critical of the church

We could do a lot worse than to remind that **the church was Jesus idea**

From very soon after Jesus was baptised he chose 12 to be with him

And so that he might send them out to preach and to heal

Then he gave them an example by preaching and healing

And then he sent them out to continue the work that he had begun

Jesus created the church

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And I believe that **the church is the hope for the world**

And so verse 19 continues

Mat 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

For Jesus to say that **we have been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven**

Might at first sight seem amazing

But if you think about it – it is completely true

You and I - the church here in this place

Have it in our hands to pass on the good news of the kingdom

And so to make it possible for others to join us in that kingdom

Or we have the option of keeping the good news to ourselves

And so denying others access to the kingdom of heaven

So it is up to you and me

We have the keys to the kingdom of heaven

And as we serve others in TOT and Urban Saints, JIFFY and Spring

As we serve others in baptisms, weddings and funerals

In little lights, searchers and the youth home group

So we pass on the good news of the kingdom

And if there is anyone who is not serving the community

And who would like to

then do please see me and we can find you a role too

So that each and every one of us can be passing on the good news

Jesus created the church and

The church is the hope of the world

Lets not keep that hope to ourselves

But rather lets pass it on to others

And thirdly

Let's deny ourselves take up our cross and follow him

So let's look at verse 21

Mat 16:21 *From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*

Up until this time the focus of gospel has been all about **“who is Jesus?”**

There has been teaching about the kingdom of God
and how to follow the example of Jesus lifestyle
and there have been loads of miracles
which make people ask “who is this Jesus?”

But from the moment that the 12 realise that Jesus is the Messiah

The focus of the synoptic gospels changes

And now the focus is to explain what **sort of messiah Jesus is going to be**

And the sort of messiah Jesus is going to be is **a suffering servant messiah**

Like the suffering servant described in Isaiah

And perhaps the best known passage is Isaiah 53

Here is a short quote from *Isaiah 53.4-7*

Isa 53:4-7 *Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. (5) But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. (6) We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

Peter expected Jesus to make a plan

Something like:- march to Jerusalem picking up supporters on the way

Take the temple by surprise and quickly declare Jesus to be king

Jesus is saying that he is going to go to Jerusalem

But that he will suffer and be killed

And then in verse 24 Jesus addresses himself to his disciples

Mat 16:24-26 *Then Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (25) For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. (26) What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?*

And in effect he is saying

What is going to happen to me is going to happen to you too

Or what applies to me applies to you too

Now many people don't like this part of the gospel

They want Jesus to be their saviour

Because they like the idea that they will go to heaven

But they don't really want to submit to Jesus as Lord of their lives

Because they like their comfortable self-satisfied lifestyle

The only trouble is that is not true Christianity

Because true Christianity includes

Denying ourselves, taking up our crosses and following his example

and so that means that those of us who are older

will sometimes have to make allowances for the children

and those who are parents of young children

will sometimes have to make allowances for the elderly

that is what it means to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus

it means that **we need to die to our own selfishness and love one another**

so it might be best to say nothing to anyone when we disagree with others

but we do need to make them our friends

To invite them to spend time with us

and to accept their invitations when they invite us to spend time with them

It means that **we need to die to our own selfishness and serve others**

It might be as simple as joining in with a work party one Saturday morning

Or it might be as simple as giving someone who doesn't drive a lift

For Jesus denying himself
Meant leaving heaven where everything was perfect to come down to earth
It meant being born in a dirty drafty stable
It meant fleeing for his life before he was two
It meant being betrayed by one of his friends
and abandoned by all of the others
it meant being tried by a kangaroo court in the middle of the night
and being publically executed

when we remember that Jesus has loved me that much
then the little sacrifices we have to make pale into insignificance
let's deny ourselves take up our cross and follow him