

Jesus' Church Growth Plan

By Todd Friel

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Bible Text: Matthew 16:13-18
Preached on: Sunday, April 9, 2017

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Ty Blackburn: He's written a number of very helpful books "Jesus Unmasked" and most recently "Reset for Parents." Many of those are available in our bookstore. He and his wife, Susan, have three children: daughters Emily and Haley, and a son, Jack. And we are blessed to have them as a part of our church family now having joined our church this last fall and Patti and I are honored to call them friends for a number of years now and Todd is a dear friend, loves the Lord, loves his word, and he's going to come and share with us a message I heard him preach at G3 a couple of months ago and I said, "Would you please preach that at Providence." So bless you, Brother, for coming and sharing God's word. Thank you.

Todd Friel: For those of you who were at G3, sorry you're going to have to hear this again. Ty, thank you very much not for the introduction but I want to thank Ty and I want to thank the other elders, Jack and John, Ted and Todd, for being mature, godly men to whom it is a joy to willfully submit. So thank you for that because, believe me, we've been in some churches where it wasn't so joyful and so I am grateful for all of you, profoundly. And thank you for letting me have this pulpit. If you ever wanted to see Ty get nervous, this would be the morning. This is like you handing the keys to your precious automobile to your 16-year-old who has a driver's permit with wet ink who wants to parallel park. I'll do my best to not make this a mess.

If you are a visitor here today, I'm sorry. Please do not judge the church based on this. I promise you, come back and worship with us next Easter and the best preacher in the church will be delivering the message. So just put your little scorecard away, how nice were the people, the parking facilities, and the preacher, just forget all of it. Come back next Sunday and hear that man. By the way, I do have to tell you this is really not what I anticipated. When Ty asked me to deliver a message that I delivered at the G3 conference, I speak for a living so that's what I do and like a lot, I talk, constantly talk. No wonder why you need water up here. Seriously. I want an IV plugged in because to stand in front of this accumulation of biblical knowledge is a daunting thing indeed, so standing at this revered pulpit, I am fully aware of the responsibility and I would invite you to join me in praying that God would guide our hearts through the worship of the proclamation of his word.

Let's pray to God.

Father, we come before you in the name of your Son asking you to do a work on every heart in this room, that we would all be attentive to your word, that we would all submit to your word, and that we would all hear your voice, follow you and obey. We cannot do this by ourselves and so we ask you for the power of your Holy Spirit to do that work in us. Amen.

Please open your Bibles, if you would, to Matthew 16. We're going to try to tackle three, six, we'll see how far we get with Matthew 16. The title of this sermon is "Jesus' Church Growth Strategy." The elders will tell you, Ty will affirm, there are many church growth strategies these days. For instance, we're going to be talking about a passage of Scripture where Jesus identifies himself as the rock, the foundation. So if we were obeying some of the church growth strategies today, I can tell you what this sermon would have been like. I would be showing you movie sermon clips from Dwayne Johnson's latest movie. He's the rock. And then we would have Ted sing Simon and Garfunkel's "I am a rock," you see, because that would be cool and contemporary and hip and relevant and that would build the church. In our text, Jesus shatters all of those church growth strategies.

I went online to look up church growth strategies. Here are the top seven Google responses. 1. Strategic church growth tool. 2. Ten church growth strategies. 3. Ten small growth strategies that cost zero dollars, so it's a good deal. 4. Ten small church strategies in a big church world. 5. Fifteen strategies to increase the number of first-time church visitors. 6. Seven keys to church growth. Finally, number 7. Forty-four church growth principles that are real and work and Jesus says, "Reject these methods." He has a different church growth strategy and we are going to see that now in Matthew 16, starting in verse 13.

13 Now when Jesus came into the district 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; but 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 Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, 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 rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

In our text, we see three major points: we see the question; we see a confession; and we're going to see a declaration by Jesus Christ. The question, the confession and the declaration.

What was the question? "Who do men say that I am?" This is a bit of a Barna poll to see the climate of Israel at the time and they biffed it stunningly. It almost seems that they are pointing toward the idea of a reincarnation. I can perhaps understand Elijah because of the book of Malachi talking about an Elijah but Jeremiah returned? When Jesus entered into Jerusalem, do you recall what they were excited about? "This is the prophet." Many

people are prophets, Mohammed is labeled a prophet, but they did not give the right confession that, "He is the Christ, the Son of the living God." That is the only correct answer to this question and people miss it constantly today. The Jews continue to think, in fact, Jewish people today, you can convert to any religion if you want to if you're Jewish but not Christianity. Roman Catholicism, Jesus is a co-redemptrix with his mother, Mary. In Islam, he is a prophet. In Buddhism, he's an enlightened being. So Jesus asks them the single most important question on the planet, "Who do you say that I am?" That is the biggest question any human being will ever answer because as we're going to see, that is the question that has been asked from the beginning.

"Who do you say that I am?" And for a change Peter actually nails it; he actually stepped up to the plate and he got it right and there's a reason for it. He said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter answered rightly the question of the ages. What was the question? Who is the Messiah? Who is this promised one that the Old Testament was relentlessly pointing to? If you recall when Adam and Eve, our federal heads, sinned, God gave the Gospel rather clearly immediately in Genesis 3 when he said, "There is going to be one who will crush the head of the serpent but he will bruise his heel."

Who is it? Who is this rescuer? That was the big question. With Abraham it was the big question. If you recall, Abraham was involved not by himself, God actually instituted in Abraham a covenant with three promises: a land, a nation, and a seed. The land, Israel. The nation, the Jewish people. And the seed, who is the seed? Who is the prophet greater than Moses who will actually have the power to bring us into the Promised Land when Moses could not? The greatest prophet couldn't bring them into the Promised Land. Who is the one greater than Moses? Who is this King who is greater than David who will sit on the throne forever? Who is this one described in Isaiah 53 who was a lamb led to the slaughter, beaten so that you couldn't even tell that he was a human being, and we thought it was for his own sins but it was for the sins of the people, who is this seed?

Who is this Messiah? And Peter nails it and shuts the book and ends it. Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the answer, the fulfillment of everything that the Old Testament points toward and Jesus, therefore, pleaded, pleaded with the Jewish people to understand him rightly. Do you remember the great clashes that would take place in the marketplace, particularly John chapter 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, were all about understanding Jesus rightly. It is not enough to think that Jesus is a prophet. That will do you no good. It is not enough to think that he's an enlightened being. You must understand that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, in other words, he is God Incarnate, Immanuel, God with us, God in the flesh. Get it right or perish.

That was the clash. Christology is important. While the world and the church screams, "Just chill. Lighten up on the theology." Jesus rebukes that and says, "No, do not lighten up on the theology. Don't go soft on this because if you don't have the Son you don't have the Father." Then when you read 1 John 2, you can also read 2 John verse 7, anybody who goes beyond the teaching of Christ is accursed. You are not a Christian if you do not understand Christ rightly. Christology is important and the early church understood this. If you recall, there was a little debate about Christology and Trinitarian theology in the

fourth century and we came up with a document called the Athanasian Creed and they make it very clear if you do not understand the Trinity correctly, you're out. You're anathema. Then it goes on to make point after point, if you don't have correct Christology, you are damned. Then when we scoot ahead to the fifth century, we have another council, the Chalcedonian Council, and there was a crystallization, a clear understanding of who Jesus is because we must nail this. The implications are eternal.

Let me take you back in time and share with you, it's one sentence, it's a run on, but this is the creed that our forefathers wrote down because they recognized the importance of answering the question rightly, "Who do you say that I am?" Listen now to a 1,600-1,700-year-old creed that people died for. "We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God," they weren't stressing that she was divine but that Jesus was fully human, born of a woman, the mother of God, the theotokos, "according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten," not birthed, he did not come from a sexual relationship between the Father and Mary as Mormonism teaches, "to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us."

That's a lot. Is theology important? They thought so and so did Jesus. Why is this so crucial is we have to have, I know this math confounds some, we must have a 100% man and a 100% God. We have to otherwise we are in big trouble. You see, if we don't have a fully human Jesus like Apollinarius taught, that he was two thirds of a human, if we don't have a full human representative, we don't have anybody standing in our place. We don't have an actual representative and if we don't have the sacrifice of God himself, we cannot appease the wrath of God himself. Jesus had to be fully God, fully man. The two natures didn't mix and mingle. They didn't get confused. When Jesus walked the earth, he only revealed that to which the Father told him to speak. He wasn't acting as a demigod. He wasn't a Superman. He was the obedient one by the power of the Holy Spirit who submitted to the Father and as he was learning, as Jesus the fully man, he was upholding the universe by the word of his power. While he was having his diaper changed, Jesus was keeping the universe aligned. He is fully God and fully man, not created in Genesis 1. The eternally existent, preeminent, firstborn, not born like he was birthed from the Father as God. He is the preeminent one, the first one. That's who the Messiah is.

Now, what was the mission and the message of this Christ? What did he teach? It is not what the Jews were expecting on Palm Sunday. They were looking for a deliverer from Rome. Jesus is a much grander Savior. Look, I know, and it depends on who you are and what your political persuasion is today, we've had some crummy governments, have we not? We've had some bad rulers. Jesus says, "I'm not interested in that." Jesus is not interested in reigning in capitals, we've got a Messiah who desires to reign in hearts. God doesn't want to move the political pieces around because he can do that with a mere thought, he wants to reign and rule in rebellious individuals.

So what was the mission and the message of this Christ? Very simple: to save sinners for God's glory. And if you're here today and you're younger, I would encourage you to grasp this. If you wanted to know the reason for the existence of the universe, this is it. This is what the planet is about. This is why the world spins: so that God can receive glory by saving rebellious, wretched sinners like us. And that's what the Bible points toward. This is it and if you read through Ephesians, not just chapter 2, verse 7, but read Ephesians chapter 1, chapter 2, and chapter 3, the mystery has been revealed so that what? So that the Father could receive glory for sending his Son to die for sinners so that at the culmination of time, 1 Corinthians 15, God the Father can assemble this elect group called "the church," present them as a gift to the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus stunningly takes the gift, returns it to the Father and says, "No, Father, this is for you that you might be all in all." That's the culmination of human history, God gathering us to present to the Son who presents it back to the Father so that he can be seen for the glorious God he is. If you're young and you are confused about life, this is the key. If you get this straight, everything else is window dressing. "What car do I buy? What college do I attend? Who should I marry?" All of that becomes quite easy. Your role in the universe is to get saved. That's it. Biff it on that and you can become rich and famous but it will end in dust.

This is what God wants to do, save sinners, and how does he do that? It's foolishness to men. For those who seek a sign, for those who seek wisdom, God confounds it all and he preaches a message that is absolutely staggering. The king should crush the servants. The king should squash the rebellion. That's not what our King does. He gets off of his throne and he comes to live among the rebels and die for the rebels and take their place. That's our King. That's why he gets glorified. That is why the world exists, to proclaim this message pointing toward one event and it happened on Calvary where the cross of Jesus held God in flesh.

Have you been there recently? Have you visited the cross lately? May I invite us all to go there for a moment. We're a week away from the cross. Let's use our senses to remember what happened there. Listen, listen to the sound of the fists and the blows. If you ever watch a TV show or a movie, how does it sound when somebody gets hit? It's very dramatic. That's not how it really sounds when somebody's fist connects with somebody's head. It's a dull sickening thud of a sound. And Jesus was crushed by his creation as the Prince of heaven took the blows that we deserved. Do you hear the blows landing? Can you hear the cat o' nine tails? This wasn't just a whip like you saw on "Roots." Now, that was comparatively easy to what Jesus endured. A cat o' nine tails, leather straps and the

sadistic Romans would regularly put nails and broken pottery woven into the leather so that when you got whipped, it would tear through the skin regularly, it would tear through the muscles and the organs would fall out. Can you hear the sound of the cat o' nine tails? Can you hear the crack of the staff that is repeatedly applied to the skull of the Lamb of God? Can you feel the spit that splatters the diamond of heaven? Turn your eyes away as God is stripped naked, taking on our shame, and mocked by the very creatures he created to be his image bearers. Feel the tender area of your wrist as nails were driven through to hold him up in the air as he gasped for breath. Listen to him breathing because they were short breaths because that's what happens when you are held up on a cross, your weight gets pulled down and your rib cage gets stretched and you just can't breathe. Listen to him perish. Listen to him die. Listen to what your Savior did so that you could be saved, so that the wrath of God could be poured out on him on behalf of the ones who killed him.

That's the message of the cross and there are two types of people here today who are going to reject that message. Let's see if you're in one of these two groups. If you are here today and you reject this because you think it's a pretty nifty story, Jesus was a good teacher, wrong answer. He's the Christ, the Son of the living God and he came to die for sinners but that's your stumbling block. This whole idea that you're a sinner and you can't do it but Jesus must, that's what causes you to stub your toe. "Whoa, whoa, whoa, I've got this." That's what every world religion is about, by the way, "We got this. We can do this. We can do enough works. We can make God happy by our own efforts so that we can pat ourselves on the back." And you're here thinking, "I just don't need this Jesus."

My friend, may I step to the front of the line and show you how we all need Jesus? I'll start. This morning I woke up knowing full well that I'm going to preach this morning. I started to pray to God before my head got off the pillow and I fell asleep while talking to God. I had a cup of coffee this morning exactly the way I like it, a little cinnamon, a little Italian creme, didn't even stop for a second to thank my Maker who provided it. Had some yogurt, you know, the stuff that's got the gooey stuff on the bottom. You think it's good for you but it's all gooey and sweet on the bottom. I mixed it up. I devoured it really quick because I was in a hurry. Never stopped to thank my Maker. I didn't thank him for the air that I was breathing, for the clothes that I am wearing, for the ability to walk up here, to drive here with an automobile, to have a roof over my head. My sin of presumption is staggering.

May I ask you, friend, how grateful have you been for everything that God, whether you acknowledge him or not, has provided for you? Our sin of presumption has got to be a stench in the nostrils of a benevolent God who causes the rain to fall on the evil and the good. But wait, he goes deeper than that. Will he who made the eye not also see? Will he who made the ear not also hear? My friend, if you think that you've been getting away with dirty deeds, your God has been watching you. Oh, he goes deeper than that. He who made the brain has full access to it and he's in there and he knows every thought that runs through our polluted brains. We need a Savior. We need a God-man. We need a Messiah. We need a rescuer. And if you're here today and you have never run to that Savior, you're

making the biggest mistake of your life because this is the biggest question of your life. Let today be the day of your salvation.

But there is a second group of people who reject this message of the Messiah and you might even be a Christian and yet suffer from this, or you maybe think you're a second-class Christian. But let's focus on the second group of people who will not come to this sympathetic high priest. You don't submit, you don't surrender because you don't think there is any point. "God would not forgive me. God couldn't have mercy on me. Maybe on those other people, they wash up pretty good, but not me. I've got a past. I've got a history. I have done things. I don't have a skeleton in the closet, it is a boneyard and I have done despicable things." My friend, do not think that you are going to be the first person in human history to out-sin God's grace. When Jesus was punished for sins, he was punished for all of our sins. Come, ye sinners, come to the Savior who will not cast you out. He saves to the uttermost.

Maybe you're adopted and you have always kind of felt like you could not be loved. Your heavenly Father loves you no less, no more, he loves you as much as he loves his Son when you are in Christ. Come to Jesus, ye sinner, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore. Jesus ready stands to save you, full of pity, love and power. Come to this Jesus. You're not too dirty for Jesus. His blood will cleanse even you. Did you have an abortion? And you think, "Not that. Not that. If these people in this congregation even knew that I did that, I would be ashamed. There is no way that God can forgive that sin." Yes, he can and, yes, he does, and, yes, he will forgive that sin. Maybe you have homosexual desires. It's probable in a body this size, and you think, "Oh, my parents, they would die. I would die. This would be too shameful of a thing." Your Savior knows about your desires and he says, "Come, you sinner, weak and wounded, sick and sore." He is ready to forgive you, full of pity, love and power. Do not neglect so great a salvation because you think that you're too bad. The badder you are, the more glory he gets for being an amazing Savior.

Come to Jesus because Jesus loves to flip the line around, you know. The world esteems the rich and the famous, Jesus loves the poor; he loves the infirm; he loves the diseased; he loves the blind; he loves those who gorge themselves with food; he loves those who starve themselves from food. God takes the line that culture says is important and he turns it around and says, "That's what I love. That's what I cherish." Do not stay away from so great a Savior. He saves alcoholics. He saves drug dealers, crackheads. He saves Wall Street fat cats. Jesus saves homosexuals. Jesus saves women who have taken the lives of their babies. Jesus saves transvestites. Jesus saves rapists. Jesus saves child abusers. Why? He is that good. Come, you sinner, to this amazing Savior and let today be a day of joy for you and you will remember this Palm Sunday forever. Don't stay away from this Jesus who loves you, died for you and proved it, and wants to save you this day. Even now many are pressing into the kingdom. Do not be cast into outer darkness. Run to the light of the world. That is the message of Christ the Messiah.

But now we have a declaration, "And Jesus said to him," verse 17 of chapter 16 of Matthew, "And Jesus said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and

blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Well then, that seems to end the debate how do people get saved. It sure would appear that God must save, God must reveal this truth that his Son is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Please notice what did not reveal this to Peter. This is important when we consider our evangelistic methods. Logic did not reveal this to Peter. Why? Well, you can't reason with somebody who is illogical. He suffers the same way we do from the effects of the fall. You can't think this through. When we see these kids, I don't like it, it's pejorative the way that we talk about the millennials, "They're snowflakes." Look, they've just been taught this. That's their worldview and their indoctrination and they are not thinking right, just like the rest of us. So to try to reason with them so they'll have better reason is illogical because they can't do it. We can't reason people into the kingdom.

Furthermore, apologetics aren't going to get the job done. They have their place in our Christian testimony. We can talk about textual criticism, we can talk about archaeological evidence, we can talk about all of it. We can talk about all of the wonderful things that support our message but apologetics have never gotten anybody saved. God saves, not our apologetics. Study it, have it in your quiver but know full well that that will never hit the bull's-eye. God must do that work.

Please note what did not reveal this to Peter, it wasn't a great sound and light show like many churches try with their modern methods of being a seeker sensitive church. "Bring in as much of the world as possible then the world will like us." Well, that's not what's going to save anybody. It might be entertaining but it has no power. The proclamation of the word is what God works with as he reveals that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is building his church, not us.

The declaration continues, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Who can overcome this church that he is building? Nobody. He uses the most extreme comparison he could, the gates of death. Not hell, per se, but death. "Death can't overcome what I am building." If you are fretting because, "Yikes! If Donald Trump loses in a few years and somebody really bad gets in, our religious freedoms could be lost!" Well, I think that's probable. They are not going to overcome the church. They are not going to tear down the church. It doesn't matter who the ruler is. Pol Pot and Stalin could not tear down the church. Adolf Hitler could not tear down the church. Nothing is going to tear down this church. Oprah can't tear it down. Joel Osteen can't tear it down. If you're worried about anything, don't worry.

This is what God is doing, he is building his church and this is the rock on which we must stand. We're living in a postmodern world where there is no truth, there are no values, the world is floundering. This is the rock. It's the church. I'm going to sneak in a plug, Ty. Are you a member of this church? Have you been dillydallying? Might I encourage you to pick up the pace? This is the safe place for you. This is the good place for you. This is the rock. This is the pillar of the truth and you've got elders here who are willing to look

over your souls to tend to you and take care of you. Don't delay. This is what Jesus is building.

But there is some controversy in our text. Who is building the church? There is a large religious organization that would say Peter is building the church based on our text which, by the way, if you ever visit the Vatican which is its own nation with a wall all the way around it, that was free, when you visit there in the Sistine Chapel, it will say this verse, "On Peter I will build my church." Really? Is that what Jesus is saying in our text?

I think we are on point 3 and I've come up with 25 reasons why Peter is not the church. Now, here's what I thought about doing for this: I thought, I'll just try to sneak in as many as possible. Maybe do it progressively or chronologically or through impact. "Oh, it just keeps getting better. Oh, yeah, clearly Peter..." I thought I'd do that but then I wouldn't beat Ty in having the most sub points ever. 25. 25 sub points. Let's go through these rather quickly, shall we?

"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Now, Jesus was not installing Peter. He was making a declaration about himself. Many of you know this, Peter is a little rock, masculine. Petra is a big boulder and it's in the feminine. "You are Peter," the masculine puny rock, "on this mountain of a confession, I'm going to build my church." He wasn't talking about Peter, it was simply a play on words.

But hold on, we can continue to prove it. If you move forward just a little bit in Matthew 16:21 through 23, our next verses, it causes us to doubt that Jesus was installing Peter as the first pope. You're already in Matthew 16, verse 21, "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 be raised up on the third day. Peter," the new holy father, "took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me,'" Vicar of Christ? "Satan!" Hardly the correct way to address one of such importance.

But it continues, if you scoot ahead to Matthew 18, this is Matthew 18:1. We're going to go fast. "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'" Why would they ask that if they understood that Peter was clearly the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Please notice Jesus doesn't say, "Weren't you listening? Again, I just told you Peter is the most important one." Nope, it's the most humble and the office of the papacy even with our current pope is anything but humble. Jesus then describes the greatest in the kingdom of heaven and it is not the office of the papacy. Little ones, humble ones, not the most pompous.

Next, there was the whole denying the Lord three times business. Not very papal. Paul publicly rebuked the pope in Galatians 2:11 through 14. Peter didn't identify himself as the pope when he called himself a bondservant and a fellow elder. He didn't call himself holy father, the chief apostle, the Bishop of Rome, supreme pastor, his holiness, supreme pontiff, father of kings or Vicar of Christ. He was a fellow elder, a bondservant of Jesus.

Apparently he didn't understand Jesus' words the way the Roman Catholic Church does. Peter shunned the idea of receiving attention and praise in Acts 3 when he healed people. From our text this morning, 1 Peter 2, he understood who the rock was. He understood who the cornerstone was. It was Jesus. Furthermore, the Old Testament made it clear who the rock was. Anytime the rock was referred to in the Old Testament, it was about divinity. Who is Psalm 18, "God, you are my rock." The Old Testament prophets, they understood.

Paul scolded the Corinthians for giving devotion to a man, including himself and Peter. The Roman Catholic Church says revere the man. The early church honored the teaching of the apostles, but not the apostles themselves, Acts 2:42. Paul defines two offices in the church: elders, deacons, and no popes, no Cardinals. Jesus considered himself the rock and his teachings the foundation of the church. "Anyone who hears these words of mine and believes them, he may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock." Might I suggest that Christ did not fight to the death to depose one work righteous system to install another in its place. He tore down the work righteousness of the Pharisees, why would he replace that with the work righteousness of Roman Catholicism?

All of the Reformers labeled the office of papacy antichrist. They were of one voice in this. If you ever want to read really smacky stuff, read Martin Luther talking about the pope. He doesn't spare anything. "You are a brothel keeper," said he, "and the devil's daughter in hell." Why? Because Martin Luther saw what was going on in the debauched Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church has a history, a bloody bloody history. Millions of people have either been displaced or killed because of the Roman Catholic Church. Maybe they used the government arm as its mechanism but it came from a holy Roman Emperor and from the Vicar of Christ, so-called, as millions of people, Jews and Protestants, killed millions of them and it is a tawdry past. You can read through the history of the office of the papacy and, wow, I don't even think they put this stuff on cable TV. HBO would go, "That's a little bit too racy for us." It's a story of incest. It is a story of bestiality. It is a story of simony where they would sell offices like Simon Magus. That's the history of the papacy. It's hard for us to imagine looking back in time that Jesus was saying, "Yes, that is the only church through whom you must go to be saved and you must acknowledge the man sitting on that throne or you will not be saved." He claims, "I am the rock." Perhaps the greatest reason it cannot be that Jesus was installing Peter as the first pope, it robs Jesus of his glory. It gives glory to a man.

Jan Hus, the great Protestant Reformer from Bohemia, a Roman Catholic priest, on the back of his church he had a mural on each side of the door. On one side was a picture of the Pope in all of his golden finery and rings on a white stallion with a fancy saddle with people bowing and kissing him and praising him, and on the other side was Jesus, Palm Sunday riding into Jerusalem lowly on a donkey, and he's going to get glory for that and he will not give it to another. The Roman Catholic Church stands in opposition to these words. As we are celebrating the five hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, let's remember we are not Catholics. We are Protestants and we have a long and glorious history that goes all the way back to Jesus Christ. And the rock, the Messiah, who is building his church.

Consider the abiblical theology that the papal system has concocted: indulgences, mariology, praying to saints, transubstantiation, and a Gospel that is no good news at all. It is a work system. Jesus could not have been installing and endorsing this. His Gospel is grace. He is the one Mediator between God and man. He is the one who is praying for us right now. It has been said that if you could hear Jesus praying for you for five minutes, you would never be afraid again. He is interceding on our behalf. He is our high priest, not a man.

But there is one last note that I think puts a stake in the coffin of the concept that Peter was being installed as the first pope and we will close with this, and when I say that, don't think minutes and don't judge me because I have biblical precedent. The book of Philippians 2 it begins, "And finally brethren," and he goes on for two more chapters. So sit tight. We'll get you out of here in time for the tee off of the Masters today at three.

What is the last reason, the greatest reason that Peter is not the pope and that Jesus Christ is the rock? It's the statement itself. He is not answering the question, "Who do you say that I am" in contemporary terms, he's answering it in historical terms. He's answering the big question, "Who is the seed? Who is the Messiah?" That statement should make it clear that if the entire Old Testament was pointing to Jesus Christ, why would he suddenly say, "But you can give praise to that guy too." It makes no sense because that is what God is doing, he is pointing toward the cross, he is pointing toward his Son and that is what the Bible has been relentlessly doing as God has been progressively answering the question, the mystery into which angels long to peer. In the entire Old Testament, have you seen Jesus in the Old Testament? He's there, you know? He said so himself. This isn't fanciful interpretation. This isn't numerology. This is Jesus himself saying to the Pharisees, "You read the books of Moses because in them you think you have life. I tell you, they testify about me." The books of Moses were pointing toward the rock. They were pointing toward the Savior.

We see this also in Colossians 2:16 and 17. Don't let anybody tell you about Sabbaths and festivals, they were merely a type. They pointed to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus with two disciples, what did he do? He revealed to them himself from every book in the Old Testament. He is there, we just need to find him right. How do you do that? Well, if the New Testament says it, you'd better believe it, it's Jesus.

Where is Jesus? Where is the rock in the Old Testament? I think he's in the beginning when God said, "Let there be light." But it wasn't until day four that the sun, moon and stars were created. What a curious thing. There was light shining illuminating the universe but there were no planets to do so. Who is the light? I believe it was the light of the world. I believe if you scoot over to Revelation 22, you will see that the new heavens and the new earth are illuminated by what? The light of the Lamb. He appeared immediately in the book of Genesis. He appeared immediately when they sinned, tried to cover up their own shame and God said, "That will not do," and the shedding blood of the first animal was committed by God himself for the covering of the shame of the people.

It was a fuzzy picture but it was a picture nonetheless and we see a lot of blood being spilled because there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood, but we need to remember all of those Lamb sacrifices, they did not forgive sins, they pointed to the one who did. Ty, the number, I'm sorry, the 150,000, 250,000, how many? 256,000 lambs sacrificed on Passover. Why? The blood. It was pointing, pointing, pointing toward the one who could not cover our sins but the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

What was Abraham and Isaac about? This curious story of a father who takes his only beloved son up a hill, Mount Moriah, which most scholars believe is right outside of Jerusalem, the very same place where Jesus was crucified, and he carried his own wood, the son carried his wood up the hill and he said, "Father, where is the lamb?" And Abraham said, "God will provide the lamb," and as he is preparing to kill his only beloved son, God stops him. The next time we visit this mountain, God does not stop and he takes the life of his only beloved Son. What was the story of Abraham and Isaac about? It was about Jesus.

What was the story of the ark about? Who is the ark of our salvation? It's Jesus. It's a story of judgment and salvation. He is the ark of our salvation. Who is the one door that got an awful lot of animals into the ark? There is one door, it's Jesus Christ when he said, "I'm the door." Who is the pitch, the glop that got put between the boards? In the Bible 70 times the word is used "kathar or katar" and typically it means propitiation. One time it means that glop that got put between the boards to keep the waters of judgment out. Who is our propitiation? It's Jesus Christ.

What about in the desert when the Jews were wandering around? Was God preaching the Gospel? He most certainly was. How's about the bronze serpent in the desert? Another curious story. The people sin, God sends snakes to bite them and kill them, but fashion a bronze serpent, hold it up on a pole, look to it, the identification with your sin, what's killing you, and live. What was that about? Jesus makes it clear in John 3 when he revealed to Nicodemus, "Just as the serpent had to be raised up in the wilderness, so too must the Son of man be raised up." God preached the Gospel to them.

He preached the Gospel to them in Exodus 17. This is a fascinating account. In Exodus 15, the Jews have sinned by complaining about God's provision. "We want water." God provides it. Two chapters later, "Where is our water? We want water." Moses recognizes, "Your complaint is not against me, you are grumbling against God." So what does God have Moses do? It is a courtroom drama with judicial language. Let's just say for the sake of the illustration to get our minds clear about this, you're the Jewish people, you're the ones who are accusing God of sinning against you, and there you are assembled and in front of you stands Moses with his staff of authority with a row of judges who are going to stand in judgment for this court case, and between the sinful people and the human judges is a rock. God's presence falls on the rock and he instructs Moses to take that staff and crack it on the rock. And who is the rock? 1 Corinthians 10, it's Jesus Christ. He's the rock. He's the one. And the rock cracked open and what poured out? Water, streams of living water. And who is the living water? It's Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament was preaching the Gospel repeatedly, persistently preaching the Gospel, pointing in fuzzy pictures toward the clear reality Jesus, and that's Peter's confession. It was an Old Testament confession that Jesus Christ was being preached every week in Old Testament Israel. The Sabbath was a picture of Jesus. That's why we see this clash with Jesus. If you've ever wondered, "They sure did get a little persnickety about the Sabbath business," and Jesus almost just kind of seemed to like taunt them by continuing to work on the Sabbath. Why? Because by the time that Jesus walked the earth, the Sabbath, a good institution, a very unique institution, had been completely perverted. It had become kind of the cornerstone of the Jewish religion. If you keep the Sabbath, you're a good Jew. If you don't keep the Sabbath, you're out. It was a big deal and they had column after column after column of ridiculous laws about where you could walk, whether you could ride a donkey, which you couldn't because, not that it was work but that you might be inclined to break a switch off of a tree to whip your donkey and that's work. So don't do it and don't pull your chair up because you could make a furrow, that's farming. Don't take a bath. I'm not kidding. Don't take a bath because if you spill water, that too is farming. And Jesus comes along and starts doing works on the Sabbath which began in the garden with God when he rested on the seventh day.

We hear about it again in Exodus 20, unheard of Middle Eastern culture, work for six days and a day of rest. Backbreaking work for six days, then a little bit of rest. Work harder, a little bit of rest. It should have caused them to call out, "We need rest," and Jesus comes along and proclaims, "I'm the Lord of the Sabbath. It was pointing to me. Your short physical rest is a picture of me giving you complete eternal spiritual rest." The Sabbath was preaching about Jesus. Why? Because that is what God is doing in the universe.

The festivals, they pointed to Jesus. We are entering now, Jesus enters into Jerusalem. We think it was on lamb selection day for Passover when you would pick out your unblemished lamb which was supposed to live with the family for a short amount of time. But then the family would slit the throat of the lamb and they were to paint, if you recall from the Passover story, paint the blood on the door and death would pass over and the Passover meal was a celebration of God delivering them from death. Jesus Christ at a Passover meal, we call it the Last Supper, he held up a cup and he said, "This blood shed for you for the forgiveness," not for the covering but for the forgiveness of sins as he initiated a new and better covenant.

What was Passover, the festival pointing toward? It was pointing toward Jesus but what about the very next day which was the festival of unleavened bread? If you recall, leaven was a sign of sin. They had to remove the evil from their house. What was Jesus doing on the celebration of unleavened bread? He died on a cross so that sin might be removed from us.

But wait, then we had the next festival which actually happened on Sunday, not on the Sabbath but on Sunday. It's called the festival of first fruits. In an agricultural society, they would grab the first fruit and they would wave it. They would wave the sheaves.

They would wave perhaps even the palms to say, "Thank you, God, for the great harvest that is to come." And who is the first fruits of the resurrection? It's Jesus Christ who is going to gather many for the glory of the Father.

The festivals were about Jesus because that is what God is doing on Christ, the solid rock we stand. The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord. She is his new creation. By Spirit and the word from heaven, he came and sought her to be his holy bride. With his own blood, he bought her and for her life, he died.

What is the answer to the biggest question in the universe? Who do you say that Jesus is? May the resounding response from this congregation long after we are dead continues to be that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and may that be our own private declaration that we build our house on a rock and not on sinking sand.

Let's pray.

Father, your word is amazing and you have been so kind to use it to point toward your Son. Would you please point our hearts and our eyes toward him that we might live for him and glorify him all the days of our life? He is our rock, he is our foundation, and it is in his name we pray. Amen.