

KINGDOM BREAKTHROUGH

SERMON TEN

I WILL BUILD MY PEOPLE

Matt 16: 13-20

As we get to the final in our amazing series at looking at the Kingdom of God, I want to look at the fact that God is in the business of building his people to become real sons and daughters of the Kingdom. Jesus makes a statement in verse 18, “I will build my church..”. The word that is used in the New Testament for church is the word ekklesia which literally translated means “the called out ones”. Church therefore as many already know is not about the building, the pews or the religious rituals, but it is about the people of God. Where the people of God meet together, there the church is to be found, there the kingdom of God is to be found. In order then for God to build his church therefore, He needs to build the people who go up to make that church. So when God says I will build

my church he is also saying I will build my people. Kingdom people are people who are being built by God to be used as effective and powerful tools in the Kingdom of God. The context of our passage is God’s interaction with Peter. If ever there is an example of God building his people then it is Peter. His original name Simon literally meant “a reed swaying in the wind”. Simon was a weak fickle character when Jesus encountered him but he prophesied John 1:42 that he would become Peter the rock, who would be used to establish his church. If God is able to transform a man like Peter and even Saul the persecutor of the church into Paul the greatest missionary ever known, then how much more can he build and transform you and me. What about men like Abraham, Moses and Joseph? God is still in the business today of building and transforming people in amazing ways. He desires to build and transform you as you allow him to. I invite you this morning to see how God desires to build His people.

1. HE BUILDS ON OUR TESTIMONY

In our passage Jesus asks Peter a very direct question, “Peter who do you say I am?” Peter then testifies to who he believes Christ to be and proclaims him as the Christ the Son of the living God. Jesus responds by proclaiming Peter’s blessing and then making an amazing statement that has been misunderstood through the years. Jesus having heard the testimony of Peter says that on this rock he would build his church. The Catholic church in particular have interpreted this verse to suggest that the church would be built on Peter as the foundation and hence their teaching that Peter was the first Pope and that all successive popes have come from him. This teaching is however is not consistent with the rest of Scripture which teaches Christ to be the capstone or cornerstone on which God will build His church. What then is the rock that Jesus will build his church on? It is simply Peter’s testimony or confession that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God.

If God was going to use Peter and the other disciples to build the church of God then it would have to begin with an unwavering belief in who Jesus was. It had to begin by understanding that Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords of the Kingdom of God that has come into the world. As Peter makes a public confession of who Jesus is, Jesus responds and literally says, now Peter I can begin to build you into the person and ultimately the church I want. God had been with Peter on a journey brining him to this point. This is where all of our journeys with God begin. Knowing Him for who he really is and confessing Him for who he really is. Until we get there, God is not in a position to begin the process of building us up. There is tremendous power that is released when a confession or a testimony is made. In Rev 12:11 speaking of the saints in heaven and the victory they had over Satan, “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony”. When we testify to who

God really is it releases power in the heavenlies and in that name we can achieve great and mighty things. Never be shy to share a word of testimony for it brings glory to God and defeats the evil one.

2. HE BUILDS US INTO POWERFUL PEOPLE

Jesus says to Peter that he will build his people and the gates of hell will not overcome them or if you look at the footnote at the bottom of your page, the gates of hell will not prove stronger than them. This speaks to me of a power that is far greater than the power of the Kingdom of the world. This is picture of the Kingdom of God and the people of God advancing against the gates of hell and these gates will not be able to withstand the attack. It is about bringing people out of the Kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Paul tells us in Eph 1:20 that the very same power that defeated the kingdom of evil when it raised Jesus from the dead and broke

the power of sin and death, is the same power that is in those who believe. It is because of this that the forces of evil cannot withstand the power a believer has. The disciples were amazed at this new power within them when they came to Jesus and in amazement noted even the demons listen to us. In 1 Jn 4:4 we are told, “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”. As God builds us, he takes the weak, the broken, the foolish, the small and he builds us into a powerful instrument in the Kingdom of God. He uses the foolish to confound the wise, the weak to confound the strong. We may be weak and insignificant in the world’s eyes but the man and the woman filled with the Spirit of God is a powerful person.

3. HE BUILD US INTO PEOPLE OF AUTHORITY

Jesus continues in verse 19 with another statement when he announces to Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom

of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”. There is much debate as to what is referred to by the keys of the Kingdom. Most commentators accept that they are associated with allowing people into the Kingdom which in turn is associated with the preaching of the Good News of the Gospel. God has delegated to us to preach the good news of the gospel and as we do we have an influence over who comes into the Kingdom. When one looks at the element of binding on earth and heaven as well as the keys, these all speak to me of a delegated authority that Jesus has given to His people. In Matthew 28:18 as Jesus gives to his disciples his last and greatest commandment he says, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go...”. He delegates his authority to the disciples and sends them out. Here I am reminded of the words of Jesus in John 14:12-14, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been

doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the son may bring glory to father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it”. Jesus as he ascended to his father handed to us the baton of power and authority to be used for God’s glory. In the New Testament we are instructed that as we pray we are to pray in the name of Jesus. This is what delegated authority is all about. Christ delegates his authority to us as we use his name. If the father were to ask by what authority we approached him in prayer we could happily say in the delegated authority of his son Jesus Christ. We come in the name of the King of the Kingdom with his seal of authority, the Holy Spirit in our lives.

4. HE BUILDS US AS WE ARE WILLING

God has proven himself to be the ultimate gentleman only coming in when invited and building when there is a willingness on our part to enter into this process with Him. There are a number of Scriptures which highlight what we are to do in this process.

4.1 Seek the kingdom.

In Matt 6:33 Jesus encourages us to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”. This speaks of priority. The kingdom of God has come, and as kids of the kingdom we need to make this our priority in life. As we facilitate the kingdom breaking through in our relationship with God so all that we need and desire will be added to us. Seeking speaks of desire, passion, commitment and motivation. It speaks of intention and action,

something that is not just going to happen by itself. When God reveals his kingdom to us we have our second command.

4.2 Take hold of the kingdom

In Matt 11:12 we are told of the Kingdom, “the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it”. We are to seek the kingdom and as we discover where God is at work we need to join him there and in so doing take hold of the kingdom which in turn makes us a forceful people. We must seek and take hold of the Kingdom.

4.3 We must come as little children

The paradox of the Kingdom of God is found simply in this. We are built into powerful people of great authority when we humble ourselves and come to the Lord as children. The greatest in the Kingdom are the children. It speaks humility and teachability.

CONCLUSION

Notice one important element. Yes we are to seek the kingdom, we are to take hold of the kingdom, we are to have a humble spirit, but at the end of the day it is all about what God will do. He says I will build. We need to be open and available and allow God to build us as he chooses.