

# Together as His Body

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

We'll go to Matthew chapter 16. Matthew chapter 16. Tonight we're starting a brand new series that we're calling Together. This is gonna be kind of a mini-series, just, I don't know, four or five weeks or so that we'll be in this series together.

Did you see that? See what I did there? Anyways, here's the reason kind of what we're doing. We're gonna be talking about the importance of the church, the importance of our being together. There's a few reasons why we're doing this.

First of all, we're almost about two years into our in-person gathering, which is fantastic. And so this has kind of been a special season for us.

And I think it's good for us to be reminded of our being together and why that is significant. We're also coming up on a lot of things, important conversations that we'll be having, like small groups, which we mentioned in the announcements.

[ 1 : 24 ] And we're searching for different, like facility options and things like that, just kind of looking to see what's out there. So there's a lot of things, a lot of important things that we're in as a season here at Faith Family.

And so it's important for us to think about the significance of being together. And the other reason why we're doing this series is this is setting up what will be a longer study, at least the plan for right now, is that we're gonna be doing a longer study in the book of Acts.

And so I wanna show us how the church is called to be together. And then in the book of Acts, when the church is together, led by the power of the Holy Spirit, amazing things take place, okay? So there's kind of a lot going on in why the Lord has led me to do this series. And at the end of the day, it's the Bible, and the Bible's always good, amen? So it doesn't matter what the series is, we wanna study the Bible.

So let's look at Matthew chapter 16 as we kind of launch this, and we're gonna be looking at together as his body, together as his body.

[ 2 : 32 ] Let's look at Matthew 16, very familiar passage, beginning in verse 13. And if you are able to stand, please do so as we honor the reading of God's word.

Matthew chapter 16 and verse 13 says that 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, well, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. And he said to them, but who do you say that I am?

And Simon Peter replied, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

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. Let's pray.

[ 3 : 35 ] God, thanks for this time now to be in your word, to think about the importance and the significance of the church. And in saying that, we don't mean a building, we don't mean an institution, we don't mean programs.

We're talking about your people, those that you have bought with your blood. And so Lord, help us think about the significance of our being together, and why this body really matters.

So I give this to you now, and just pray that by your Holy Spirit, you would come and teach us through your word, I pray in Christ's name. And God's people said, amen, amen.

You can be seated. The bee's got it. You're dead as a doornail, Smalls. You're dead as a doornail, Smalls. Smalls, you mean to tell me that you went home and swiped a ball that was signed by Babe

Ruth, and you brought it out here and actually played with it, and actually played with it?  
Yeah. Yeah, but I was gonna bring it back. But it was signed by Babe Ruth. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You keep telling me that. Who is she? What?

[ 4 : 44 ] What? The Sultan of Swat. The King of Crash. The Colossus of Clout. The Colossus of Clout. Babe Ruth. The Gray Bambino.

I love that clip. That is a classic clip of like all time. And if you know anything about baseball, you can sense and understand the frustration that they're expressing.

You don't play in the backyard with a baseball that's been signed by Babe Ruth. That's because you can buy a baseball at any old local sporting goods store for just a few dollars, but a baseball that is signed by Babe Ruth is worth a few thousand dollars.

And of course, that's not just true about a baseball. That's true about a lot of other things. So, for example, this dress originally cost about \$12,000, but because it was owned and worn by Marilyn Monroe, it sold for \$1.3 million.

These Nike airships originally cost about \$65, but because they were worn by Michael Jordan, they sold for \$1.5 million.

[ 5 : 53 ] This guitar, which is a nice Fender Strat, worth about \$500, but when it became Eric Clapton's famous Blackie, it was worth about \$1 million.

These writings, for most of us, wouldn't be worth anything at all, but when you realize that they're Leonardo da Vinci's codex, you realize they sold for over \$30 million.

Here's the big idea. Here's the point that I'm trying to get across. It's this. Notice it on the screen.

The value of an object is directly related to the significance of the owner.

The value of an object is directly related to the significance of the owner, and we all know that, do we not, personally? I mean, this Bible, to most of you, wouldn't mean a thing.

Now, by that, I'm not suggesting that you don't care about the Bible. I'm saying this specific Bible doesn't mean anything to any of you in this room, but it means everything to me.

[ 6 : 56 ] This was my grandfather's Bible that he preached gospel ministry for 51 years. There's old outlines here in this Bible as you flip through.

You come to take this, I will smack you like you wouldn't believe. This is significant to me because of the owner.

And you know this true personally as well. Like, that picture really isn't all that much to most people, but because it's a picture of your son, it means everything. I mean, that letter that you kept to most people doesn't really mean all that much, but because it's from somebody that you love, it means everything.

Here's the big idea again, and all of you know this to be true, that the value of an object is directly related to the significance of its owner.

Amen? If that's true, and you know it is, if a baseball is just a baseball, unless it bears the mark Babe Ruth, a guitar is just a guitar until it's the personal property of Eric Clapton, a letter is just a letter until it's written by somebody that you love, then Faith Family, the church of Jesus Christ is nothing more than a gathering of some human beings until you realize who she belongs to.

[ 8 : 15 ] The church of Jesus Christ looks nothing more than like a gathering of some individuals until you realize her owner. I start this series out because if we're going to understand the significance of our being together as the bride of Jesus, the body of Jesus, the church of Jesus, we must understand the significance of Jesus.

Because in understanding the significance of Jesus, then we will see the importance of our being together as his body. Once you believe, or who you believe Jesus is, has direct implications of your understanding of, your participation in, and your attitude towards one another.

Listen to me. When I said, prayed earlier, when I say the word church, don't you think a building, don't you think an institution, don't you think a list of programs. Think about who you're seated next to.

The church is the people that God has called out and saved by the blood of Christ. Notice here in verse 13, Jesus puts forth a question to his disciples.

Here in chapter 16, verse 13, he says, Jesus came to the district of Caesarea Philippi, and he asked the disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is?

[ 9 : 46 ] Jesus takes his disciples to a secluded place. Caesarea Philippi, you'll notice here on this map, is up in the northern region. It's about 25 miles or so at least from the Sea of Galilee.

So it's way on kind of up north. And even here in Minnesota, when you kind of go up north, you get more secluded. You get away from the city. And that's what's happening here. Jesus has removed the disciples from the hostile crowds of Jerusalem, the growing demands of Galilee.

And here in this more secluded, quiet place, he has a question that he asks his followers. Who do people say that I am? What's the word on the street?

What's the buzz around town? Because I think sometimes we forget to realize that during the time that Jesus was on earth, he was a very fascinating but also very polarizing figure.

A lot of people had a lot of different opinions about Jesus. And that's true still today, is it not? I mean, there are some people that think he's divine, but he's not eternal.

[10:51] He's a prophet, but not as great as Muhammad. He's a wise man with some helpful teachings, but he's not God. He's a religious leader or a historical figure. And there's others that would even say, I don't even really care who he is.

Even since Matthew 16, there's been a lot of polarizing views on who Jesus is. Well, here's what the disciples say.

Verse 14, here's the answer. They said, well, some say you're John the Baptist and others say you're Elijah and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

Now, the disciples here are a little bit more positive in terms of what people think on the street at this time. But this is true. There were a lot of people that thought Jesus was a prophet, that he was John the Baptist or he was Elijah come back or one of the prophets.

And so this is certainly accurate. Jesus spoke with the authority of God. And so it was common for people to think he was a prophet of God. In fact, how many of you remember the Samaritan woman?

[11:55] Remember when she encounters Jesus? We preached on this a few weeks ago. I hope you haven't already forgotten it, right? She encounters Jesus. He speaks with authority into her life and she immediately assumes he must be a what?

A prophet. And so this was a very popular view of Jesus during this time. But it wasn't the only view. I mean, if you go back just a few chapters in the Gospel of Matthew and you interview the Pharisees, who do you think that Jesus is?

They would have a very different answer as to who they thought Jesus was. They thought he did his works out of the spirit of Beelzebub. And so there was a lot that Jesus did right, but most got his identity wrong.

Whether it was on the positive side or the negative side. And so this question that Jesus asked is an important one. But notice now how he turns it on the disciples, verse 15.

And he said to them, but who do you say that I am? Now, it's not really about what everybody else thinks.

[13:09] It's not about what the opinion polls say. It's what do my followers believe? Who do you? It's personal. And it was personal then and it's personal now.

Jesus isn't ultimately concerned about what others think. He wants to know what his disciples believe. Look at this on the screen. The identity of Jesus was personal then and it's personal now because it doesn't matter how others view Jesus.

Listen, faith family. It matters how you view Jesus. I don't give a rip what America thinks about Jesus or any other culture or country for that matter.

I'm asking, Jesus is asking tonight, what do you believe? What is your confession? Who do you say that he is?

Faith family, at some point, your belief in Jesus has got to go beyond a spouse, a parent, a pastor, or your religious upbringing. And there is only one right answer to this question.

[14:11] And this thing of life is pass or fail based on how you answer this question because your answer to who Jesus is determines everything about your life.

It determines what you value. It determines how you live. It determines where you will spend eternity. Who do you say that I am?

What do you believe? And who do you think is the first disciple to speak up? Of course, Peter is.

He's the first one to answer. Verse 16, Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the son of the living God.

Hey, give it up for Peter. Way to go. Nice job, buddy. Like, that's a confession. Peter gets a lot wrong in life and ministry, amen, but he gets this one right on the money.

[15:10] You are the Christ, the son of the living God. Let's break that down. Two important parts of this confession. First, that Jesus is the Christ.

This speaks to the humanity, the man of Jesus. Peter is saying, you are Messiah. You are the anointed one of God. You are the one to whom the promises of God pointed to.

You are the one that all the generations before put their hope in. You are the one that God promised would be the seed of Genesis 1. You are the one that would reign on David's throne. You are the priest that will offer the ultimate and final sacrifice.

You are the prophet who not only speaks the truth, but is the truth of God. You are the Savior that brings hope into the world. Peter is saying, in essence, this.

In regards to the one whom all the Old Testament speaks about Messiah, you're it. That's what's packed in that one statement.

[16:15] You are the Christ. Everything the Old Testament has longed for about this human anointed one from God, you're it.

and there is no other. You're the Christ. You are the anointed of God. Here's the second part of this confession. Not only are you the Christ, you are the Son of the living God.

And this speaks to Jesus' divinity. Because understand, and many of you have heard me say this before, but that's okay, it's worth repeating, that sonship in the ancient Near East is you do what your father does.

If your dad's a carpenter, guess what you're going to be? In fact, Jesus' earthly father was a...

You've got to at least get this one right, all right? Skip Easter and go back to Christmas, okay?

Yes, his earthly father was a carpenter, and so Jesus was a carpenter. If your father was a shepherd, you were going to be a shepherd. That's just how it worked. A son was what their father was.

[17:20] And so to say that you are the son of God is to say you are God. You are in the same essence as the father. You are divine, you are eternal, you are sovereign over all.

Jesus is the word that not only was with God, he is the word that is God. He is the one, if you've seen him, you have seen the father. He is the great I am, the alpha and omega, the son of God. Peter is saying, others believe you're a prophet. I believe you are God in the flesh. That's a powerful statement. You are the Christ.

That is everything we have longed for about Messiah, you're it. And you are the son of the living God. You are the word made flesh. You are God among us.

Emmanuel. Now again, this is a quote that I know many of you have heard before, but again, sometimes things are just worth repeating here. This is from mere Christianity. C.S. Lewis writes this, quote, you can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him, this is Jesus, and kill Jesus as a demon, you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.

[18:31] But let us not come up with this patronizing nonsense about his being a good human teacher. He has not left that open to us, and he did not intend to.

Who do you say that I am? I don't care what your neighbor believes, I don't care what your mama believes, I don't care what the person next to you believes, what do you believe about Jesus?

Who do you say that he is? Peter got it right. You're the Christ, the son of the living God. And how did Peter get this right?

Because he's the smartest disciple. Peter thinks so, right, on several occasions, right, or maybe it was a lucky guess.

Maybe he copied off Luke's blue notebook, I don't know, right, or maybe, maybe, Peter got this right from another source. That is, it didn't come from him, it came, are you listening, by divine grace.

[19:34] Verse 17, And Jesus answered, Peter, blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. You didn't get this on your own, you didn't come up with this, you didn't study late last night for this test.

No, my Father, who is in heaven, revealed this to you. In other words, listen, the word blessed here means graced or favored one.

The only reason, Peter, you've been able to see me rightly is that God has been gracious to you.

You didn't figure this out on your own. Notice it on the screen. No one is able to see Jesus for who he is unless God opens their eyes.

No one is able to see Jesus for who he is unless God opens their eyes. It is an act of grace. Do you know why? Because dead people don't have faith.

Dead people can't get Jesus right. But when God opens our eyes to see, we see and we believe. And by the way, I'm not just saying that.

[ 20 : 41 ] That's what the Apostle Paul says. Listen to 1 Corinthians 2 verse 19. He says, But as it is written, what no eye has seen nor ear heard nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.

These things, say this with me, God has revealed to us. How? Through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

For who knows a person's thought except the Spirit of that person which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received not the Spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God that we might understand the things freely given by God. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Let me be very clear tonight, Faith Family. Whatever you understand about Jesus that is correct, you understand because of the work of divine grace in your life.

[ 21 : 55 ] You didn't get there by your own smarts. You got there by the grace of God. Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you.

My Father who is in heaven revealed this to you and of course that is the contrast of the passage isn't it? Those that have not experienced the grace of God have natural explanations for Jesus.

He is a prophet. He is a good teacher. Maybe he is Jeremiah. I don't know. But they are thinking in natural terms. But those that have experienced the grace of God see Jesus for who he is.

That is the point here in the passage. Peter's whole life is one of grace. Tonight let me ask you this. How do you answer this question? Let's just even put Peter aside for a moment.

What about you? Who do you say? that Jesus is. Has grace opened your eyes to see Jesus rightly?

[ 23 : 04 ] I pray that if that's never happened tonight would be the night that you would see him and that you would confess with your mouth that he is the Christ and he is the son of the living God.

Now this confession all of that was free and quite honestly shouldn't be timed. All that shouldn't count towards my time tonight because I'm really not even to the main point I'm trying to emphasize here though Jesus is always the main point that's a good amen right there okay but this confession what I want to show you Peter's confession here doesn't just reveal the identity of Jesus it actually reveals the importance of the church look at verse 18 and I tell you you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church I will build my church faith family let me ask you a question feel free to answer out loud who does the church belong to you can't go wrong at least just saying Jesus right that's the answer to every theological question it's Jesus the church does not belong to me the church doesn't belong to the people who've been here the longest it doesn't belong to the people who give the most it doesn't belong to the young people it doesn't belong to the old people the owner of the church is

Christ it's his church now notice it on the screen again the value of an object is directly related to the significance of its owner and if the owner of the church is the Christ the son of the living God then our view of our togetherness our view of the church has everything to do with our view of Jesus if we really believe this about Jesus and I do I hope you do as well then that has significant implications for how we think about the person seated next to you the church that belongs to Jesus I remember back in high school you know seven eight years ago something like that I had a buddy of mine his name was Kevin and you know how you were kind of in high school the girls would sit around talk about the guys guys sit around talk about the girls and we're sitting around talking and Kevin has a confession it's not a confession quite as great as Matthew 16 but he confesses to us group of guys that he has a thing for Sarah now what you need to know about Sarah is that Sarah cussed so bad auto mechanics would blush I mean she was a mean mean gal right I mean you would run at the just hearing of her coming right and so we're like you like you like Sarah please tell me this is Sarah changed her mind

Sarah started dating Kevin Sarah went on to marry Kevin and every time I go back home I am fearful that I will run into her I don't care if I run into Kevin I'm fearful of running into her right listen it was bad enough to say those things about Sarah I'm certainly not encouraging such talk but it became even worse when those were words that were spoken about his wife it took on a whole new thing here's my point faith family is that what you say about one another do you realize that you're talking about the bride of Jesus that view that attitude that you have towards one another do

you realize the owner to whom that person belongs you know there's a lot of people that it even is said among

[ 27 : 38 ] Christians that will say I love Jesus I just don't need the church and listen I agree with you if you're talking about like institutions or certain programs or a lot of the things that we tend to call church but if by that you mean you don't need the togetherness of the body of Christ you need to go back and realize who Jesus is if you would say things and many of us have had bad experiences with churches or or maybe you've been coming for years and you just grumble about you know it wouldn't be the pastor but probably other people you know it's important for us to stop to ask this question would you say what you're saying if you were in you say that about him would you say that about her would you say that about his bride listen could you look at the one who Ephesians 5 laid down his life for his bride could you look at the one who

Acts 20 redeemed her with his blood and say you do not matter to me because the value of an object is directly related to the significance of its owner and the church belongs to who Jesus so notice this on the screen to devalue the church to devalue our togetherness is to diminish the work of Christ I'm not talking about institution I'm not talking about structures and programs or any of that stuff I'm talking about the people of God gathered together that is significant so it's important for us to ask the question how do we speak to one another are we participating are we supportive is our togetherness a priority this is something all of us can do inventory on so we not only see in this passage the identity of

Jesus and therefore the implication of the importance of the church because the church belongs to the Christ the Son of the God but we also see here that in Christ the church by our togetherness will accomplish amazing things verse 18 we're almost done and I tell you Peter that on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell or Hades shall not prevail against it listen because the church belongs to Jesus who is the Christ the Son of the living God there are two things that you can absolutely count on absolutely take to the bank as it relates to our being together and this is true of faith family this is true of the body of Christ throughout the world number one you cannot stop her you cannot stop her when it comes to the advancement of the church Jesus is not giving his best effort he is not going to try his best

God will build it regardless of what anyone says the church belongs to him and he has the power to build the church which is what we will see when we get to the book of Acts how the apostles are not I'm not necessarily picking on any tradition here but they're not wearing robes and having people kiss their rings they're just led by the spirit of God to proclaim Jesus the resurrected son of the living God and that confession proclaimed to the ends of the earth takes the world and turns it upside down you cannot stop the church because Jesus will build it and here's the really awesome thing you want to talk about grace lean in we get to be a part of that building we get to be a part of that story to which I hope our response would be this let's go I mean what are we afraid of notice it on the screen if nothing can stop us then what's stopping us if nothing can stop us what's stopping us of coming together and experiencing great and mighty things by the power of

God second that you can take to the bank is this you will not defeat her you cannot defeat the church Hades is the place of the dead that is no matter who or what tries to take the church out she cannot be killed you realize faith family this has been the talk I'm off the cuff okay so this is free probably worth what you pay for it there's been a lot of talk the last several years that the church is in decline I mean studies and polls and all that's been done to say the church is in decline the church is losing its grip to which I say no cultural religion is losing its grip the church is alive and well the church has not been declining and the church will not decline that is the true church the people bought by the blood of Christ she's doing just fine and she will never die and do you know why she will never die look at on the screen because she can't be defeated because she belongs to the one who walked out of the grave like good good luck killing the one that belongs to the one that defeated death you won't stop her and you can't defeat her so when the world says the church is irrelevant and old fashioned and insignificant and declining

[ 33 : 37 ] I would remind you they said the same thing 2000 years ago about her owner when he had nails driven through his body and he was laid in the tomb and they thought he was no longer significant and then all of a sudden three days later a dead corpse walked out of the grave and if you couldn't kill the head you won't kill the body!

he If he killed he he killed he killed! If killed he killed If he killed he he killed he killed!

If he killed he If he who he belonged to, it changed everything. Faith family, hear my heart. Hear it. On the surface, we don't look like much. You say, speak for yourself. But seriously, we don't look like much.

Faith family is a group of broken people who have all at one point in life been in the ashes. And we gather weekly and we sing to lyric videos.

And we listen to a sermon. And we eat a little cracker with a little cup of juice in rented spaces. We are just a local church.

[ 36 : 18 ] And together, we don't look like much. But we belong to him.

And our value is directly related to the significance of our owner. And that means this group of people and those watching online are not only important.

You're victorious. And that's why we come together. And all God's people said, amen.

Amen. Pray with me. So, Lord, thank you for this passage tonight. It is so powerful. It's so packed with significant and important truth. And of course, it starts, begins, and ends with Jesus.

We will never get the church right. We'll never understand one another if we don't get Jesus right.

When we understand that Jesus is the Son of the living God, that he is the Christ.

[ 37 : 36 ] He is the one that died on the cross and rose from the grave. And he has ascended on high. And he is our great high priest. Ruling and reigning forever and ever and ever.

And then we stop to think about the fact that the church, this group of people in this room and to the ends of the earth that have been bought by your blood, that that group of individuals belongs to him.

Then we see her value. We start to understand her significance. And I pray, God, even for me, like, help me, help us think more clearly about how we relate to one another in light of this truth.

And help us think more confidently and victoriously about our future. For the gates of hell will not prevail against us.

And they most certainly will try. So, Lord, thank you for the victory that is already ours in you and what you have done for us upon the cross.

[ 38 : 44 ] We love you. We thank you. And now we celebrate you as we partake in communion of the victory that you accomplished through the cross and through the empty tomb.

We give you thanks for that tonight. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.