

Matthew 16:13-20 "Gospel Community Wrap-up"

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- While they're going back, I want to tell you about another special concert so you can mark your calendars. Anybody ever heard of Behold the Lamb? It's coming back to Huntsville this year.
- December 1st, Sunday night. They will be coming back here. They usually fill this sanctuary and this year they're doing a special 20th anniversary tour.
- So they are bigger and more people will be here and we are going to the VBC. So it's going to be a really special night. We want you to know that and be able to mark your calendars for that concert as well as the Slugs and Bugs concert.
- That's Sunday night, December 1st at the end of Thanksgiving week to kick off our Christmas celebration. So I hope you can be a part of that with us as well. It'll be a great night.
- [1 : 0 6] I've loved this summer getting to wrestle together through what God calls us to be as his church. We've looked at many one another passages in his word.
- And what a joy to remember that God sees the loneliness in our lives. And he answers that with these life-giving relationships, gospel community.
- We've also seen how living that way is not natural or easy, haven't we? If you'll grab one of these cards out of the pew pocket in front of you, these have been there all summer.
- It says the summer of one another. You can flip it over to the other side. We needed to get rid of these and get them out of the way. So just go ahead and take them all out. Help us clean up. But we need reminders, don't we?
- And this may not be the reminder you want, but for some of you it might be helpful to grab one of these and put it in your Bible or your wallet or your fridge or whatever.
- [2 : 1 1] And remember, love one another. Pray. Confess sins. Forgive. Carry each other's burdens. Show hospitality to one another. Be able to remember that and especially to pray that God would make your life and our church like this kind of community.
- Secondly, as we wrap this up, I want to challenge all of us to take some tangible steps toward investing in this kind of community, these relationships.
- Someone said to me last Sunday, hey, that was a really challenging message on hospitality, pastor, but you know it'd never make any difference if none of us ever does it. Fair enough.
- There's a lot of truth in that. We can talk a lot about one another without anything happening, can't we? We've said over and over this summer our heart is to have everyone at Southwood connected in a small group and or a connect community where those relationships can grow and we can invest in each other.
- We don't want anyone missing out on those relationships that God has designed us for. So to help with that, we've got a special Sunday coming up where we're going to focus on that Sunday, August 25th in three weeks.

- [3 : 29] And we're going to help you get connected if you're not already. We're calling it Creating Connections. So if you want to look back into that same pew pocket that you've cleaned out, you now can see this card, I hope. It says Creating Connections.
- And you can just give us your information and let us know if you want more information about connect communities or small groups. And we would love to be able to follow up with you on that. And then on that Sunday, the 25th, we'll help you in person to connect to community in these places.
- If you fill it out today, find a pastor or an usher and just hand it to us and we will help you to get connected. Kathy mentioned branches. I'd especially encourage you if you've read this issue of branches that you got just this past week, you're going to read more about this one another in this gospel community.
- I'd especially encourage you to read Christine Betz's article in the middle. It's called Don't Drown. It's about small groups and it's one person's story of loneliness and finding community in small groups.
- If you're uncertain about taking a step towards one another, read that. I think it'll encourage your heart towards that to be open to pursuing gospel community like that.
- [4 : 47] We all need it. But before we finish this series, before we leave one another, I want to go back where we started. We started the first Sunday asking the question, why?
- Why gospel community? Because the temptation in spending several weeks talking about how we relate to each other as God's people is to think that one another is the reason we exist.
- It's the goal of life, the essence of our mission. And it's not. As easy as it is for us to focus on me and us, God doesn't design the church to be a holy huddle.
- That's not what we're shooting for. We're not going for only caring about ourselves. We're here for others. So let's listen one more time to God's word. remind us of our mission and even how one another is vital to that mission.
- Turn to Matthew chapter 16. Matthew 16, Jesus is walking and talking with his disciples. And he wants to get at something that is fundamental to his mission and because of that to their mission.
- [6 : 07] Listen to what he says as we read at verse 13. Now, when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is?
- And they said, some say John the Baptist. Others say Elijah. And others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. And he said to them, okay, but what about you?
- Who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered him, blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed 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. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.
- And whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.
- [7 : 24] And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him saying, far be it from you, Lord. This shall never happen to you. But he turned and said to Peter, get behind me, Satan.
- You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. Let's pray. God, we want to have our minds and hearts set on the things of God, not the things of man.

And we know where they go so naturally. So we need you, please, by your spirit. Redirect our hearts.

Fix them on you. Even as we have worshipped you. Even as we have called each other's hearts to bow before you. Keep us there and show us what that looks like.

Not just this morning, but every moment of every day. Speak, Father, to us. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

[8 : 33] Imagine that you conducted a public opinion poll in your office, your neighborhood, your school. One question. Who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? What kind of answers do you think you might get to that? I suspect you'd get a pretty wide range of answers, even here in Huntsville.

Many of them positive. A great teacher. A moral example. A social revolutionary. Others, I'm sure, less so.

A failed leader. A total fraud. A religious bigot. A Christian. I wonder how many of those people you would ask this week would say something the equivalent of Peter's response.

The Christ. The Son of the Living God. I wonder how important we think that answer is. How important is it to us what our friends or neighbors think of the person and the work of Jesus?

[9 : 40] Because Jesus seems to think it's awfully important. Doesn't he? He says in no uncertain terms that accurately confessing his person and work provides the foundation for his church.

Verse 18. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. I won't belabor a lengthy debate this morning, but I'm convinced that this rock on which the church of Jesus Christ will be built is Peter professing the truth about Jesus.

That word for rock is actually a play on Peter's name. And it is personal. He's talking to Peter. But it's not merely Peter as a person.

Because in just a couple verses when Peter misunderstands Jesus' person and work, what does Jesus have to say then? Jesus calls him Satan. Not rock.

But Peter professing Jesus' identity is the foundation of the church. That's a big deal, right?

[10 : 55] Who does he say Jesus is that makes Jesus so excited? You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus says, yes, that comes from God.

He's the one who told you that. He's the Christ, the Son of the living God. In other words, Jesus is the hero of the story of the great battle of good versus evil.

He's the hero. He is the Christ, the one long promised and awaited. The true king who would crush the head of the serpent once and for all.

The one who would swallow up death forever. Isaiah 25. He's the savior who would pay the penalty for sin. Earn victory over Satan.

And lead his people in triumphal procession. He's uniquely divine. The Son of the living God. Not merely one striking human figure with great leadership qualities.

[11 : 56] But God himself. The one and only Christ. The Messiah. The true king of kings over all.

Peter said a lot there in that short statement, didn't he? By the revelation of God to him, Peter recognizes Jesus' unique deity.

And his unique role in God's mission to redeem and restore his people and all of his creation. The fact that Jesus is the hero of the story that runs all the way back to Genesis and the Garden of Eden.

He's here. He sees Jesus has this huge task. This historic foe to fight. And he sees only Jesus can accomplish this mission.

Defeat this enemy and rescue God's people from hell. Bringing them to heaven with him. And Jesus says that's it.

[12 : 59] That's me. That's who I am. And that's the foundation of my church. No identity short of that will do.

Nothing else less than that can be the focus of a Christian church. Jesus at the center. Not a footnote. Not a sideshow.

But the sine qua non of the church without which it is not the church. Jesus says on this rock, I will build my church.

My people. My called out ones. Our identity then being found in his.

We are his. His called out people. Set apart for him. To serve him and his mission in the world.

[14 : 00] Our identity is first and foremost as Christians. Those trusting and connected to the Christ. That's who we are. So just as any other team, we now have his goals.

His enemies. His priorities. That's what unites us as we've been talking about this summer, right? That's what we saw back the first week in 1 Peter.

That we are possessed people. A people for God's own possession. We are his. We are his. And so the purpose of our lives is to be about his glory and his grace.

Right? Because we're his. And similarly here, Jesus says, You are my church. Based on knowing my glorious identity and sharing my glorious purpose to conquer the gates of hell.

That seems easy, right? I mean, of course anyone who really believes this about Jesus' unique identity would be connected to his mission assaulting hell, right?

[15 : 09] What else would a church do? Isn't that what all churches are about then? The mission of King Jesus in the world. Taking on the huge task and the historic foe that Jesus fights.

Joining with him to redeem and restore his creation. To see people destined for hell rescued. And brought safe home to heaven. Right? That's what all churches are about.

Well, often other things crowd into the mission of the church, don't they? Listen to this often told parable and see if you feel any truth in it.

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept watch over the sea.

And with no thought for themselves, went out day or night tirelessly searching for the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, so it became famous. And some of those who were saved and others in the surrounding areas wanted to become associated with the station.

[16 : 17] And give of their time, money, and effort to support its work. New boats were bought, new crews were trained. The little life-saving station grew. Some of the new members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped.

So they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in an enlarged building. And now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members. And they redecorated it beautifully and furnished it as a sort of club.

Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The mission of life-saving was still given lip service, but most were too busy or lacked the commitment to take part in life-saving activities personally.

About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired staff brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick.

It looked and sounded different. And the beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

[17 : 35] At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal life of the club.

But some members insisted life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the life of all the various kinds of people who shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast.

They did. And as years went by, the new station experienced the same changes. They evolved into a club, and yet another life-saving station was founded.

If you visit the seacoast today, you'll find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters.

Only now, most of the people drown. It's a sobering parable, isn't it? Club or church?

[18 : 43] Friends, Jesus' person and Jesus' work provides the mission for Jesus' church.

He came to seek and save the lost, to attack Satan's strongholds, to ransom people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation.

If we are his, we must follow him in this. Edmund Clowney writes, Mission is not an optional activity for Christ's disciples.

The gospel itself is the story of the seeking Savior who knows the Father's love. If mission is lost, the gospel is lost.

Y'all, Jesus didn't go to the cross so you and I could have a more comfortable life in a better neighborhood with nice church friends. It's bigger than that. Our mission is not merely to make one another feel good, to enjoy life with as little of the discomfort and loneliness as possible.

[19 : 52] Jesus came and we are here to assault the gates of hell so that everyone would know the glory and the grace of the one true and living God no matter what it costs.

That's why he came and that's why we must go. Go. It's why we exist. Look at verse 18 again. You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Y'all, the church is on the move. And it has a real enemy seeking to stop us. It's not flesh and blood that we fight against but rather hell itself is what the church of Jesus is set up against.

And then Satan himself as Jesus points out in verse 23. And Peter tries to get Jesus off of his mission as the suffering Messiah who's headed to a cross.

Jesus says what? Get behind me, Satan. Hell itself. Satan himself.

[21 : 04] We are in a war and our enemy is real. And then Jesus reminds us how urgent this battle is.

The souls of men and women are at stake. Many of our friends and neighbors are facing an eternity of God's wrath in hell. And it's a reality that many of us would rather ignore.

But Jesus doesn't. Over and over he faces it straight on. Others are living through the darkness and fires of hell as it were right now in this broken world.

And Jesus says his church must be fighting hell every day. Our life together as a gospel community is sweet and wonderful and I love it.

But it is not to be one of comfort and complacency. Rather we are at war against spiritual forces for eternal people.

[22 : 08] And that battle is hard, isn't it? It's tiring. It's at times confusing. Discouraging.

Which is part of why we need one another, isn't it? With arms locked together to battle alongside each other. To bind up one another's wounds.

To encourage one another back into the fray. Don't forget. We are on mission with one another for King Jesus.

As Jude says, snatching some from the fire. I almost titled this sermon, The Church is Going to Hell. But I wanted you to know what I meant before I said it.

Why we're going to hell. The church of Jesus Christ must be raiding hell for the God of heaven.

[23 : 10] Amen? That's what he's called us to. If you're not working to beat Auburn, you're not on Coach Saban's team. You know that. Right? If you're not racing Russia to get to the moon, you're not working for Von Braun's team.

And if you're not raiding hell for lost souls, you're not serving King Jesus. That's what he does. And that's where his team is headed.

Who has God put around us? Every day. For whose eternal sake we are to be raiding hell and battling the forces of darkness.

Who is it? I told you last week about the Scottish pastor and his wife who took me and Christy in as a lonely, newlywed couple for four months.

And I promised to tell you what we learned of the hospitality and mission of the church from this small congregation. The church we became a part of was about 30 Scottish Presbyterians.

[24 : 21] I want you to get that picture in your mind. Over half of them probably above the age of 70. So you can see them all now in your mind. Their old church building right in Glasgow, Scotland.

It had recently become surrounded by neighborhoods primarily occupied by asylum-seeking refugees. Most of whom were young Muslims, almost exclusively from Middle Eastern countries.

So what did this group of 30 old traditional Scottish Presbyterians do? They moved out to a different part of town where they could comfortably enjoy retirement, right?

Yes, of course. Except they didn't. They decided that God had called them to fight for Jesus right there.

And it seemed to make no sense. It was crazy. They met these new neighbors at their point of need with English classes, helped filling out legal documents, and parenting playgroups.

[25 : 32] Can you imagine going to a parenting playgroup hosted by an 83-year-old? They brought in an assistant pastor who had learned enough Urdu to write a gospel sermon in their language to hold multicultural worship services every few weeks so they could invite their friends into that to hear the gospel preached and to worship alongside them.

They threw themselves and their time and all the resources they had, everything they could think of into loving and sharing Jesus with these neighbors.

It was beautiful. We loved getting to watch. Sometimes raiding hell doesn't require you to go too far. But it does require sacrifice.

To whom is God calling us to declare and demonstrate the hope of a God who dies for His people? Who loved us so much that no one, not even His closest friends, could talk Him out of sacrificing His life for us.

Who's the one true King and Savior, the only one who's done that for us, so everyone needs to know Him. Who that you know needs to know that? See, our enemy is real.

[26 : 57] The battle is urgent and dangerous and costly, but it's also true that our victory is certain. Verse 18, one more time.

I will build my church. Who's going to do that, by the way? King Jesus. I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Y'all, this is what sends you into the darkness or the flames, right? That King Jesus has been there. That Jesus went to the cross so that this rescue has actually been accomplished accomplished because of who He is and what He has done.

We charge forward with hope and confidence because greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church who follows her great King.

Amen? And so, and so, we press into that darkness even when it seems fearful. And so, we open our homes to those we don't know very well.

[28 : 09] And so, we initiate conversations that we fear may get us shut down or left out. And so, we offer our time to dive into messy life situations.

And so, we learn the names of our neighbors and our servers and our classmates because God is sending this group of kids into schools this week to do this.

And He's sending you somewhere and into the lives of people too. And He says, get to know them and then dive into the mess that you know and that you see. And so, we plead with our friends and we plead with God in prayer because there is one Christ and there is one cross and there is one King and salvation is found in no one else.

And not even hell can stop King Jesus or His church from rescuing dying people. And so, we go. When I think of a faithful friend, Samwise Gamgee often pops into my head for a lot of reasons, but especially this one.

In Tolkien's The Fellowship of the Ring, Sam's friend Frodo is staring into the darkness of Mordor and the fire of Mount Doom and he's about to face all the evil that the world has to throw at him.

[29 : 42] And Sam sees his friend trembling at the thought because Frodo thinks he's going to go face it all alone until Sam steps up and says this to Frodo.

You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin to the bitter end and you can trust us to keep any secret of yours closer than you yourself keep it. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone and go off without a word.

We're your friends, Frodo. Anyway, there it is. We know most of what Gandalf has told you. We know a good deal about the ring. We are horribly afraid. But we are coming with you or following you like hounds.

Is that your heart for your friends and neighbors? Is that our heart for the entire Huntsville community?

You cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone. That's the mission of a gospel community.

[30 : 50] In God's family, we are bound tightly to one another by King Jesus in order to forge into the darkness and fires of hell for King Jesus.

He tells us to storm the very gates of hell and share the good news of a Savior who went to a cross to rescue us and many others.

Amen. Amen. May God give us grace to be such a community for His glory. Let's pray. God, this is not new information.

We just confess how easily distracted we are. We confess how our hearts beat for a lot of different things from what yours does.

and we ask that you would renew and revive them. That we would have the heart of Christ for those around us.

[32 : 01] That we would desire the glory of Christ as more and more sing praises to His name. And that we would be willing to walk through anything because He has been there and because He is with us.

And the Holy Spirit within us and among us as a community will see that happen. And so, Father, with great hope and with a little bit of fear, we ask You to make us like that.

Make this church your church that the gates of hell would never prevail against her. In Jesus' name.

Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.

Instead, I will see you from our here today. As first of all, visit us online at southwood.org. Let's go to [www. Correthet.org](http://www.Correthet.org) and visit us online on divine and their postappointment gift visit us online available at italian Senhor.

[33 : 12] Here are some dannes dividend in Moses of the horror in the past series stateHe in the past