

Where God Works

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[0 : 0 0] If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Matthew chapter 16. Is there anybody here who doesn't have a Bible?

We have Bibles for you. We're not calling to show you up or anything like that. But we have no usher over there. We maybe have someone over here.

If someone needs a Bible, we'll bring you one because you're going to want to have it before us. In case you don't know who I am, my name is BK.

I get the pleasure of being one of the pastors that serves here at Squamish Baptist Church. And one of the things that I'm starting today is a little bit of a three-part sermon series. And one of the things that I like to bust out once in a while is taking a look at some specific things that the Bible teaches about.

If there's one thing that I know that many of us have in common is sometimes we think the Bible says certain things and sometimes our culture says something or we've heard another Christian say.

[1 : 0 4] So what I like to do is I like to boil it down, go right down to what the Bible says so we can be assured that this is what the Bible says. Because why? We understand that is the power. Amen?

That is God's Word. It is infallible. And it's correct in teaching us about Him. So the subject that I'm going to talk about for the next three weeks is the church.

What does the Bible have to say about the church? One of the questions that I get asked all the time, and I'm not exaggerating whether it be here in Squamish or down in the States or in Asia or Europe, wherever I've been just as a pastor, as I meet with other pastors, other people, they always ask me, Hey BK, what is your vision for the church?

What is your vision for the church? Tell me, and often they want to hear about my philosophy of ministry or a direction that I'm going. But one of the most important things that I think, and I want you guys to understand, that really my vision means nothing compared to God's vision, right?

It's not about my vision. It's understanding us as a body what God's vision is for the church. So I always try to direct people, well, you might look at the ministry that I'm involved in, but I want you to be able to judge it by what God says as opposed to what I say.

[2 : 2 6] So that's kind of the reason what prompted me to put together this sermon series to understand this. Now, before we get to the subject of God's vision, I believe we need to understand three truths about God's church, three truths about God's church, and that is what we are going to spend the bulk of our day in today.

If you have a bulletin, you'll notice in the notes section, there's a pretty easy outline to follow. Feel free to add in those points as we go.

That'll help you for your growth group study, and I hope for your personal edification. Before we go any further, and I get into these truths, I need to share something with you.

I am really biased on this subject. All right? I am biased on the church. I love the church.

I do. I love it with all my being. And it has absolutely nothing to do with me being a pastor. Zero.

[3 : 39] Absolutely nothing with me being a pastor. In fact, I loved the church many years before I even considered becoming a pastor. And one of the reasons that I wanted to become a pastor, and I wanted to, is because I wanted to share my love, not only of Jesus Christ, but for His church as well.

Now, the truth of the matter is, not everyone loves the church. What's even worse, some people believe they have no hope in the church.

If you're familiar with George Barna, George Barna is a self-proclaimed evangelist who, he's the founder of what's called the Barna Research Group.

If you've picked up a book, probably in the last, I don't know, at least 10 years, maybe going back as far as 15 to 20 years, and there's a survey on anything that has to do with church, like how many men, why do men go to the church, why do children's ministry look like what they look like.

It's usually his group has done the research, compiled all the surveys, and written all the books on it. Well, several years, he wrote a book, and it was called Revolution.

[5 : 04] In this book, Barna became so disillusioned with what he has seen and measured in the last 20 plus years that he sadly concludes, based on my research, that if the local church is the hope of the world, then the world has no hope.

That's sad, right? You're reading that book, you're trying to understand about church, and you read this from an expert, in church surveys and understanding, and he just tells you, hey, last 20 years, I'm going to tell you, I got no hope when I've learned.

Maybe you feel the exact same way as George does. Maybe you've grown up, maybe you've come in the last 10, 15 years of your life, but I want to teach you what God actually has to say about his church.

And why it looks like the way it does at times. So please take out your Bibles. Matthew 16, we're going to read, 13 to 19 here.

And as you're looking forward, I just want to ask God's blessing on our time together. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we just thank you for who you are, that you have chosen to reveal yourself to us.

[6 : 39] When we are left to our own devices, we only mess it up even more. Whether it's understanding you or your church or salvation, left to our own devices, we mess it up.

Father, forgive us for being such messy people. Lord, I just ask that you would call us to a greater understanding of who you are through this study of the church.

I pray that you'd give my voice clarity, and that these ideas from your word would penetrate our hearts and give us greater understanding unto you. In your most holy and precious name, amen.

Now, before we get to the first truth, which I'm going to read in this scripture passage, the question that I want to have us understanding is, where does God work?

We're sitting back as believers in Christ. We want to be a part of God's action and what he's doing in the world. The one question we need to ask ourselves is, where does God work?

[7 : 46] So here we are turning with me to Matthew 16. Now, what's interesting is that Jesus has already done his first phase of his ministry, okay? When we get to this part of Matthew 16.

And he's kind of sitting there in the most northerly part of Israel. It's very pagan in that part of the land. And he's having this discussion with his apostles.

And it's kind of an interesting discussion because they've been with him for over a year. They've seen him do many things. It says, now when Jesus came into the district of Cesar I, Philippi, he asked his disciples. Hey guys, he's kind of doing a George Barna.

He's doing a survey. Who do people say that the Son of Man is? Verse 14. And they said, well, some say John the Baptist.

Others say Elijah. And others, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. And he being Jesus said to them, but who do you say that I am?

[8 : 46] 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.

So the first aspect to Jesus' church is, the church matters to God. The first point is, the church matters to God.

What he's revealed to us in this section of Matthew is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This is God's Son, this is God. Number two, that Jesus will build his church.

It's kind of interesting, if you really want to get into the verse, a lot of people think that Jesus is saying, he's telling Peter that he's the rock that he's going to build the church.

[9 : 54] That's not what he's saying here. He's saying, I am the rock, and I am the cornerstone which this church is going to be built upon. And number three is, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Okay, that's a point for a great amen, right? The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Amen, right? That's what he's telling them. Hey guys, no matter what you see, what you feel, what you hear, you need to understand whatever's going on around you, this is my church, I will build it, and hell will not even come against it.

So what does the church mean? If you notice in your bulletins, I put, there's theological definitions, and I kind of gave you an expanded view of what the church is. But it essentially means, out of the Greek, it comes from this word, this word, ecclesia.

And it's actually not a direct translation to church. What it means are those who are called out. And ultimately it means, called out from the world, right?

That's the whole message of the gospel. Paul in Colossians says that before we became believers in Christ, the church, we were called out of the domain of darkness.

[11 : 18] We were a part of the world of Satan, and God has called us out. Which means we were kind of doing our own thing, saying our own thing, being our own person, and somewhere, somehow, Jesus intervened into your life.

You know what it is, right? You're kind of doing your own thing, thinking it's working okay for you, and then you notice your thing's not really working for you. And often, God gets a hold of you, pulls you in.

And now once you're saved, you're a part of that church. You heard that there is forgiveness for your sins. You heard that Jesus Christ died for you. You heard that he offers eternal life, and ultimately, he loves you very much.

I think that last song we were just singing, God exchanges our sin for his grace. Amen? Once that happens, we're a part of that church.

He qualified us, he delivered us, and he transferred us from death to darkness. You saw Jesus, you heard Jesus, and ultimately, you believe Jesus.

[12 : 34] Now, when Scripture uses church, it talks generally about the entire world who comes to Christ. And when I mean that, it's all time in the past and in the future.

But more often than not, Scripture talks about the local church. The local church. So as I said, the first truth we need to understand is that church matters to God.

And today, I'm going to give you five reasons why the church matters to God. I've put those verses in parentheses for you, so I want you to be Bereans. I want you to go back. I want you to look up these things.

But the first reason, the first reason why the church matters to God, it's the place where sound doctrine is taught. It is the place where sound doctrine is taught. Sound doctrine is the truth and news about Jesus Christ.

Amen? That's how we know about him. If you know anything about Psalm 19, Psalm 19 basically states we can come to an understanding that there is God by looking at all the nature that's around us, but we're really not going to get to know God until he actually reveals himself to us.

[13 : 47] God has chosen to reveal himself in history not only through the person of Jesus Christ, but he's given us a Bible. And that Bible is used for us to know himself.

And this verse talks about to devote ourselves through the reading of Scripture to exhortation and to teaching. Bible will earlier teach in 1 Timothy that the church is the buttress and pillar of truth.

The world's not going to tell you the truth. Universities aren't going to tell you the truth. It's pretty interesting. I was, I think I mentioned to you before I used to do college ministry at Caltech and that's where Einstein used to teach so the kids that were in my class were momentarily smarter than I was in every aspect of life.

These kids are just thinking all the time. And it was interesting because even talking to some of the philosophers, even on the subject of evolution, they would talk about, oh man, that thing is so dead.

It's so dead. Even though we see that permeate in our culture, it's kind of like an afterthought because scientists who have this integrity factor are starting to study and saying, hey, this just isn't jiving with any other part of science, right?

[15 : 04] So here we are thinking, we send our kids to school thinking that they're going to come back to the truth. But sadly, it doesn't work that way. It's the church that's going to be the buttress and puller of the truth and this is where we help ourselves understand.

So the church is to be the place where we are grounded in God's truth. The second reason why the church matters to God, it's the place where the presence of Jesus Christ is lived out.

It is the place where the presence of Jesus is lived out. Ephesians 4, 15-16 talks about speaking truth in love and we are to grow in Christ.

The church is the place where we are to live life together. It is the place where we come to care for one another and it is the place we come to be cared for by others.

It is the place where we are to forgive and it is the place we are to come to be forgiven. It is the place we are to come to be loved and it is the place where we come to love others.

[16 : 16] I don't know about you, one of the reasons why I love the church is that I had a broken home and I didn't experience much love or teaching or cared for in my family when I was young but it was actually families in the church that modeled this for me, that loved me, encouraged me and helped me grow into the man that I am today.

The church matters a lot to me. The third reason is why does the church matter to God? it is the place that Jesus watches.

The church is the place that Jesus watches. Revelations 2, 2 and 3 he is addressing churches he says I know your words I know your works and I know you.

that should send a chill down your spine. That Jesus Christ himself knows specific churches.

He knows specific people. What would he say about this church? what would he say about you in this church?

[17 : 45] The fourth reason why the church matters to God simply Jesus loves the church right? Ephesians 5 25 tell me a husband at some stage of his marriage hasn't been reminded by his wife hey you're supposed to love me like Christ loved the church.

That is the promise Paul teaches us in Ephesians 5 how does Jesus love the church? He gave himself up for her by dying on the cross.

You might not love the church but you know who does it's Jesus Christ and if you don't you should. It's the perfect embodiment of who he is the reality is the church is not perfect but the reality is neither are we.

we don't always love the church for what it is but we love the church what God is making it into amen?

We may not perfect but he's growing us. A few years ago I would have struggled much harder with trying to forgive and now those things that I struggle with aren't even on my mind.

[18 : 58] Just in my growth in Jesus Christ God has given me that ability to forgive. One of the most important aspects that I want you to understand on why God why does the church matter to God the fifth point is Jesus protects the church Jesus protects the church and if you notice I put in Acts 9 3-5 and I'm going to give you a little background story on that.

That is the whole story of the apostle Paul before he was an apostle Paul and he was called Saul. If you didn't know he was a great persecutor of the church he was a member of the Sanhedrin and he hated Jesus Christ and he hated the church.

And historians believe that he was a part of many murders of Christians. So he went and he got permission to travel to Damascus to stamp out Christians that were meeting there.

On his way something happened. Saul saw Jesus appeared to him. Notice what he says. Why are you persecuting me?

Why are you persecuting me? He didn't say why are you persecuting my church? When you persecute my church Paul you're persecuting me.

[20 : 24] Jesus Christ personifies the church. I've got a shot claim for you. If you do not love the church you do not love Jesus.

Because Jesus is the church. The fact of the matter is when you attack, oppose, sow conflict and discord in the church you're attacking, opposing and sowing conflict with Jesus.

The fact of the matter is Jesus is committed to his church. So much so that he calls it him. If you count yourself as committed to Christ you will be committed to the church.

So that is the first truth in understanding. the church is that the church matters to God. What's the second truth?

Church is unhealthy. The church is unhealthy. The fact of the matter is statistics do show in North America that North American church is shrinking.

[21 : 42] The fact of the matter is North America is now the third greatest country to receive missionaries. Did you guys know that? Third greatest country in the world that it's gotten so bad here.

We used to think we were it. We were going to be the beacon of light. Whether in the United States or Canada we were going to send out missionaries. Now other countries have said man you guys have messed it up so much we're actually going to send our missionaries over to you.

Statistics show that more churches are closing down today than ever before. Churches are not growing. They're not thriving. It's interesting I lived in Victoria for five years and a lot of people know Victoria is a cruise ship destination right?

A lot of people come from Alaska do the park and the sight sea and one day I just happened to be downtown with one of my other pastor buddies of mine and we were just walking downtown and this couple just kind of comes up to us and they wanted to know why they're seeing so many church buildings that were no longer churches.

It turned out it ended up being a Christian couple from New York City. We got to know them. We let them know we're pastors and they were just saying why are these church buildings wasted away here?

[22 : 56] In fact I have an article that talks about all the different ways different cities are using church buildings for other purposes from community centers to restaurants to nightclubs. churches. How did this happen? Why are churches so unhealthy? I'm going to give you that answer and that answer is found in Jeremiah 531.

Jeremiah 531. One verse explains to us why the church is unhealthy. I'll read it to you here. One he says the prophets prophesy falsely the priests rule at their discretion and my people have come to have it so.

But what will you do when the end comes? We see three characteristics of why churches are unhealthy. One, prophets speak falsely.

Prophets which we can argue are modern day preachers no longer speak for God but speak for other things. Instead of declaring what God told and declared they spoke what they thought that people wanted to hear.

[24 : 06] Hey I want to feel good about myself right? I want to hear the truth that makes me want to come here every day. It's not so much what I say that I want you to be refreshed with.

I want you to be refreshed with the power of God's word and how it's lived out in a community of believers. But these were the men that were called, they were given a charge to call people back to God.

That's what the prophets role was. Hey you guys have gotten so far from God as God's people in Israel I want to tell you about them so you can come back. But the prophets instead they told them falsehoods that God was happy with them.

This is why the New Testament is filled with commands for preachers and teachers to preach the word of God over and over and over. Preach sound doctrine.

The reality is of course people don't want to hear about hell or their sin but the reality is they have to right?

[25 : 11] We've been here I think just a little bit over a month here in Squamish and I finally got a doctor right? A family doctor and we're looking at getting a dentist and doing all those things and I had a great time with the doctor this week.

I went in and they checked me out ran the chest and told me I was in perfect health for a 75 year old man right?

Now if I came to you and said I'm a perfect embodiment of health you might want to say BK you might want to get a doctor that's actually going to be a little bit more honest with you about maybe a little bit the weight but we want a doctor that's going to be honest with us right?

My favorite comedian always says the doctor is the only person in the world that can insult you right? That's the kind of friend we want from our doctor. We don't want him to tell us hey you're really great but yet he understands there's a tumor inside of you.

Tragic story at my last church a woman was told she was so fit and fine to go on a cruise with her husband right in the middle of the Panama Canal she gets grossly sick gets rushed over to the Panamanian hospital and not only is she sick she's got a tumor and she's dead within six weeks.

[26 : 36] You know one doctor's telling her everything's fine. That's why I preach you right? I want to call us to revival reform and renewal.

That's what the prophets were supposed to do. Second thing we learn from this passage is that priests rule at their own discretion. They rule in ways that will make them popular or wealthy because the priests at that time could take pay and often they would decide to rely on their own wisdom to get things done.

It's interesting if I can show you my email I get advertisements all the time from conferences, books, seminars, new products, everything that's going to help us become a rich church.

You know that? Make your people give more. All these type of techniques come through. New ways to reach people. The reality is sadly you cannot ask someone who doesn't know they are sick to prescribe them their own medicine, right?

The tragic reality is you and I are horrible at self-diagnosing. As many as you know, I was married just three and a half years ago.

[27 : 52] Before that time, I thought I was the most understanding, patient person in the world. I found out I can be really selfish. I can be really stubborn.

learn. You see, the key to building a healthy, vibrant, Christ-energized church is to seek after God with a broken spirit and a humble heart.

That's what we're supposed to do. Fact of the matter is it's God's church, amen? Man's not going to tell God how to get things done. We've got to go to God to tell him, tell us how to get things done.

So you might be saying, hey, BK, I don't like the church because I know there's bad preachers, there's bad leaders, just the leadership's horrible, I just don't want to be a part of it. But what's interesting is that Jeremiah reminds us that the problem just isn't found in church leadership.

Let's go back to Jeremiah there. He says, the people liked it so. The people liked it so.

[28 : 58] They didn't want the truth, the people didn't seek after God, and the people didn't want to give of their gifts. They wanted comfort and for something to tell them that everything was great on their Titanic, regardless if it was true or not.

So what is God's judgment on this? Read down, check out verse 30. It's before the passage. God actually passes judgment before he gets the diagnosis, and he says, an appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land.

The word appalling actually means to take something that was good and beautiful and was made to be something wonderful.

It actually means to take good and lushful and to turn it into a dry wasteland. That's how God views churches that aren't holding his things first, right?

You were given something that was supposed to be so beautiful and lushful, and you turned it into a dry and desolate land. It actually means a deflowered area.

[30 : 19] And when he says that a horrible thing, he's actually saying a revolting and disgusting thing has happened. You had preachers who didn't preach, leaders who didn't lead, and people that were okay with that.

The only other time in Scripture that he uses that definition is when he describes Sodom and Gomorrah. what we see happening in today's truth should break our hearts.

We forsook her. So the first truth that we understand is that church matters. The second truth is the church is sick or unhealthy.

But the third truth is that church can get better. Amen? This is what he tells us in verse 18. 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.

Verse 19. 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.

[31 : 32] What's interesting, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. It is the only human institution in this world that gets that guarantee.

You know that? It's not our marriages. It's not our workplace. It's not our businesses.

It's only the church that gets that guarantee that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

the reality is we can play a part in the recovery plan. Jesus gave the apostles the keys of the kingdom, and they passed them on to us.

And we were charged with one thing, which is to share the message of Jesus Christ. It's interesting just hanging out with a pastor this week, and he's kind of done a head count calculation of the amount of Christians that are operating in all the churches on Squamish on a Sunday morning.

[32 : 44] You guys know what the percentage is? Yeah, close. It's about 2%. 2%. 2.5 maybe if you think Squamish has less than 19,000.

But only 2%. That's the one thing we were charged with. You see, my heart is that you would be moved by Christ for this church, that you will pray for this church, that you will be sanctified by this church, and that you will serve this church.

For in doing these things, we are making a decision to serve Christ. Not me, not the leadership, but we're making a decision to serve Christ.

Not for ourselves, not to make ourselves feel good or remove the guilt off us. We feel that sometimes, right?

We feel guilty. That's why we come to church. My husband gets off my back if I come here. But I want to call your attention to the words of the Apostle Paul, which he gives us in Colossians 1.28.

[33 : 52] Why don't you take your Bibles and turn there for me? Colossians 1, New Testament. I'd read off all the books of the Bible, but I'll get them in disorder and you will think I failed seminary.

Colossians, Ephesians, right? And this is what Paul is writing.

He begins with him, and that's talking about Jesus. He says, Jesus we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, which is God's wisdom, right?

Not man's. Now get this, he says, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. That's the goal of the leadership.

That's what the goal of the leadership here is at this church, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. Now Paul says something in verse 29. He says, for this I toil, struggling for all his, it's Jesus' energy, that he powerfully works within me.

[35 : 10] Now it's not so much that our goal is to present you mature in Christ, it is our understanding that whoever the Lord would bring to Squamish Baptist Church, we are to be stewards of the souls here.

we are giving this blessing and responsibility by God himself to grow you in a deeper, mature faith. And you know what? He says, but Paul says, I toil. And what that means is I struggle, not by my earthly means, but I struggle in Christ's energy.

Amen? That means it's not a work of the flesh, it's a work of the spirit. It means to be sold out to Christ.

It means to be faithful, available, teaching. The question is who is willing to allow the power of the spirit to work in them and to humble themselves as they take on this great responsibility?

Who here wants to do that? To be empowered with God's energy to work in his spirit to present each and every one of us mature.

[36 : 23] So next week what I want to do is I want to flush out more what a church is supposed to look like that is functioning under the power of Jesus Christ. I want you to know it because I want you to say, hey, I don't want you to commit to a church that is not doing the things that God has asked them, right?

I don't get paid by commission, right? I'm not trying to fill people in here, but I want you to understand and I want you to experience the joy that I have and that you can share in by toiling, struggling in Christ's energy to see people mature in Christ.

You see, these are the truths that will help us understand the type of ministry and church that God blesses. Notice he doesn't say the power of Jesus is only for the gifted.

The fact of the matter is we've all been gifted. You know that? We've all been given a spiritual gift. And one of my favorite sayings is, did you not know that when you are not using your gift here, you could be robbing me of the ability for me to be sanctified?

And what the writer is saying is, by you using your gift, it's actually helping me get over my issues, my sin, that I can grow in Jesus Christ. So when you choose to withhold those gifts from here, you could be robbing me, you could be robbing your friends of what God wants to do in their lives.

[37 : 58] I honestly believe that every true Christian wants to be involved in something that God blesses, right? Our souls long to be a part of something that God energizes.

Because of this, I'm going to give you four things that I want you to pray about this week, okay? By the way, a couple of sermons from here, we're going to actually speak on prayer, and I guarantee you it's not going to be any type of sermon that you've heard on prayer before.

I'm going to come at it in an entirely different way, but one, first thing I'm going to ask you is, is to pray for humble hearts. Pray for a humble heart. Two, I want to pray that our minds are renewed by the Word of God, that we have minds that search God's Scripture and renewed.

Three, that God would give us teachable spirits, that God would give us teachable spirits, and four, that God would protect us.

I guarantee you as you are considering this church and serving the church more, you will be attacked. Because notice even though the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, guess who's against the church?

[39 : 17] Gates of hell. You have to protect your marriages, you need to protect your homes, you as parents need to protect the hearts of your children.

children. One of my favorite quotes is what I'm going to close with on the church, and it was written by John Stott, who was an English preacher, and he simply writes, on earth the church is often in rags and tattered, stained and ugly, despised and persecuted.

But one day she will be seen for what she is, nothing less than the bride of Christ, free from spots, wrinkles, or any other disfigurement, holy and without blemish, beautiful and glorious.

It is to the destructive end that Christ has been working and is continuing to work. The bride does not make herself presentable. It is the bridegroom who labors to beautify her in order to present her to himself.

We can't do it. We need God to work within us to make this church beautiful. Please pray with me. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we love you.

[40 : 38] We thank you that you haven't forsaken us, that you protect us, you guard us, that we are your most cherished, possessional Lord, your church.

Father, I don't know the lives, I don't know the hearts, I don't know anything that's going on here. I have the advantage of being completely new and get to know each person where they stand today. My heart is just through understanding these truths about your church that your spirit would work.

I pray that you would want to be a part of something that you are blessing and that you are a part of and ultimately that comes down to your church. Father, we've got a million and one distractions that come against us.

But Lord, just as it comes to making budgets for our money for the year, sitting down in our businesses and making plans for what's going to come, I pray that we would be a people who would sit down, think, and pray about what we can give the church.

And I'm not talking about money. I'm talking about our gifts and how we can better use our gifts for the building up of your kingdom. Father, we love you.

[41 : 55] We desire to follow all that you have given us. In your most holy and precious name, amen.