

Jesus is the Rightful Owner of the Church

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[0 : 0 0] Returning back to Matthew chapter number 16, I'm grateful for corporate worship and church, the time here. You know, throughout the week we all struggle with different things and we come together and our mind and heart gets to be fixed upon Jesus.

It saves us from ourselves at times. I find myself in all kinds of trouble throughout the week that I've created of my own doing. About a year ago I was at Stephanie's family's house seeing her uncle Kim and they just had this beautiful home, all right?

Our home would probably fit in their living room and kitchen. It's a few million dollar home there on Lake Lanier. And as I was there I was waiting and a plumber was going to come by and I was going to meet them.

Well, the plumber came by and he asked a few questions and very quickly I realized this guy thinks I own this house, all right? And the reasonable thing to do would just be like, well, I'm not the homeowner.

I'm just, you know, I'm a cousin just helping. That's not the way I went with it, not at all, all right? I'm making up a back story. I'm a tech wizard, you know, get rich at a young age. I'm just going through all these things and kind of just thinking, well, this is kind of fun that this guy thinks I own this big house and I'm just going to run with it for a little bit.

[1 : 0 6] Then we finally get to a question that he asked that the homeowner should have known, but I didn't know. And I had to say, man, I'm just going to tell you something. I'm just a cousin. All right, I don't live here. And I was just, he was like looking at me like, you're grown.

Like, why did you do that? I'm like, you know, I'm only, you know, I'm not fully grown, you know? I just, and so, but him not knowing who I was didn't create any problem, little embarrassment, but knowing who I am makes very little difference in all of this world.

But knowing who Jesus is changes everything. That is the question that we are not going to move past as a church. Our boast is going to be in Jesus Christ and making him known.

And so we're going to look at the setting here where Jesus asked the disciples, you know, who do men say that I am? And they knew the answer to that. But the biggest question was, who do you say that I am? It's the biggest question any of you will ever answer in here.

Most important question we will answer as a church is, who is Jesus Christ? Chapter number 15, we're going to just back up a chapter that lets you remember what happened in that is Jesus is on his journey through Gentile territory.

[2 : 1 6] He feeds 4,000 plus people with loaves of bread and fishes. And there he's doing ministry with the Gentile people there. And then towards the end of the chapter, he gets in a boat with his disciples and he comes back in the Jewish territory.

And when he does, he's greeted by a group of people, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. And now we start chapter 16 with Jesus on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. And there's two groups of characters here in Matthew 16.

You have your Pharisees and your Sadducees. And then you also have your disciples. The chapter 16 starts off with them wanting a sign from Jesus and them wanting him to prove something that he has proven time and time again.

And then Jesus looks at them and he changes the discussion to verse 2. And he says, He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and lowering.

And you hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky, but you can discern the signs of the times. Something that's even common to the day. People can look at the weather and they can tell what's going to happen.

[3 : 20] And what Jesus is doing here is he's telling this group of people that were typically opposed to each other. The Pharisees and the Sadducees representing the religious, the self-indulgent, those that were self-righteous, proud.

He's telling them that you focus upon temporary matters. You're constantly paying attention to things like the changing of the weather and predicting what's going to happen, but you're missing what is right here in front of you.

You are blind to eternal realities. They could not see what was right there in front of them. They're ignoring the signs that were there. And he told them in verse 4, it says, There'll be one sign, it's the sign of Jonah.

We learn in Matthew 12 that that means in the resurrection, you're going to have plenty of proof that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one, the son of the living God, in the resurrection.

And that's all sign that you should need. But the disciples aren't like this. They're not the self-indulgent or the self-righteous people. At times they're a little bit slow and we see and we're thankful for that as we read it in scriptures and Jesus will say things to them about, Oh ye of little faith or did you not perceive or do you not understand?

[4 : 30] And constantly bring them to a place of remembrance. But they're not marked by being self-righteous here. And so when the question comes, Jesus is going to ask them. He brings them to a place where he's going to ask them these two questions.

He doesn't take them to Rome because he doesn't need a political endorsement. He doesn't take them to Athens because he doesn't need any academic certification. He takes them here to Jerusalem.

He takes them here, not to Jerusalem because he didn't take them to Jerusalem because he did not need the approval of the religious establishment. But here at Galilee, at the key headquarter of false religion, Jesus is going to ask two questions.

Not preach a sermon, not give a speech, not start a debate. But he's going to ask them, who do people say that I am? And who do you say that I am? Because Christianity is not about cultural or political or even solely theological viewpoints.

It's all about Jesus. It's about him. It's about knowing him. And so the most important question you answer ever individually is who is this man called Jesus?

[5 : 36] And as a church, it's a question that on this anniversary and every anniversary, we need to ask ourselves, who do we say that this man is? It's fine that the disciples know what the other people thought and the question, but what Jesus really wants to know is who do you say that I am?

Charles Spurgeon, pastor of England many years ago, about this passage, he says this, Our Lord presupposes that his disciples would not have the same thoughts as men had.

They would not follow the spirit of the age and shape their views by those of the cultured persons of the period. And it's true today. The disciples of Jesus, we see Jesus differently than popular opinion.

We see Jesus differently than a religious crowd alone. So three things from the passage I want us to look at. First of all, is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

That is Peter's confession, and that is confession of all those that make up the church today, that Jesus is the Christ. Second, Jesus is the builder of the church. And then lastly, Jesus is the rightful owner of his church.

[6 : 41] Look again at verse number 15 with me, if you will. This comes at the end of those two questions that Jesus asked. He asked, who do men say that I am? And then he goes on and said, who do you say I am? And verse 15, he saith unto them, but whom say that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. On this occasion, and on many occasions, Peter is going to be a representative.

He's going to answer on behalf of the other disciples. He is the first to speak. He always seems to know the answer. If you have some children, you probably have that child that always seems to be the spokesman for that group.

Maybe you are that spokesman in a group of people. Peter, he answers. And he answers very clearly. He doesn't waver. He doesn't say, some people believe, and we're coming to the opinion. He says, thou art the Christ.

Peter would have grown up like other Jewish young men with this being whispered in his ear and said to him, a passage out of Deuteronomy chapter number 6, verse number 4, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.

[7 : 42] He would have heard that our God is one Lord. And his statement to say that Jesus is the Son of God would be far beyond signing of the Declaration of Independence.

You know, when those men signed that Declaration of Independence, they were making a declaration that could have cost them their lives. Whatever Jesus would be found guilty of, being stating that he is God, Peter now is, he has signed on as well.

He says, you are the Son of God. It's not my opinion, but he makes a definitive statement about it. What he's saying is, Jesus, you are the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One.

You're the one that has been prophesied by all the prophets. You are the long-awaited deliverer of God's people. And Peter is not the last to say it, but here in scriptures, he's the first one to make this public confession.

And so the popular opinion of the day, it was wrong about Christ. What did some people say? Some said, well, you're John the Baptist. That comes from the story in Mark chapter number six, when Herod, who had killed John the Baptist, he becomes paranoid about the idea that John the Baptist has come back.

[8 : 50] And so he would have had that opinion. And apparently other people had thought that as well, this illogical conclusion, because Jesus and John the Baptist live here at the same time. There's no reason to believe that.

Or some thought he was Elijah. And we understand that. If you remember in a Sunday school class where you had Elijah doesn't die, but he is taken up in a whirlwind. He's separated by a chariot of fire, but he goes up in a whirlwind.

And so Elijah never died. And we know that he would come before the Messiah. And then some said Jeremiah, or in one of the other prophets. And there's no consensus here, but there's different opinions.

And each of these opinions show a high approval of Jesus. As John the Baptist, he was going to proclaim the kingdom and call people to repentance. Or as Elijah, he demonstrated supernatural power.

Or like Jeremiah, his character and conduct was prophetic. These are all complimentary things. These are all high approval of Jesus, but they're inadequate.

[9 : 49] Just viewing Jesus as a forerunner at best, they didn't see him as the Messiah. It's a wrong view to see him as a wise rabbi or as a great prophet. Or it's just as a miracle worker.

Probably heard the saying before, but a half-truth masquerading as a whole truth is a whole lie. I'm going to say that one more time. Probably going to read it. It's a hard one to say, right? A half-truth masquerading as a whole truth is a whole lie.

Public opinion about Jesus here was high, but at best it was a half-truth. And so it was a whole lie. They did not recognize who Jesus was.

Did you know that in America right now that we're at the highest percentage of people who ever once faithfully attended church, who no longer attend church? That one out of ten people in America say that they once attended church regularly, but they don't anymore.

That is concerning. But what's most concerning is that a diminished view of Jesus always leads to a diminished view of what he loves. If you were to survey people and say, who do you say that Jesus is?

[10 : 56] The answers would be as varied as it's ever been. And that should break our heart as people that know him. We're the ones that say he is the anointed one. He is the Christ. Today, if you just know Jesus as a good teacher, then you will follow him as if he is a good teacher.

If you think he has good ideas, then on occasion you'll decide to yield yourself to his ideas. Or if you think he's just a good example, then you will try your best to follow that example.

But today in here, if you believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah who came to earth to save us from our sins, to conquer sin and death, and to reign and rule over all of us as Lord, that changes everything about our lives.

And that is where the church has been built. That is the answer that was given. A.W. Tozer says, What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. What you think about when you think about God is the most important thing about you.

On a corporate level as a church, what we think about Jesus and what we say about him is the most important thing about us. Many churches have nurseries. Many churches have wonderful programs.

[12 : 03] But what do we say about Jesus is going to distinguish us from being truly a church or just some other group of people that gather. Peter's not the only one that will say that. Remember Martha, who was too busy the day that Jesus came by there with Mary and she gets a bad rap, right?

Because he wasn't ready that day to answer, not recognizing fully who Jesus was. In John chapter number 11, verse 27, she says, She saith unto him, Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which shall come into the world.

She makes the same confession. The Apostle Paul, when he's giving his testimony, talking about when it all started, Saul, who had been a persecutor of the church, and now he had come to know Jesus, he says in Acts chapter 9, verse 19 and 20, And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.

Then was Saul certain days with disciples which were at Damascus, and straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. That was the beginning of his Christian life.

That was his complete message. It is our happy confession as believers to say that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the Anointed One. And you and I are blessed in here that that has been revealed to us.

[13 : 15] Verse number 17 of our chapter of the day, And Jesus answered and said unto him, the Peter, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, the son of Bar-Jonah, here, the Son of Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

See, the grace of God is the only way that any of us could behold the beauty of Christ. Paul describing when he came to Christ in Galatians 1.16, He says, to reveal his Son in me, that I may preach him among the heathen.

Today in here, if you're a believer, we should rejoice in the fact that Jesus Christ was revealed to you, that you understood the gospel, and you put your faith and trust in him.

It's about four chapters before where Peter and other disciples, they will ask that Jesus teach us how to pray. And he will say, some many times throughout the scripture in the Old Testament, God would have been referred to as Yahweh, but Jesus is going to pray, and he's going to say, our Father which is our in heaven.

And he's going to tell every one of those around him, those believers, those disciples of him, that they can pray in the same way, that you and I can say, that is a wonderful privilege that we have as the church, as his children, that when we pray to him, we get to say, our Father which art in heaven.

[14 : 35] And so we ought to be grateful the day that he has been revealed to us. It says, blessed art thou who knows this. If you know this in here today, we are blessed people. And the church will always advance, and it will always go forward on this confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

And regardless if it's unpopular, or unfashionable, or if it becomes politically incorrect, the church is always built on this foundation, and the gates of hell will not prevail.

I spent a few years ago, I shared this story with you when I came back. But there's a church coming out of COVID, and it was down to just a small group of people. Many people had not returned. There was very little money in the bank.

They weren't able to pay their electric bill. The church was going to have to be sold, and the church was going to dissolve. And the group of people began to get together, and they began to pray. And they would say, we don't know what God has for us, but at the last months that we have together, we are going to do all that we can to make much of Jesus.

And they wrote Jesus all over the place. When you pulled up on property, it was on the side of the wall. They had spent \$30 of their \$300 left in the bank for a gallon of paint, all right? And they had signs all over town.

[15 : 46] They had T-shirts on that said Jesus. And that church was just growing, and God was blessing, not because they had some great innovation, but because Jesus was being lifted up, and he was building his church.

It was wonderful. And that's the promise that he gave, that he would build his church. Jesus is the builder of his church. That's verse 18. Thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church.

You know, as a pastor, those are the most comforting words that I hear. Jesus say, I will build my church. At no point has he ever needed me to sub in for him.

At no point has he ever got tired and said, I'm going to give up my position to you. But Jesus, the one who died for you, the one that you're blessed to know, the Son of God, he says, I will build my church.

And he says, I will build it upon this rock. And there's still questions that we ask here. Does he mean Peter? Many people through history thought he meant Peter here. And if so, we should look to Peter as the first pope.

[16 : 48] And we should look to our latest pope, the latest pope for direction. Or does he mean the apostles? Peter being a representative of that group. And he spoke. And we know in Ephesians that the apostles' doctrine is foundation of what we know as Christians.

Or does he mean this confessional statement that Peter has given, that the church is being built upon this common confession, that is Jesus Christ. Let's look at the first one here today and kind of knock that one out.

It would be the most important. It's the one that would change everything that we do around here, if it's the first one here, of being Peter. Peter will receive another nickname in just a handful of verses in Matthew chapter 16, verse number 23, where Jesus will turn and he will look at Peter and he will give him this name where he will say, Satan, thou art an offense unto me.

Thou savest not the things that be of God, but that be of men. And so there's a play here upon words where it says Peter, his name, upon this rock, but there's a distinction that's being made.

And clearly here in this chapter, kind of what Chuck would be to Charles, Rocky might be to Peter, okay? That might be a nickname if your name was Peter. He might be called Rocky, all right? And so here, he is being called Rocky, but there's a distinction that's being made.

[17 : 59] And in the harmony of scriptures, you'll know that Peter is not the rock in which the church is going to be built. We see that in Matthew 16. But if you turn to 1 Peter chapter number 2, where Peter here from this story, he's going to make it very clear that the foundation of the church is Christ.

That Christ is the rock that he'll be built upon. 1 Peter chapter number 2, verse number 4, it says, To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious.

You also as lively stones are built upon a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

You see, the church grows as people respond to Jesus, that his call to him. Verse 4, To whom coming as a living stone. Peter is going to say that Jesus Christ is the rock, that he is the living stone that has been rejected by men, but by chosen by God and precious.

Book of Acts, we see many examples of this. Acts chapter number 16, the Lord will come to Lydia, and as he does this, this is Acts 16, 14, speaking about, as she hears the gospel and responds, she says, Whose heart that the Lord had opened.

[19 : 12] A couple verses later, there's another woman who is a slave girl that had a demon that's going to be cast out of her, and it said that, I came, command thee in the name of Jesus Christ.

And then out of that, Paul and Silas will find themselves thrown in jail. In verse number 30, and there the prison guard will be told, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved in thy house.

Just a matter of few verses here in Acts 15, God is going to build a church, and how he does it, this business woman, a slave girl, and an employee of a local church, they all come together from the name of Jesus and putting their faith and trust in him.

I have a couple pictures I want to show you today. One, the first one here is a picture of Kyle and Hannah. You see Kyle at the very front, he's hard to miss. Hannah's there in the back, and this is a new church there in Chile.

They just have a new building that they're in, and this is God's people gathered around, rejoicing together. This next picture is in Ecuador. The day in the foyer, there's a sign out there.

[20 : 14] Stephanie and I will go to Ecuador in a couple weeks for a charter service for Liberty Baptist Church there in Quito, Ecuador. And this is a group of people, this is a church that Jesus Christ has built.

These people, like the business woman or the slave girl or the employee of the local jail, they are people that have met Jesus Christ. And God is building his church upon that foundation of Jesus Christ.

It's the most wonderful thing in all of the world is to see God build his church. So three truths about this before we move forward. First, although the rock upon which the church is built is not Peter, and it's not you, and it's not me.

1 Corinthians 3, 11 said, for other foundation can no man lay that is laid, which is Christ, which is Jesus Christ. But additionally, the foundation of the church is Jesus Christ, but God was using the apostles greatly.

Ephesians 2, 20, a reference, but I'll read to you, it says, and built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

[21 : 21] Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone, but the doctrine here of the apostles, that teaching upon Jesus. That was what was said about the apostle Paul, the one that once filled, that once was persecuting the church, and now he is preaching Jesus, the one that had saved him, and it says that you are filling the city with your doctrine.

They went everywhere sharing Christ, which leads me to this third point. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the church and the eternal plan of God.

You and I are not the message. A church is not built by hearing about Peter. It's not built by hearing about me. It's not even built about hearing this church. A church is built by people coming to put their faith in Jesus Christ.

And the Bible tells us that we get the joy and privilege of being the pillar and ground of the truth, that we point people to Jesus Christ. And so being the cornerstone and the builder makes Jesus the uncontested owner of the church.

Verse 18, Thou art Peter, turn upon this rock. I will build, what does it say there? My church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Those wonderful words of Jesus.

[22 : 31] He is the rightful head of the church. Ephesians 1.22, it says, I put all things under his feet and gave him the head over all things to the church. Some things to remember when you think about church.

Some things to teach your children from the time that they're in the nursery until the time that they grow up is that he is the head of the church. The word ekklesia is the word that's most commonly used 114 times.

It means that we are called out. It means that we are in assembly. But the English word that we use, church, it comes from a different Greek word where it refers to the fact that Jesus is the Lord or that he is the, this is the house of the Lord.

So another way to say it is that when we gather we are a meeting of people who say that Jesus is Lord. We are a meeting of people that say that Jesus is Lord.

And all the ways in which God demonstrates his beauty in this world, all the incredible wonders of the world, the meeting of people that call him Lord is absolutely beautiful. That's why we come here the day to do is to say that he is Lord.

[23 : 37] He loves us and he gave his life for us. Ephesians 5 25 As husbands love your wives even as Christ has loved the church and gave himself for it. In the book of Acts it goes as far to say that he purchased the church with his own blood.

That's the extent in which Jesus Christ loved his church. There's a story of a general of King Cyrus of Persia and one of the wives of the general was accused of some form of treachery and she was condemned to death.

And being condemned to death the husband runs into the room there before the king and he says O king take my life instead of hers let me die in her place. The king stops and reflects and he says a love like this must not be spoiled by death.

And he allows the husband and wife to leave the room. As the two are walking and they're very happily walking out of the room the husband says to the wife did you notice how kindly the king looked upon us as he gave his pardon and the wife's response was this I had no eyes for the king I saw only the man who was willing to die in my place.

Could I encourage you in here today when you think about the church don't think of activity don't even think about mission but think about the eyes of the Lord upon the church think about your love for the Lord and his love for the church.

[25 : 01] He died to create the church and now the church has the wonderful joy of being his wisdom on display. Ephesians 3.10 To intent now unto the principalities and powers and heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

It's not your wisdom it's not your creativity it's not your sacrifice but it's his love his wisdom and sacrifice that should be put upon display. The way Adrian Rogers always said it the church is not the way to heaven but the church is the sign that points to heaven.

Christian Baptist Church I want to encourage this today that we have Jesus Christ as our foundation. Jesus Christ died for us and this church belongs to him and so we can never make too much of Jesus.

And I would encourage you in here that we should seek to make God's great love for the church our own love. Stephanie has become a fan of the Pensacola Christian Eagles basketball team alright?

They are an NCC AA Division 2 team alright? Which if you know much about college basketball there's a lot of divisions and that's a smaller one okay? But Stephanie did not become just a fan of the Eagles and then in becoming a fan of the Eagles she said you know what I think I really like that one girl on the team that Kristen Mintzer I think I'm going to become a fan of Kristen Mintzer and watch every game that I can and find all kinds of excuses to leave town to go with Wendy to watch a basketball game.

[26 : 32] She didn't it didn't work like that. What happened was she cares about Kristen and so she cares about the things that matter to Kristen so she begins to love those things. I'm not getting emotional about Pensacola Christian Eagles basketball okay?

But in loving Jesus we love the things that he loves. It is quite possible that you could be committed to church but not committed to Christ but you cannot be committed to Christ and not committed to his church.

He loves the church. It took the death of Jesus to make what we are experiencing at this moment possible. A gathering of redeemed people that were once lost in our sins but now have been forgiven and now have been set free to worship him.

It's absolutely wonderful. I'm going to give you a few reasons of which I love the church. Then I'm going to give you an application today and it's not to show up the church more okay but some of you think that's obviously the direction that is going in.

I want to talk to you about your great love for church how it ought to be lived out to us but here's just a few reasons. The only institution that Jesus promised to build and promised to bless is the church so I want to give my life to it.

[27 : 40] The church is going to win at the end. It's already been promised. You get to turn to the end of the book and you get to see that the church wins. The most precious possession that God has on earth is his church his redeemed.

The church because it's the I love the church because it's an earthly expression of a heavenly reality of the heavenly kingdom here on earth and it is a place of worship and we have done that today and we've done that so many times over the 18 years.

We have gathered here leaving everything outside leaving everything aside and just worship him as our good and gracious king. So we gather the day. We gather as families and as singles and different walks of life and different places that we gather here around one common faith around one message that is Jesus Christ.

Christ. And so first of all here I want to remind you for God's great love for the church. All that he did, his view of the church. And as you love him you ought to allow his love for this church to become your love for the church.

And so you should respond in gratitude. Simple application ought to be the Holy Spirit has ministered to you through his church which means through people and it would be good of you to find somebody today and embrace them and say thank you.

[28 : 55] You have done more than you ever know because you have allowed the Holy Spirit to minister to me through you which is God's plan as a gathered people. And then secondly in here as we're reminded of the significance of the church and God's eternal plan could we renew our commitment to see a church for every nation, for every people, for every tribe and for every city and for every family.

It's the most wonderful expression in all the world is the church. Large portions of this world do not have a church. Members of our church family are in those parts of the world laboring and serving to see a church established.

And may it be that your love, may it be that God's love for the church would stir something inside of you that says I want to give my life to seeing and that it's possible that everybody gets to enjoy this.

Some of you have seen your kids grow up in here. Ben Sherry is about to go off the South African for a six month internship. If he doesn't raise 100%, I'm sure Dan Penrod will pay the difference, alright?

It's always a good plan, alright? If you're raising money for an internship, just go to your girlfriend's parents and ask if they want to help you leave the country for six months, alright? But Ben's grown up here his whole life and it's been a wonderful thing to get to watch and I could go through here and it's been people constantly reminding him that Jesus loves him and that he should love Jesus.

[30 : 19] And God's done a wonderful work. Could you pray with me the day that God would allow us to see more churches planted than we've ever seen before? You saw two pictures but there's so many places around the world and that God would maybe begin to start one in your heart, that God would place in you a desire to see that done or maybe God would stir in your heart and say it's been a while since I reached out to so and so and I know that they're doing good work but it's just a wonderful thing what God has done.

The church is the most beautiful of God's creations here upon earth. Let me read this to you before we pray. The church is no small importance to Jesus. I want to remind you of that.

In helping the disciples know who he is, Jesus wanted them to know that he was a church builder and he was a rightful owner of the church. In Jesus explaining to the disciples who he is, he does it in the context of the fact that he is a church builder and he is the rightful owner of the church.

So the church is of no small importance to Jesus. Jesus doesn't lament the church. He has rescued or looked for another one to capture his attention. Christ welcomes the church as his beautiful treasure and joy.

The church isn't just about organization, leadership, function, and vision. Jesus sees more. His gaze reveals the beauty of our Father, the sufficiency of his cross, and the fulfillment of his mission in the world.

[31 : 42] He sees sinners being rescued, redeemed, and renewed. And he calls it beautiful. Heavenly Father, I want to thank you once again, another Sunday, Lord, in these 18 years where I have the opportunity together with your people.

Lord, I want to thank you for dying to make this possible. Lord, I want to thank you for setting us free. Father, I love the church because my love for you has taught me to see how wonderful that it is.

If every head bowed and every head closed and Christ begins the play, I speak to you as believers in here. Look through the words of scripture today. Look at what Jesus Christ says about his church and ask him to stir in your heart a greater love for the things that he loves.

We love this church because Jesus Christ loved this church. But not just this church, the churches around the world. Would you ask God today to give you some commitment, a renewed commitment, maybe some direction on how your life can be spent in a way that is honoring the hymn and that helps further the gospel around the world.

Many places around the world do not enjoy what we enjoy in here today, but God could use us to see a church among those people, among those places. And as you pray, believer, and you express your gratitude to the Lord for what he has done in and through your life and through the church, I speak to you in here today.

[33 : 08] If you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior, who you believe that he is, is the most important question that you're ever going to answer in your life. And I can encourage you in this fact today.

He has revealed himself through scripture. He wants you to know him. He wants you to know the love that he expressed for you when he died in your place upon the cross.

And so I want to encourage you today to not leave here today without putting your faith and trust in him. Not leave here today without telling Jesus that you will follow him with your life. Heavenly Father, I want to thank you for your son's death that made it possible for us to gather today.

Thank you for the great freedom that was found. Lord, I want to thank you for a church in a small town in Kentucky that was built upon the foundation of Jesus that shared the gospel. Father, I want to thank you for every kid and teenager and adult that has come to this place, Lord, and now that they are a living stone, place the Lord upon that cornerstone of Jesus.

Lord, I want to thank you that you are the builder of this church and that you are the protector. Lord, I pray for this coming year and for the years to come. May we always be a church that is built upon Jesus.

[34 : 27] Lord, you are all sufficient and you're all that we could ever need. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.