

Dear Northfield

This morning I was reading Matthew 16, and I thought I would share the one sentence that spoke loudly to me.

The story is that Jesus was speaking to His disciples: He was asking them who people say He is. The disciples answer Jesus, and then Jesus asks them a more personal question; “who do you say I am?” Peter speaks up and answers that Jesus is the Son of the Living God, and Jesus responds with this:

“Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed! You didn’t discover this on your own. It was shown to you by my Father in heaven. So I will call you Peter, which means “a rock”. On this rock I will build my church, and death itself will not have any power over it...” (Matthew 16:17-18).

There was one sentence in these verses that hit me like a ton of bricks.

“...I will build my church, and death itself will not have any power over it...”

Churches around the world have taken a massive hit in 2020. Change in church is generally difficult because our spirituality is such an intimate part of who we are. Therefore change in church is generally a slow painful process. This year we have had to change the way we connect with God and each other instantly. Then as soon as we are used to it, something else changes. I’m sure most of you are experiencing many of the same struggles as me.

However, when I read this one sentence I was reminded of a few truths.

- 1. God builds the church.** What a relief! If God is the one who builds the church then it has less to do with our efforts and more to do with God’s grace. If God is the one who builds the church, then God knows what is to come, and God knows what is needed to brace us for what is ahead. What a beautiful reminder for me that God is in control, and responsible for the church.
- 2. It is God’s church.** As a minister I often fall into the trap of thinking Northfield is my church. I think that is what makes all of this so difficult sometimes, as ministers we often take the state of the church so personally. We fall into the trap of thinking: when church is empty, it is my fault, when it is struggling financially, it is my fault. To be reminded that it is God’s church is to be reminded that I could never truly destroy God’s church because it is God’s church and God is greater than me. It is to be reminded that the church belongs to the eternal, all powerful God. That reminds me that the church may look different to what I thought it should, but God will still use the church because it is God’s church.
- 3. Nothing can destroy the church.** That statement that death itself will not have any power over it. How reassuring. This is a reminder for me that nothing can stand in the way of God’s work. Nothing can destroy God’s people and the work that we are called to do, not even death. Yes, churches might look different at the moment. Yes, our buildings are standing empty. Yes, we don’t know what church will look like after Covid19. Yes, we are struggling financially. Yes, things have changed and will still change. But, no matter what it looks like at the end of all this, the church will survive, in one form or another. I am not speaking only of Northfield, I am speaking of universal church, the collection of those who choose to follow the Jesus way.

This was a powerful reminder for me in these uncertain times, and I hope it will be a powerful reminder for you too. I am reminded that all I need to hold onto, is the truth that “Jesus is the Son of the Living God”.

Love and Blessings,
Louise Wernich



