

Matthew 16:13-28 | Keys to the Kingdom

Jesus further engages his disciples with details about the kingdom, his church. To belong to the kingdom we must confess that Jesus is Lord. To live as the kingdom will require suffering. The disciples would understand that a man condemned to death on a cross was often forced to carry part of his own cross, on his walk to death. But the kingdom doesn't end in death, there is a better glory coming.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 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. 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."²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

²¹ 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. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." ²³ 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."

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

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Jesus gives us the keys to the kingdom of heaven, providing access and authority, when we believe and confess Jesus as Lord. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are suffering. As the disciples were expected to follow Jesus' lead in suffering, we are expected to do the same. We are called to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. Rather than working to save our lives or bring more comfort to our lives, we are to actively die to self and find life in Jesus. Always knowing there is a better glory coming. Jesus is coming back with his glorious kingdom.

Discussion Questions

- What does it mean to "deny yourself"? What is an example?
- What does the bible teach us about suffering?
 - Paul - Romans 8:17-18 ; Peter - 1 Peter 4:12-16, 1; Jesus - Matthew 5:10-12
- When considering the suffering of Jesus, how does it help you with your own suffering?
- What is the reward for following Jesus? How does this impact how you will live today?
- Is there anything about the reality of following Jesus that is challenging for you? How can we support each other in this?

D&A (Discipleship & Accountability)

Break up into smaller groups for prayer.

- How is your time with God?
- What are you praying for?
- What gospel conversations have you had this week with someone who doesn't follow Jesus?
- What are you struggling with?
- Who are you praying for to know Jesus?