



Matthew 16: 13-20
(NRSV)

¹³Now when Jesus came into the

district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Opening

- 1. Pray:** Loving God, thank you for building your church in and among us to bind us as one in the Spirit. Let us act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you. O, the Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us. Amen.
- 2. Share:** What do people say about who Christians are? What do you say about who Christians are?

Dive Into the Text

- How do the disciples respond to the question, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” and how does our world perceive Jesus today?
- Jesus seems more interested in what the disciples said about who he was than what other people said about him. What would Simon’s answer, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” mean to Jesus?
- After his confession, why do you think Jesus gave Simon a new name, Peter, and promised that Peter would be a foundation of the church in the future?
- Jesus promised to give Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven. What can we learn about the nature of the church from from this?

Christian (christianos) – those who belong to the party of the Anointed, appear 3 times in the book of Acts and 1 Peter

Disciple (mathētēs) – a learner, someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus, appears 261 times in the gospels and the book of Acts

Church (ekklésia) – the assembly, a congregation, appears 120 times in the gospels and New Testament

(Greek words in parentheses)

What a church is and what it is not:

1. The church is not a building or an institution but people who confess Jesus is the Son of the Living God.
2. The church doesn't belong to people but to Christ.
3. Jesus delegates his authority to the church to continue his mission in the world.

Go Deeper

1. The word “Christian” means “the party of the Anointed One” from the Greek word, *christianos*, and only appears three times in the New Testament. Why do you think Jesus didn't call his disciples “Christians”?
2. If Jesus asked you the same question, “What do you say that I am?” how would you like to answer today?
3. The church is an assembly of believers sharing a common mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (according to The United Methodist Church mission statement). How can we use the authority to build up a welcoming and grace-filled community, regardless of our differences?
4. Where do you find God is moving and creating something new in our community through our ministries?

Close in Prayer

Close your time in prayer together.