

“The Church Victorious”  
Mark 8:27-29; Matthew 16:13-20  
(Preached at Trinity, December 7, 2011)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We've been looking at the all-important question Jesus asked His disciples.  
"But who do you say that I am?"  
It is a very personal question demanding a very personal answer.  
Peter's answer is the most important answer that a man can give. "You are the Christ."
2. As we turn to Matthew's Gospel (**Matthew 16:13-20**) Peter adds the phrase,  
"The Son of the Living God"  
To this Jesus pronounced His blessing:  
**Matthew 16:17** "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven."
3. As we continued examining aspects of this passage that is absent from Mark's account but included in **Matthew 16** we read, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."  
<sup>19</sup> "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."
4. So far we've limited our focus to the nature of the church. Jesus said,  
"upon this rock I will build My church"  
The church is a work of Christ. He purchased it, owns it, rules it, defends it.  
The church is the fullest expression of the Old Covenant community.
  - A. Abraham had a multitude of physical offspring – Hebrew Israel  
Within Hebrew Israel God had an elect remnant of Abraham's spiritual children.
  - B. As individuals they possessed every spiritual blessing in Christ  
\*\* Forgiveness of sins \*\* God's Law written on their hearts  
\*\* And they knew the Lord
  - C. But this remnant was invisible. They were without unique ordinances.  
When Christ came He collected this invisible society and formed them into a visible body of believers – the church. He gave them their own ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and then engrafted Gentiles into that community.
5. Tonight I want to focus on another aspect of the church. It is wonderful to consider.  
"and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."  
Or the more familiar KJV: "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
6. Tonight I want to examine this verse.  
The focus has to be upon the meaning of "The gates of Hades"  
I want to direct your attention to two possible interpretations – both of which I think are true.

- I. First of all, “the gates of Hades” is a metaphor to describe the dominion of Satan
- A. The “Gates of Hades” implies that the church has enemies. The implication is that the gates of Hades are striving to overpower the church
1. **William Hendriksen** – This “represents Satan and his legions storming out of Hades’ gates in order to attack and destroy the church.  
**Matthew Henry** – “The gates of hell are the powers and policies of the devil’s kingdom, the dragon’s head and horns, by which he *makes war with the Lamb*; all that comes out of hell-gates, as being hatched and contrived there. These fight against the church by opposing gospel truths, corrupting gospel ordinances, persecuting good ministers and good Christians”
  2. There is a sense that Satan’s kingdom has already been defeated by Christ. Satan’s powers were greatly limited by the crucifixion
    - a. Jesus has entered and plundered Satan’s domain  
**Matthew 12:29** – “Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.”
    - b. Satan can no longer deceive the nations as before  
**Revelation 20:1-3** – “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”
    - c. Jesus described this plunder of Satan’s dominion at Paul’s conversion  
**Acts 26:18** – “To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”
  3. Christ the King is crushing all of His enemies  
**1 Corinthians 15:25** – “For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”
- B. But it is also true that there is an ongoing war going on between Satan and the people of God – Satan’s war against the church continues and will continue  
*The nature of Satan’s war against the church:*
1. Satan has always opposed the gospel truths, attacked the church’s ministers, and assaulted the body of Christ
  2. We must continually beware – vigilance  
**1 Peter 5:8** – “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”
    - a. Adversary - lit. an opponent in a lawsuit - he stands as our accuser
    - b. He not only accuses us but tempts us to commit crimes against the king

3. Satan works with all manner of deception -
    - a. John 8:44 - he's a liar
    - b. Eph. 6:11 - he works with all manner of trickery
    - c. 2 Cor 11:13-15 - he makes his servants to appear holy and pure
  4. Peter says he goes about as a roaring lion
    - a. He has no compassion, a brute beast, savage
    - b. His appetite is never satisfied
  5. He walks about seeking whom he may devour - he never rests
    - a. Jesus warned Peter  
<sup>KJV</sup> **Luke 22:31** – ‘And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have you*, that he may sift *you* as wheat:”
    - b. Satan continually looks for ways to frustrate the kingdom  
 He hinders our labors  
**1 Thessalonians 2:18** – “For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and *yet* Satan hindered us.’
    - c. Paul warned that we must be well aware of his methods of operation  
**2 Corinthians 2:11** – “so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”  
 νοήματα – plot, design  
**Ephesians 6:11** Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.  
 μεθοδεία – craftiness, KJV – “wiles”  
 We get our word “method” or “methodology”
- C. Since Satan is always in the attack mode the church must always be in defense mode  
**James 4:7** – “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.  
<sup>KJV</sup> **Ephesians 6:10-13** – “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”
1. Jesus tells us that no force shall be able to overcome His church
  2. The church shall prevail until He returne

- II. But there is another important way to look at Christ's words that I'm afraid most overlook: **Matthew 16:18 NAS** - "and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it"
- A. Hades is not the same place as hell
1. The KJV translation of "hell" for this word is confusing.  
Hades is the abode of the dead  
Hell, on the other hand is a place reserved for those eternally condemned on the Day of Judgment  
**Matthew 25:41 NAU** - "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;"
    - a. The word for Hell is completely different - γέεννα  
**Luke 12:5 NAU** - "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"
    - b. Hell isn't actually occupied yet
    - c. It will not be occupied until the Day of Judgment  
**Revelation 20:14 NAS** - "And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire."  
**Revelation 20:14 KJV** - "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."
  2. Hades is likened with the Old Testament word Sheol referring to the grave  
*Jacob upon learning of Joseph's apparent death*  
**Genesis 37:35 NAU** - "Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him."  
**Genesis 37:35 KJV** - "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning."  
*Jacob upon receiving the request for Benjamin to to down to Egypt*  
**Genesis 42:38 NAS** - "But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."  
**Genesis 42:38 KJV** - "then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."  
*The Messianic Psalm*  
**Psalms 16:10 NAS** - "For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay."  
**Psalms 16:10 KJV** - "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell"
- B. So what Jesus is saying here is that death will not bring an end to the church
1. Christ has had and will have His remnant in every generation.  
The death of one generation will not bring an end to the church
  2. The church will prevail. This verse guarantees that the church will be here when Christ returns.

3. This was Paul's expectation  
**Ephesians 3:20-21 NAU** - " Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, <sup>21</sup> to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."
4. When Jesus gave the Great Commission to the church He promised to be present with His church until the end of the age.  
**Matthew 28:20 NAU** - "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
5. God stands forth to save sinners in every generation until Jesus returns. Death will never destroy the church.

#### Conclusion:

1. The great promise of Christ in this passage is the church shall never be defeated
2. This speaks primarily of the universal church—the elect of God
  - A. Christ defends us. The church is invincible because it is grounded upon an invincible Rock.  
**Matthew 16:18** – "upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."
  - B. Jesus continues to defend us:  
**Luke 22:31-32** – "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded *permission* to sift you like wheat; <sup>32</sup> but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail;"  
**Isaiah 54:17** – "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD."
  - C. Death will never bring an end to the church. Christ will continue to save His people in every generation. There will always be the presence of His church upon the earth.
3. Can this be applied to individual local churches?
  - A. Jesus walks among His churches. He holds each in His right hand. Each church is represented as a bright candle burning. They are sovereignly protected  
**Revelation 2:1** – "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:"
  - B. But where the elect are unconditionally preserved and protected individual churches are maintained conditionally.
    - a. This is clear as we read the letters to the seven churches  
**Revelation 2:5** – "Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent."  
**Revelation 3:16** – "So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."
    - b. Many a church has been razed to the ground fallen into apostasy and sin.
    - c. But as we maintain Christ at the center of our work and as the focus of our worship we have every hope of His continued sustaining grace.  
"the gates of hades will not prevail against us."

- C. And it is true that as we continually laboring faithfully with Christ as our Head we have every hope that our church will survive unto the next generation. This is still conditional. Many a church has died when that generation died. They became satisfied and fell into slumber and their church perished. May God grant us much grace to continue holding Him high, maintaining Him as our first love, seeking to expand His Kingdom. May He protect us unto the next generation.  
“upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”