

INTRO

- what's been a highlight of your summer? What are you looking forward to in the Fall?

READ

Mt 16:13-18, 21-25

As we close our summer series, we turn to the words of Jesus specifically, and what he has to say about the church.

REFLECT & RESPOND

"I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." — Jesus

Caesarea Philippi is the place where Jesus utters these words about his church. It was known as a centre for pagan worship and considered the gateway to the Underworld/Hades or gods. Hence, Jesus is emphatically and defiantly declaring that no power will overcome his church!

Qu: what's your reaction to Jesus' words in v18?

THE CHURCH AS EKKLESIA

Jesus built on the Jewish understanding of being a called out people for God, an *ekklesia*, only now it would be a called out people centred around the worship and way of Jesus.

A church is a community "where individuals are transformed and empowered to join God's corporate family and participate in God's plan to reconcile all things to Himself." — Matt Chandler

In other words, the gospel of Jesus leads us to *personal transformation* → *community formation* → *missional participation*. This is the essence of the church.

Qu: a church is a community of worship and mission. How does this differentiate from other communities you can be part of?

THE CHURCH JESUS BUILDS

Even though Peter confessed the true identity of Jesus as Messiah, he still had a faulty concept of what that entailed—he wanted a triumphant Messiah, not a suffering Messiah. He wanted (like most of us!) the kingdom without a cross. But the church Jesus builds is filled with disciples who, in light of Jesus laying down his life for them, they lay down their life for him.

Jesus builds his church; we are called to be and make disciples of Jesus. Part of being and making disciples is to immerse ourselves in the practices of worship, community & mission. As we've seen this summer, the early church did this through the 6 practices we've looked at. After all, we become what we repeatedly do.

Qu: out of the 6 practices we've looked at, which ones do you sense God prompting you to pay more attention to in the season ahead?

RESPOND & PRAY

- Pray for a greater resolve to practice worship, community & mission together
- Pray for one another to be encouraged and strengthened in the face of much instability in our world right now.