

Sermon Theme

The church stands on the confession that Jesus is the Christ and carries His kingdom witness into the world.

Big Idea

Jesus asks His disciples the question that every follower must eventually answer: “Who do you say I am?” Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus then speaks of the Church He will build and the keys of the kingdom He entrusts to His followers. The Church belongs to Christ, stands on the truth of who He is, and is sent to carry His grace, truth, and mercy into the world.

Who Do You Say I Am?

The crowds have many respectful answers about Jesus. They compare Him with John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, and the prophets. Yet admiration isn’t the same as confession.

Peter answers personally: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

- Jesus is more than a teacher, prophet, or moral example.
- He is the Christ, God’s promised Messiah.
- Christian faith can’t rest forever on someone else’s answer.
- Our confession of Jesus should shape the way we live.

Peter gets the answer right before he fully understands what it means. He will soon struggle with Jesus’ teaching about the cross. Discipleship is a lifelong process of letting grace reshape our understanding and our lives.

Grace Comes First

Jesus tells Peter that the Father revealed this truth to him.

God takes the initiative. He calls, awakens, reveals, and makes faith possible before we know how to respond. Yet Peter still has to answer Jesus’ question.

Grace comes first, but grace invites a response.

Peter also reminds us that God continues working after we believe. He will misunderstand, fail, and even deny Jesus, yet Christ keeps correcting, forgiving, restoring, and forming him.

“I Will Build My Church”

Jesus says, “I will build my church.”

Those words remind us who owns the Church.

- The Church belongs to Christ.
- Pastors, leaders, congregations, and denominations are stewards, not owners.
- Our responsibility is faithfulness.
- Christ remains the builder.

We worship, pray, teach Scripture, make disciples, serve our neighbors, care for those in need, and proclaim Christ. We don’t have to carry the burden of saving the Church. Jesus has promised to build His Church.

The Gates of Hades

Jesus promises that the gates of Hades will not overcome His Church. Hades refers to the realm of the dead.

This promise points toward the cross and resurrection. Jesus will die, but death won’t hold Him.

- Death doesn’t have the final word.
- Congregations and ministries may change, but Christ’s saving work continues.
- Christian hope rests in the risen Jesus.
- The Church stands because its Lord is alive.

The Keys of the Kingdom

Keys represent entrusted authority. When someone gives you a key, they give you access and responsibility, but ownership doesn’t change.

The Church has been entrusted with the gospel.

We carry the message that:

- sinners can be forgiven,
- broken lives can be restored,
- enemies can be reconciled,
- people who feel beyond hope can find new life in Christ.

The keys belong to Jesus. Christian authority is stewardship, not control.

Carrying the Keys

The keys aren't meant to remain inside the church building. Christ sends His people into the world as witnesses to His kingdom.

We carry His kingdom witness when we:

- speak truth with grace,
- feed those who are hungry,
- sit with those who grieve,
- welcome those who feel unwanted,
- forgive when bitterness would be easier,
- serve without needing recognition,
- point people toward Jesus rather than ourselves.

We cannot force anyone into the kingdom. We witness, invite, love, and trust the Holy Spirit to work.

Key Truths

- Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.
- Grace makes our response of faith possible.
- The Church belongs to Jesus Christ.
- Christ builds His Church. Our calling is faithfulness.
- Death cannot defeat the saving work of the risen Christ.
- Christian authority is stewardship rather than ownership.
- The Church is entrusted with the gospel for the sake of the world.
- Jesus continues forming imperfect people into faithful disciples.

Questions for Reflection

Where does Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?" become personal for me?

Does the way I live reflect what I confess about Jesus?

Where am I tempted to treat the Church as though it belongs to us rather than Christ?

What changes when I remember that Christ is responsible for building His Church?

How can I carry Christ's kingdom witness into the places I go this week?

Who around me needs to experience the truth, mercy, welcome, or hope of Jesus?

Takeaway

The Church stands on the confession that Jesus is the Christ, but that confession isn't meant to remain inside our walls. Jesus entrusts His people with the good news of His kingdom and sends us into the world as witnesses of His grace.

The Church belongs to Christ. The kingdom belongs to Christ. The keys belong to Christ. He places them in our hands so that through our words, service, mercy, and faithful witness, others may encounter the Savior we confess.

The rock is the confession. The keys are the responsibility. And the Church belongs to Jesus.

Key Verse

"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Matthew 16:16