

# I Will Build My Church

11/05/17

Matthew 16:18 “*On this rock I will build my church.*”

There is important information that comes before and after this statement, ideas that have long been debated. But this is the topic for this week: the idea of Christ stating, “I will build my church.”

Of course, we know that Jesus was not talking about building a synagogue, which is the type of church he would have built if it were to be a physical structure. The Greek word that is translated as ‘church’ is *Ecclesia*. It refers to an assembly or congregation, and it literally means “those called out”. Christ has been ‘calling out’ to those of the world for those who would respond.

Christ’s church was not to be one of a particular religion. He was not interested in creating a religion, or a denomination, or sect; he was creating an assembly of consciousness and shared spiritual ideals within individual consciousness. His church was open to anyone who would answer the call.

It would be the One Church, ‘my church’, as he called it. “I will build my church.” This one true church reaches beyond creed, dogma, and ritual. His call echoes beyond synagogue, temple, shrine, sanctuary or cathedral; it calls to the heart, and his church is comprised of those hearts.

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians: 6:16 states: *What agreement has a temple of God*

*with idols? For you are a temple of the living God.*” There are those who say that this verse means that our bodies are the temple of God; but we are not our bodies. That verse we hear in a moment. There are those that say we are our thoughts. I disagree. We have thoughts, just like we have bodies; but we are not our thoughts. We can watch our thoughts, so how can we be something that we can also be watching? No, we are our consciousness; the watcher of our actions, thoughts, and feelings.

As we turn within to Spirit for our light, inspiration, and guidance, the differences between the churches of man will be eliminated, and the One Church will be recognized, and we will at last acknowledge each other as Children of God.

It is ironic that the church that Christ is building is comprised partially of people that don't even know that Christ exists, or they reject the notion of Christ. Some don't call themselves Christians, but still hear the call and feel the pull of Goodness and Love and of doing what is right. They don't recognize it as the call of Christ; they don't recognize the movement of Spirit within them, but they are part of the One Church.

Although we are all Children of God, many of us are blind to it. Although we are part of one family, we resist joining the assembly that Christ is building and refuse to hear his call of Goodness, Light, Peace, and Joy. We choose The World over God.

But I have faith that the “calling out” of Christ continues. After all, he said “I will build my church,” not “I have built my church.”

The building is still in process.

So what is the church? We are the church. It is not this structure; it is each one of us, and the spiritual ideas that we hold, with Christ as the head. God didn't send Jesus to teach, love, and give his life for a building. Christ came for people, for you and me.

Many people go to church with the idea that they will find God, or will be closer to God. But in truth, wherever we gather to worship – there is The Church. Jesus said, *“For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

Whether we go to a synagogue, mosque, monastery, temple, shrine, Daoguan, cathedral, chapel, or a small church in Genoa – the open heart finds the same thing, God. And although the temple of God is our consciousness, we are also told, *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you.”* So our body and thoughts are also part of our temple for Spirit.

Sometimes our temple just needs a good cleaning. To cleanse our temple, we first cleanse our thoughts. As we release our old thought patterns, unproductive attitudes, actions, and habits, we cleanse our consciousness and cleanse our temple. As we thank God in advance for the positive events, people, and all the powerful positive thoughts we are gratefully affirming – we are cleansing our temple. As we tame our thoughts and imagine the power, love, joy, and peace of Christ lighting up every cell of our bodies, we are building our temple: strengthening its walls, reinforcing its rafters, and repairing the roof.

As we surround ourselves with the Spirit of God by maintaining His presence in our minds no matter where we are, we are purifying and supporting our temple. Yes, we do that when we attend church. We can also do that in our own home. We can perform a “house blessing”: Affirming that God’s presence floods our home. We are protected and safe because God is there.

We can do this at work, in our car, and soon we are doing it everywhere we are and in all that we do. CJ has shared with me that when he is driving, he affirms that God is his co-pilot. I can only imagine those conversations.

Brother Lawrence, a simple monk, worked daily in his monastery cleaning pots and pans. He held a simple belief and simply loved God. He wrote: There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. Only those can comprehend it who practice and experience it." We can begin to practice this presence of God in all of our activities, constantly maintaining an inner dialog of joy, love and peace.

“I will build my church”, says Christ, “and this church will have no walls.” Christ’s church has no barriers and no curtains to separate its people from the loving presence of God. This means that there is nothing God cannot do through us when we abandon our resistance and stop hiding in fear. Without walls, our church can accept and appreciate all who come into heart’s distance. If we can open our hearts and minds to the call of Christ, we can bring others

into God's fold by allowing God to express through us – through our words, our thoughts, our activities, and our attitudes.

Although over the centuries the word 'church' has come to mean the building where we assemble to worship, a brick and mortar construct can no more be what a Church is than the clothing we wear would be who we are.

“I will build my church,” says Christ, “and this church is created by and for people.” In Romans 16:1-16 there is a list of 20 people that Paul introduces, then goes on to name 8 more people in the chapter. What are we to learn from this?

Two lessons come to me. One is that God knows everyone's name. He knows our names; who we are and what we are. He knows us – our hearts and minds, our strengths and fears, our needs and challenges. The second lesson is that there are no unimportant people. Every Child of God is important, plays a part, and is loved equally despite the challenges we face.

Why? – because Christ came to build his church...and that church is built of you and me and everyone outside these doors whose heart is open to the Goodness, Love, respect, empathy, tolerance, forgiveness, and compassion of God within them. They may not admit to knowing God, but if they are living in accord with the Holy Spirit by embracing the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control then they are part of the One Church – whether they are theist or non-theist.

As followers of Christ, our agreement is to help build his church by loving our neighbors as ourselves, so that they might be open to Spirit's movement within them. I have never felt compelled to actively proselytize and try to convince people to join our church. I have, however, felt the nudge to love people and treat them with respect, which just might touch their hearts and give them a glimpse into the church Christ is building. I may also be guilty of sharing a few times that I am the minister of that "cute little church in Genoa". Ok, so maybe I've shared a couple of gentle invitations to come check us out. Well, why not? I think this church is pretty special.

"I will build my church," says Christ, "and you are going to help me." When we love our neighbor we are spreading the Word; we are helping to build The One Church Christ has in mind. Christ has no hands on earth but ours, we acknowledge that. But he also has no marketing department but us. We carry his church within us, and we only have our little 'church' because you bring it with you on Sundays. You are the church; we are the church, and are part of the One Church Christ is building. That thought makes me feel happy.

Let us pray....