

Weekly Newsletter: 26th November 2024

Reflection - Jesus: The builder of His Church

By Sam Allen

“On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail over it.” This is the promise that Jesus gives to Peter in Matthew chapter 16, a promise to a confused disciple that has for the first time understood Jesus' divine identity. This is also a promise to every believer, a promise that reaches back into the Old Testament and forward to us living in these “last days”.

This week I have been turning these words over in my mind and have been struck again by how searching and how comforting the words of Jesus so often are; snapping us out of our self-involvement, waking us up from our stupor of spiritual laziness. Let me suggest three things that this promise means to us and three ways that it challenges our mindsets, calls us to self-reflect and reconsider the goodness of Jesus:

1. “I will build *my* church” Notice how personal this is! Jesus, the incarnate eternal Son not only owns the church for himself, but takes it upon himself to bring it into existence. This means two simple things; it means that we can't suggest that we are the owners of the church and it means that we can't treat the church as something that is being built by us. Subtly we do so, how easy it is to talk about the church as if it were just another social commitment, or as if it were a weight of responsibility. How easy it is to talk about the church as if it wouldn't thrive without our money/ abilities/ influence! This promise rebukes these attitudes, it reminds us to view the church as a spiritual institution that doesn't follow the rules of this world. This promise also invites us into the church, invites us to work alongside the chief architect - Jesus. When we realise that he is the builder of the church we can let go of the pressure we feel to build the church and instead work joyfully trusting that Jesus will be the one to convert and keep sinners in his church!

2. The second lesson we take from this passage is that the church Jesus builds is spiritual in nature. It isn't a particular denomination, a particular way of praying or singing, or even a particular theology. Jesus' church is simply made up of people who trust him as their Saviour. To look again at the verse, the “rock” that Jesus is building his church on can't be Peter - the leader of the disciples. It was this same Peter who denied Jesus three times on the night of his trial, this same Peter who was rebuked by Paul at Antioch. No, the “Rock” is Peter's statement that comes the verse beforehand: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”. So membership of the church is found in a trusting faith in Jesus, nothing else.

3. The final point that this promise makes is that the church will be opposed, but opposed unsuccessfully: “The gates of hell will not prevail over it”. Hell is pictured here as a kingdom of evil, the gates being a reference to where the wise men of the city would congregate to do business. Jesus is telling us that the

schemes and the councils of evil, personified in Satan, will not ultimately be successful in their attempts to destroy the church though try they will. This promise therefore can seem bittersweet. The church will be eternally safe and eternally secure, but it will look at times shattered by governments, ashamed by hypocrites, fractured by arguments. Faith will be needed to trust in God's goodness when even the outward church around us will seem so embattled.

For us though we have a great affirmation of this promise that the church will not be overwhelmed by evil. We see it in the pattern of Christ's life: Christ died in a political execution outside an obscure roman city abandoned by his friends and insulted by bored soldiers yet out of that ignominy he rose triumphant openly mocking Satan as he did so. Achieving a victory that ransoms sinners from death and hell, and builds a church out of them.

Thanksgiving Service – Mary Philip



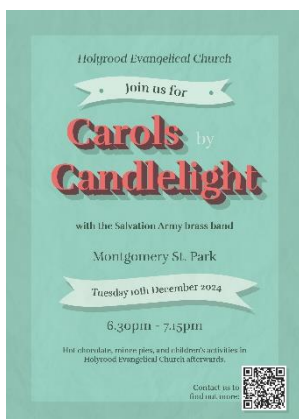
We were saddened by the news of Mary's passing on Thursday last week but rejoice that she is with her Saviour who she loved and lived for. Please pray for Jen (pictured here with her mum) and William and their families as they grieve her passing.

There will be a Thanksgiving Service at Holyrood on **Thursday 5th December at 12 noon** followed by light refreshments in the hall downstairs. Everyone is welcome.

Book Group

This month the book group is reading *The Unquenchable Flame* by Michael Reeves. Our meeting is **on 30th November** at 3.30 p.m. at 9 Craigentenny Avenue. Please speak to AnnCRIS if you would like more details.

Carols by Candlelight



On **Tuesday 10th December** we're having Carols by Candlelight with the Salvation Army Band from 6.30 – 7.15pm.

We'll hopefully (weather permitting!) be over in the park for some carol singing and then there will be hot drinks, mince pies and kids activities in the church building.

If you're coming along, please bring a torch with you and flyers are also available at the church information point, please take some!

Advent Devotional Books

A number of Advent Bible reading or devotional books are now available in the church library. Please take a look and feel free to borrow them.

Hogmanay Ceilidh

This year we're planning to have a Hogmanay Ceilidh as a church family on **31st December from 7-10pm**. Serenna and friends will be providing the music and it's a chance to get together at the end of the year and enjoy time together. Keep the date free!

Origin Christmas Special



Origin's Christmas outreach event is taking place on **Saturday 7th December** at 7.30pm in the Usher Hall. This evening provides an opportunity to invite non-Christian friends to hear Christmas music and a Christmas message. Tickets are free and available [here](#)

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Tuesday:
 - Thanksgiving Meal for International Students from 6.30pm – 9pm
 - Women's Advent Bible Studies 7-8pm on Zoom
- Wednesday: Home Groups
- Thursday:
 - Men's Bible Studies at 10.30am in the church
 - Session Meeting at 7pm in the church
- Saturday: Book Group at 3.30pm
- Sunday:
 - Worship service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Christmas Choir practice after the morning service
 - Evening service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching (live streamed)
- Monday:
 - Baby and Toddler Group at 10am
 - Warm Space at 12 noon



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