

**Matthew 16:13-20**  
**Keys to the Kingdom**

I want to thank Dr. Lyke for the invitation to be here tonight. It is good to be back at NBC and among friends. NNU online program.

*(slide #1) To begin my sermon today I would like to talk about keys.* See in my hand I have a key and a key chain. Keys are important to our everyday lives. They give us access to rooms, cars, banks, and locks. If you have your keys with you this morning I would like to conduct a little test. Take a look at your set of keys and let's determine who has the most keys that they are carrying with them. How many has at five or more keys? Shout out the number of keys you have on your key chain. Probably the person with the most keys has the most power or influence.

*Have you ever lost your keys?* I know for me when I lose my keys I get very frustrated. I look all over the house and turn everything upside down in order to find my keys. Some of you may have a key hook at your house to make sure that you don't misplace your keys, but at our house we place all our keys in a drawl.

Keys are incredibly small but have such great power. I think of truck drivers who drive those eighteen wheelers. These are incredibly large machines that are powered by just a little key, so little but with so much power. This key that I am holding is very small, it weights about an ounce and is only a couple of inches long but it has the power to move my car, tons of metal to high speeds.

*A key is a good metaphor for life.* We all know there are keys to being a good athlete and a good musician. What are those keys?--talent, hard work, discipline, experience, and discipline. I especially like those TV advertisements about the keys to losing weight, just take a few pills each day and presto you can lose weight. Christian bookstores are full of example of people marketing the "keys" to a Christian life. Throughout Church history Christians have missed the primary meaning of what it means to be a Christian in the world. Maybe we can get a glimpse of what it means to be an effective Christian in the world through the life of Peter.

***Read Passage with Me (on PowerPoint).***

The life of Peter is a good example of someone that grows in faith in Christ. He is a very interesting person. Peter, the Son of Zebedee was an ordinary fisherman, who was given the keys to the kingdom of God. We know from the gospel accounts that he was an overly zealous and an eager disciple. He was one that at times completely missed the meaning of the Kingdom of God. At times we see glimpses of his success as a follower of Christ, and other times we see his utter failure. In many ways his life is a good example of someone who struggles with following Christ. As we look at his life I think we can see some similarities in our faith journey with Christ.

*(slide #3) What do we know about the life of Peter? Group Q/A.*

- Peter was called by Jesus to be the first disciple of Jesus. He along with his brother Andrew, James and John, Son of Zebedee left their nets to follow Jesus.
- Peter was always quick to speak and to act. When Jesus and the disciples saw Jesus walk on water, Peter was the first to step out by faith. But while walking on the water he became afraid and Jesus reached out his hand caught him and said, **“you of little faith,” “why do you doubt me.”**
- Later when Jesus predicted his death, Peter rebuked him and said, “This shall never happen to you.” And Jesus said, “Peter get behind me Satan, you are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”
- When Jesus was arrested by the Chief Priest, he was quick to draw his sword and he cut the ear off of one of the Chief Priest’s servants. And Jesus responds by saying, **“Am I leading a rebellion that you would come with sword and clubs to capture me.”**
- Peter declared that he would not deny or betray Jesus, but as we know he denied knowing Jesus three times.
- After Jesus’ resurrection He came to Peter and asked three times will you “feed my sheep.” And again, Peter doesn’t really understand what Jesus is asking him to do.

Despite Peter’s failures, his denial of Christ, his lack of faith, his inability to understand the keys of the Kingdom of God, Jesus was compassionate and was able to see in Peter something that he couldn’t see in himself. Jesus knew that Peter had the abilities, gifts, and graces to do something extraordinary for the kingdom of God. Peter learned from his failures and mistakes and did more than was imagined by becoming the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. After Pentecost, Peter preached and over 3000 people were saved. He was the pillar of the church and defended the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian movement at the Jerusalem Council. Peter learned from his mistakes, failures, and struggles and did extraordinary things for the Kingdom of God.

When thinking about people that have learned from their mistakes I was reminded of some ordinary people that have done extraordinary things.

Jamie and DaLena serve in the inner city of Salt Lake City, Utah. They work with the Salvation Army and minister to the homeless of the city. Jamie and DaLena for many years turned from God and were involved in drugs and alcohol. DaLena became ill and through her illness began seeking God. She was radically saved and her witness touched Jamie and he was radically converted. Both DaLena and Jamie have given their lives to service to the Kingdom by ministering the “fringe” of society. They are ordinary people who are doing extraordinary things for the Kingdom of God.

For DeLena and Jamie, who had turned their heart away from God they have learned from their mistakes and failures and are making a difference for the Kingdom

Example of Benji Rhodes, “On the House” ministry in Capital Hill, Seattle.

Example of Ron & Dawn Stueckle, Sunset Youth Service in San Francisco.

**(slide #9).**When reflecting on the life of Peter it provides an example of an ordinary person that struggles with his relationship with Jesus. It reminds me of a more human example of the faith journey, a life lived with trails, struggles, fears, questions, and failure. A faith that struggles with the realities of life and recognizes that being a follower of Christ means wrestling with some of the most complex questions about the nature of God and how God works in the world. It means expressing human emotion, being passionate about life, and about understanding ones place in the world.

**(slide #10)**Even though Peter struggled, questioned, wrestled with the reality of what it meant to be a disciple he was the first to recognize and confess that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Peter's confession places him in a significant role as compared to other disciples. The confession of Peter has been analyzed hundreds of times and is often a source of controversy. It is either viewed in two ways:

- First, Peter is viewed as a "typical" disciple who speaks for other disciples, who in turn represents all believers. Thus, everything said about Peter becomes a lesson for all Christians.
- Second, Peter is unique, he becomes a kind of supreme rabbi on whom Jesus builds his church, a rabbi who guarantees and transmits the traditions of Jesus. The Roman Catholic Church has built a long tradition of the Papacy from the commission given to Peter by Jesus.

The first interpretation seems to get closer to the intent of the text, that Peter speaks for the disciples and represents all believers, thus what is said about Peter becomes a lesson for all of us. Peter is given power to bind and loose, and so does the church, and all of Jesus' followers are to be involved in discipling and teaching the nations (Great Commission).

For it is this confession that we honor Peters understanding of God's salvation-history. Therefore, Jesus blesses Peter for this new revelation and says that Peter (petros) is the rock on which the Church will be built. This is the first time that Jesus uses the word ecclesia, the Church. The church are all those that gather in the name of Christ. Here Jesus is saying that He will build a community of his people, His Church. He has given Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to bind and loose.

**(slide #11) I am sure Peter and his disciples were hoping that these keys would help established an earthly political kingship to overthrow the Romans.** Maybe the reason we are a follower of Christ is because of what ways it can benefit us, what's in it for me! But Jesus is saying that the keys to the kingdom are given to all of humanity to proclaim the Good news of Jesus Christ; to accept all people of all nations; to honor all human persons regardless of gender, race, and nationality; to engage in God's redemptive work in the world; to love ones neighbor, to care for the poor and the outcast of society; to be good stewards of God's creation; and when we do these things we are not binding but loosing the kingdom of God here on this earth and in heaven.

Peter was given the keys to the Kingdom of God, and now those keys have been given to you and to me. We are the church, those “called” to be God’s representatives in the world. God has chosen and called us to be his servants. Regardless of our role in life and ministry, we are all called to be a minister. We are all called to participate in the Kingdom work. The question we are faced with tonight is “Will we take hold of these keys of the kingdom of God and make a difference in people’s lives?”

The question is what are we going to do with the gifts and abilities God has given to us? How are we going to engage in God’s redemptive work in the word?

Like Peter with our struggles, questions, sins, and failures Christ continues to be compassionate to us, recognizing that we are capable of much more than we have ever imagined. Jesus sees in us something that we cannot see in ourselves and extends us the grace to be real people with real problems striving to be effective disciples. Being a disciple means learning from life’s failures and turning them into success.

**(slide #12)** Keys are incredibly small but they very powerful. The keys of the kingdom of God have been given to us, ordinary people with the opportunity to do extraordinary things. As seminary students you are at a critical point in your faith journey. You have an opportunity to do extraordinary things if you will allow God to work in your life and to utilize the power of the Keys to reach your community for Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that as you continue in your journey with Christ that you will be reminded that Jesus has given you the power to the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.

**Prayer:**