

**Unstoppable Messiah**  
**Matthew 16:13-25**  
**Sermon Outline**

**Introduction:** Jesus has told us that the “gates of hell shall not prevail against his church.”

**I) We are part of Jesus’ movement to throw down all that is wrong in our world.**

**A) Jesus’ words**

1) *v. 17: Blessed are you, Simon...* The fulfillment of a 700-year-old promise

2) *v. 18: Upon this rock I will build my church*

3) *v. 18: ...and the gates of hell will not prevail*

**B) What are the gates of hell?**

**C) The church: marginalized, corrupt, boring...**

**II) How do we stay at the heart of Jesus’ movement?**

**A) We follow him**

*vv. 24-25: If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me...*  
Incarnational living

**B) We proclaim him and his cross**

Learning from Peter

*v. 16: You are the Christ...*

*v. 22: Far be it from you, Lord!*

**C) We ask the Father**

*v. 17: Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you...*

**Questions for Reflection this Week**

- 1) Matthew 16 marks the turning point of Jesus’ public ministry. From this point forward he heads deliberately for the cross. Of all the important questions Jesus might have asked his disciples at this point, why does he choose the one he chooses? Why does Matthew put this question in the dramatic center of his Gospel?
- 2) When Peter says, “You are the Son of the living God” he does not mean, “You are the second Person of the Trinity” (that level of theological development had not yet come to the church). What did he mean? Look, for your answer, at Psalm 2. How is the answer of Psalm 2 like and unlike the answer we tend to give to the question, “What does Jesus mean to you?”

- 3) Gates are symbols of authority and power. They are also symbols of enclosure, like prison doors. Look at Isaiah 38:10, where King Hezekiah, recently reprieved from untimely death, speaks of the “gates of Sheol”. What do the “gates of Sheol” do? What is meant by the “Gates of hell” and how do they imprison us (look at Genesis 3:14-19 and John 8:34).
- 4) Against what does Jesus say the gates of hell will not prevail (think of “prevailing” as “withstanding”)? Why can the gates of hell not hope to withstand this particular assault?
- 5) Reflect on the following: “The church is the tiny movement that will one day expand to fill the world. Every other social institution—including marriage, government, Ivy League institutions, the ACLU and the NRA (and anything else we can think of) will pass away. But the church will not. It will pass on into the new heavens and the new earth. It will be the essential social institution on the day when, to use the words of Isaiah 11, ‘The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.’” Do you believe this? If so, how does your life reflect that you do?
- 6) Read Matthew 16:24-25 and then read the following portion of EPC’s vision statement. How does EPC’s statement seek to apply Jesus’ statement in our setting? Where do you see EPC seeking to live out this vision? How are you seeking to live it out—if you are?

We seek to emulate Jesus’ modus operandi in our pattern of life and ministry. Jesus, lovingly committed to our healing, fully entered our experience while remaining faithful to his Father. Even so, we seek, lovingly committed to our world’s healing, to enter genuinely and faithfully into the communities and workplaces where God has placed us, while also seeking to be faithful to Christ in those places. Such engagement meant suffering for Jesus, and we should not be surprised or disheartened if it means suffering for us. We choose to love NYC—its people and its institutions. We choose neither to stand aloof from the city nor to be swallowed up by its values where they are fallen. Instead we choose to be its friends—to feel its pains, to enjoy its glories, to pray for its peace, and to subvert it to the King by sacrificial love. We exist not to make ourselves a great church but to make New York a great city.

- 7) Why did Jesus turn so strongly on Peter in Matthew 16:23? Why the “must” in Matthew 16:21? What habits of thought or influences draw you away from treating Christ and his cross as the foundation and center of hope in your life?
- 8) How, according to Matthew 16:17, did Peter get things right about Jesus? Ask the Father to do for you what he did for Peter—to make Christ and his cross the most precious realities in your life.