

Sunday 23 August 2020

Matthew 16:13-20

This goes to congregations at North Hillingdon, Hayes and Hayes End. If you get it by post and have an email, then tell me so next time we can email you and save a stamp.

You can keep in touch via the church websites (www.hayesmethodistchurch.co.uk, www.hemc.org.uk, www.northhillingdonmethodistchurch.org) and Facebook:

- www.facebook.com/hayesmethodistchurch
 - www.facebook.com/hayesendmethodistchurch
 - www.facebook.com/northhillingdonmethodistchurch
- A video for Sunday will be on each website and Facebook.*

Each church also has a WhatsApp group. If you want to join it then let me know.

On Sunday, there are services at North Hillingdon (at 9.30 am, led by members of the church) and Hayes End (at 11.00 am, led by Ken Kingston). You are welcome at any service. (There are no services at Hayes yet, as building work is being done.) In addition, the circuit Zoom service is at 10.45 am.

The key

(Matthew 16:13-20)

When I arrived at Hayes two years ago, one of the first things I was given were bunches of keys to each of the churches. There were so many that I felt like a gaoler. I had to spend a morning in each church trying to work out which key opens which door. And after two years I think I have worked out most of them!

In this passage from Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells Peter that he will be given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. But there is much more that is 'key' to this passage.

Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" After some of them suggest John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets, it is Peter who professes "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

This is key to our understanding and identity. The church and every disciple (including you and me) is rooted in the confession that Jesus is the Messiah,

Son of God. This is what makes the church and every disciple so distinctive. It's not our ability, it's not our courage, it's not our understanding, it's not even our faith. (Peter in the next few verses shows that he is guilty of such colossal misunderstanding that Jesus calls me Satan – Matthew 16:21-23). But that doesn't mean Jesus takes the keys away from Peter. Peter, the church, you and me can draw distinctive from this confession that claims us. It is key to who we are. It is key to our identity.

This insight about Jesus comes as an event of divine revelation. Peter isn't reasoning his way to his declaration about who Jesus is. Logic could never work out that the person who is destined to die on the cross is fulfilling his role as the Son of God. This comes not just out of a step of faith, as a divine gift of grace. Grace – God-given love that we live in and love out.

So there is something that is key and crucial to understanding, but there is another sort of key. There is the key that Jesus talks up – the physical key that locks and unlocks doors. This is about security. And it is about authority too. The keys of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus gives to Peter are a symbol of the authority that Church invests in his disciple.

Those words "you are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" are words that provide a security for us. Biblical scholars have debated whether it is Peter who is the rock on which Jesus will build the church, or whether it is the words on which Jesus will build the church. But the fact is that when we confess, acknowledge that "Jesus is the Son of the living God", it is something which gives us security.

Yet there is another sort of key

I have a love/hate relationship with home decorating. I mean I love painting – putting a new fresh coat of paint on the wall and seeing the room transformed. What I don't like is all the preparation that has to happen before you get to that point – the washing down of walls, the sanding down of woodwork etc. But you have to

do this, because you need to give the paint a key to hold onto – otherwise the paint will drip and slip and the result will look shoddy and terrible.

The key gives the paint something to grip to. And that phrase again that “Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God”, gives us something to hold onto. It anchors us. Holding firm and strong to how Jesus is and what that means, means we can hold firm in the storms and troubles of life. It doesn't mean that we won't be battered or bruised but in the midst of everything Jesus is the one we can grip onto. He is our key. It is something that we can build upon.

“You are the Messiah, the son of the living God”.

- Words that are key to our identity as followers of Jesus and people of faith.
- Words that provide keys of security in that we are sons and daughters of God.
- Words that provide a key that we can grasp onto when things are difficult, and build upon as we live our lives as people of faith.

Prayer for the Week

Mighty God,
I think about the keys I hold.
Each one shows a responsibility of some kind.
Thank you for all that you entrust me with.
Thank you most of all for Jesus,
who gives me the keys of the kingdom.
For you, Jesus are the Messiah,
the Son of the living God. Amen.
(adapted from Roots)

Methodist Sunday Services on the Web

- Contemporary worship from Swan Bank Methodist Church: www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank
- From Westminster Central Hall, London: www.youtube.com/user/MCHWevents/videos
- From Wesley's Chapel: www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA
- *Sthie [at home]* – from the Isle of Man, a different style of worship taking place at home: www.youtube.com/andyfishburne

Bible passages for Sunday 30 August

Matthew 16:21-28; Romans 12:9-21

Sunday on the BBC

8.10 am **Sunday Worship** Radio 4 (93.5FM)

Exploring the inspiration of listening.

1.15 pm **Songs of Praise** BBC1

Kate Bottley celebrates over 150 years of the Salvation Army. She meets Daniel Holland, an officer in their homelessness unit who has been working as a nurse on a Covid-19 ward. He caught the virus but has now fully recovered. He talks about this has affected his faith.

Sunday Worship

There will be services at North Hillingdon (9.30 am) and Hayes End (11.00 am). If you feel confident and happy to come, then it would be lovely to see you.

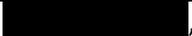
However, services will be different. Before and leaving church, you will need to use hand sanitiser. You'll need to wear a mask too. And we'll need to record (with contact details) who attends.

There will be hymns/music played but no singing, which means that services will be shorter. And once the service is over we will need to leave church. We can't serve tea and coffee yet, so if you want to chat please do this outside.

Please do not attend church if you need to be isolated, if you are unwell or have Covid-19 symptoms.

There is also the circuit Zoom service at **10.45 am**. This week it is led by the Revd Ruth Gee.

If you have the internet then use this link:

. The meeting ID is , and the password is .

If you don't have the internet, follow these steps and you should be able to join in from your phone.

1. Dial 020 3481 5237 or 020 3051 2874.
2. Enter meeting ID () then # key
3. You will be asked to enter your participants ID. Ignore this, and just press # key
4. Enter the password () then the # key.

Take care, stay safe and God bless,

Rev Ken

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