

TFTD 23.21 Friday 17th March  
Matthew 16.1-28 Simple, humble and bold



Young Syrian Christians carrying the cross in Jerusalem.

Jesus said, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (Matthew 16:19 & 24)

Peter must have thought he was on a roll.

For giving the correct answer about who Jesus was, he is told that he is the rock upon which the church will be built. And this church will apparently have power to offer eternal salvation or withhold it.

Wow! Have a gold sticker! Take a bow! Peter must have had a sudden rush of blood to his head.

So when Jesus said that when he went to Jerusalem he would be going to his death, Peter stepped in to object. Hadn't he been sort of put in charge?

Jesus put him firmly in his place. And then explained that all who followed him must also be ready to pick up their cross.

So which is it? Has Jesus given power to his church or is he leading us on the path of suffering?

Looking back over the history of the church it is easy to see periods when the church has exercised power and sometimes abused power as well as periods of suffering and persecution.

Often the persecution has taken place precisely when the church has insisted that it is able to speak with authority about right and wrong. Maybe the word 'authority' captures this better than 'power'. When the church loses courage and makes all the accommodations you need to make in order to exercise power in the world; it is at these moments that the church has stepped back from its Christ-given moral authority.

What does this tell us about how we should be the Church for England today?

Speaking in 2020, the Archbishop of York said, "If we put our trust in God, and if we learn to love one another, then I believe we can become a simpler, humbler, bolder Church, better able to live and share the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Simple, humble and bold. Three qualities we don't often see in the same organisation. What does it look like when we combine these three? How can we be simple, humble and bold in Alderley Edge? How can we be simple, humble and bold in our own lives?

Loving Father. We thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus Christ. Fix the eyes of your church on him so we may live lives for your glory; lives that are simple, humble and bold. Amen.

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