



Sunday  
**NOV 05**  
8AM + 11AM

# SINCE 1803

Matthew 16:13-20

A SERMON BY  
REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY



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**Date:** November 5, 2023  
**Preacher:** Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley  
**Sermon Title:** *Since 1803*  
**Scripture:** Matthew 16:13-20 NIV

*<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>20</sup> Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.*

#### **SERMON SUMMARY:**

As Alfred Street Baptist Church approaches its 220th anniversary on Sunday, November 26, 2023, Pastor Howard-John Wesley directs us to a deeper understanding of church and what it means to be church. Drawing from Jesus' conversation with the disciples in Matthew 16, today's sermon reminds us of the following:

1. The first use of the word *church* in the Bible is in the 16th chapter of Matthew. This concept was entirely new to the disciples.
2. Jesus is inaugurating something brand new in the development of the church, something never seen before.
3. The church established by Jesus is established on a rock. When the rain beats down, the waters rise, or the winds blow (see Matthew 7:24-29), this church will not be moved.

Raising the question of the rock on which the church is built, Pastor Wesley notes there are four points, two of which will be examined today and two next week. The first two components on which the church is built are (1) the identification of Jesus as Christ and (2) the transformation that takes place in the life of every person who comes to be a part of the church.

We know Jesus is God incarnate, the son of the Living God, the Messiah of the world, and the Lord of all. We acknowledge that everyone who comes to be a part of the church needs transformation. The surpassing love of Christ can change everyone. We are built on solid rock, and that means we are built to last.

**KEY POINTS:**

1. The logo of Alfred Street has depth and meaning.
  - a. The name of the church is larger than the name of the Pastor, indicating the relationship between both is that the welfare of the church is greater than that of any one person.
  - b. The three porticos of the church represent a belief in the triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - c. Central to the logo is the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross indicates we believe in the atoning death and glorious resurrection of Jesus.
  - d. The words "Since 1803" represent the 220 years of the existence of the church.
2. The "rock" that ensures the church survives is the realization and acceptance that all of us are in the process of being changed.
3. As followers of Christ, it's important to have enough faith to believe that God's grace is at work in and through that which looks like human hands.
4. The common confession of who Jesus Christ is binds us together.
5. Church is a community of people who are in the process of being changed. The Church is not built upon perfection, but progress.

**GETTING TO KNOW YOU:**

1. Pastor Wesley states *Since 1803* makes a powerful declaration that should not be missed. When you reflect upon the fact that Alfred Street Baptist Church has been in existence since 1803, what is one thing that awes you about her existence for that length of time?
  
2. If you were to create a logo for your life, what three elements would you include in your personal logo?
  
3. In Matthew 16:13-16, Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Simon Peter was the only one to answer correctly. When and how did you understand the true nature of Jesus Christ in your personal faith journey, and what significance did this realization hold for your spiritual beliefs from then on?

### INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley notes two scriptures that focus on transformation, II Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 12:1. Are there other scriptures on which you rely that encourage transformation? Please share these texts.
2. Many of our Biblical heroes experienced great moments of transition. This was often accompanied by a name change. Simon had his name changed to Peter in today's text, Matthew 16:18. Other Biblical heroes experienced name changes also; Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:1-16), Jacob to Israel (Genesis 32:27), and Saul to Paul (Acts 9:1-19). Look up the meanings of their former and new names and consider: what was God up to in the changing of their names?
3. Pastor Wesley explains that the survival of a church is when it is built on a "rock," meaning *Petra* in Greek. In contrast, the temple is based on adherence to Mosaic law, such as those found in the book of Leviticus. How have you created a solid foundation in your faith walk, as Jesus did with the creation of the church?

### LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley reminds us that Jesus did something new when He founded the church. Before this sermon, was it important to you to worship in/be affiliated with a *church* versus being engaged or active in another setting (e.g., *center, ministry, social justice organization, etc.*)? How might your view have changed due to this sermon?
2. Pastor Wesley reminds us that transformation can occur within each of us. Our task is to strive for progress, not perfection. When have others celebrated your progress? What did it mean to you, and how did it make you feel? How do you celebrate the progress of others?
3. When Simon announces who Jesus is, the Savior's response is, "*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.*" God does reveal things to us

that cannot be obtained through flesh. Have you received a revelation from God? How did it impact you? How did you know it was from God? See #3 in Additional Resources Section\*

4. We learn that Alfred Street is the sixth oldest independent Baptist church in America. Think about your church experience. What does it mean to you that this church has been a source of hope and strength for 220 years? What are the top three elements that you believe allow a church to thrive and continue over decades and centuries? Given this, please finish this sentence: “**Anything that lasts 220 years . . .**”
5. This sermon calls us to see past flesh and discern God. We must be able to look past human action and know our lives are under divine authority. What strategies do you use to see past the human and look for the divine in the person and the circumstance?
6. Pastor Wesley says there are some things I can only get in church. What are the things that you can only obtain when you gather (virtually or in person) for church?

#### “CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS:

Jesus changed Simon’s name to Peter as a sign that Peter is being transformed. But throughout the Biblical text, from time to time, Jesus returns to addressing him as Simon. Though Jesus has changed Simon into Peter, occasionally, the old Simon shows up. Sometimes, when we try to walk in our new Peter, our old Simon creeps in. What is your old Simon? What do you want God to transform into a new Peter?

#### **FOR INDIVIDUAL OR VILLAGE STUDY**

#### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Wesley explained the components of the ASBC logo– the name of the church, the pastor’s name, the outline of the edifice, and *since 1803*. Which of these most resonates with you and why?

2. We are taught that there is an inescapable question each person must ask themselves. That question is, “Who is Jesus to you?” If you had the opportunity to tell the world one thing about Jesus, what would it be?

#### ACTIVITY:

Identify someone you know whose life has been transformed or is visibly in the process of being transformed. What are some ways you can celebrate that person’s progress? Write an encouraging note or text message highlighting that person’s progress.

#### SPIRIT WORK:

Pastor Wesley used the phrase, “**Jesus is either Lord of all, or not Lord at all.**” What areas of your life can you identify where it is hard for you to give Jesus full and complete control? Where is he **not** Lord in your life? What steps can you imagine taking that would allow you to submit that area of your life to the lordship of Jesus? In your devotional time this week, pray for continued strength to go forward or thank God for the growth that has occurred.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Resources Mentioned in the Sermon
  - ★ Song: Tramaine Hawkins “Change”
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfByaS5wc4s>
  - ★ Website: History of Alfred Street Baptist Church:
    - <https://www.alfredstreet.org/about-us/church-history/>
  - ★ For additional sermonic information on how to hear from God, you may refer to Pastor Wesley’s sermon “Can You Hear Me Now?”
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epzGiYtE44c>