



Introduction:

This morning the pastor spoke to us about what the church is from Jesus' words to His disciples in Matthew 16:13-20. This is the first mention of the word church in the Gospels (it is mentioned two more times in Matthew 18:17). But it is by no means the last time it is referenced in scripture. In total, it is mentioned 114 times in the New Testament.

The church was the foundation ministry of the early apostles. The ministry focused around spreading the gospel and establishing churches. We understand the fact that Christ spoke of the universal church in Matthew 16:18, but we also understand in the New Testament letters from the apostles that there were many churches...local churches that functioned under the umbrella of the universal church.

As you discuss the church, allow the reality of what Christ has done for the church to soak in to your soul. Jesus died for the church, He rose again for the church, He equipped the saints for the church, and He gave His Spirit to strengthen the church.

Scripture to read together: Matthew 16:13-20; Acts 2:42; I Peter 2:4-10; Ephesians 2:20-22

- I. What does it mean to be a living stone?
 - a. Christ's purpose for coming to earth and suffering and dying on the cross was to do what?
 - b. If He has made us alive in Him when we come to Him in faith, why isn't that enough, why does He command us to be built up in Him and built up together in His body?
- II. What are Biblical components to church? In other words, what do we do when we gather together?
 - a. Consider Acts 2:42
 - b. Can we really have church if we forsake gathering together with others? Why or why not?
 - i. Can we think of other passages of scripture about what the church is to do? What do they teach us?
- III. What should happen when we come together and are being built up as a church?
 - a. Should we be rigid and demanding that we get our way, or pliable and moldable? Why is this important?
 - b. What can we learn from one another when we come together, and how does it benefit us and the Kingdom of God?