

**Lesson 16. . . The Rock, the Keys, and the Stumbling Stone
Gospel of Matthew**
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Notes From the Podium
By Fr. Matthew Kauth

***These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson.
Please use as an aid to help document the main message of the lecture.***

Matthew 16:1-28

- I. The Pharisees and Sadducees ask for a sign.
- A. This is the first time we see Pharisees and Sadducees team up in what is an evil coalition.
 - 1. The word used by Matthew for “test our Lord” is the same word used of the when the tested Jesus in Chapter 4.
 - 2. Their purpose is not to receive but to entrap, it is an evil communion.
 - B. They want a sign from heaven.
 - C. “He answered them, “...You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.”
 - 1. He *is* the sign that was prophesied in Isaiah 2; He is the one that comes down from heaven.
 - 2. They cannot behold the face of the Son of God who is right before them.
 - a. The problem is not their intellect; the problem is their will.
 - b. They do not want to receive him.
 - D. And so he says, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”
 - 1. Adulterous?
 - a. Israel was often called the bride and so anytime she worshiped a foreign god she was considered adulterous.
 - b. Her infidelity is what makes her incapable of receiving the bridegroom when He comes.
 - c. They are part of the adulterous generation, who have worshiped another god and so can’t worship the God who is standing before them.
 - 2. Sign of Jonah
 - a. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for 3 days and then came forth so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth for 3 days and will come forth.
 - b. That is the sign that no one ultimately can contradict.
 - 3. Jesus then left them in the same way that Jonah left the Assyrians. (Jonah was preaching to them for their conversion)
- II. “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
- A. Recall from Chapter 13 Jesus spoke of leaven which elevates the entire dough that is of the true word, the hidden leaven.
 - 1. This is a different leaven, but it has the same effect.



Notes From the Podium (cont)

2. Teaching that is contrary to Christ (Heresy) gets into the mind and ferments and spoils the entire dough and we begin to think and see things that are erroneous.
 - B. “And they (the disciples) discussed it *among themselves*, saying, “We brought no bread.”
 1. Jesus said, “O men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?”
 - a. After Jesus just fed the 5000 with 12 baskets left over, and the 4000 with 7 baskets were left over and they still doubt.
 - b. Interestingly He uses a different word for basket in each of those references, highlighting the fact they are different occurrences.
 2. “How is it that you fail to perceive that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of **the Pharisees and Sadducees.**”
 3. Then they understand that He was speaking of the false teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- III. Now for the big question, the true teaching, the fullness of revelation.
- A. “Who do men say that the Son of man is?”
 1. Our Lord does not ask this because He is insecure about His identity.
 2. He wants to know if the Father is now revealing the fullness of who He is because no one can know the Son except that the Father reveals him.
 - B. There is particular grace called faith that is planted in us when we are receptive.
 1. Receptivity is the power that enables us to be able to see who He really is.
 2. Receptivity makes us capable of receiving grace from the Father to say who Christ is.
 - C. And so they answer him:
 1. “Some say John the Baptist...”
 2. “...others say Elijah...”
 3. “...and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”
 - D. “But who do **you** say that I am?”
 1. How long did the silence persist when that question descended?
 2. They have walked with him for a long time now and have shared the Son’s intimate life, in the inner circle.
 3. He is not interested in public opinion.
 - a. He draws these men once again to Himself, tightening the circle.
 - b. He wants to know who **THEY** say He is.
 - E. “Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
 1. As if to say the only one.
 - a. It echoes the “Shemah”, the Jewish prayer, *“Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.”*
 - b. This is the heart of the prayer of the Jews.
 2. How precious it is, that our Lord wants to be known, but reveals it like those parables, slowly, depending upon the soil.
 3. “And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you...”
 - a. Recall the beatitudes



Notes From the Podium (cont)

- b. He is “blessed” because he has received this grace from the Father.
 4. “...For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”
 - a. It was neither Peter’s intellect nor his great ability at deduction.
 - b. He sees the hand of His own Father reaching in and planting in the soil of Peter’s soul the gift of divine faith.
 - i. Faith is not sight, but it is vision.
 - ii. It is a power by which you can see that which you would not have been able to see otherwise.
 - c. Peter in this instance is taking the position of the Father looking at the Son, as the Father always does and says with the Father, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- IV. “And I tell you, you are Peter.”
- A. The second Vatican Council once said that only Christ reveals man to man, that it is only in the mystery of Christ that man is revealed to himself, that he knows who he is.
 1. And so as if to say Peter, you have now revealed who I am, by virtue of the grace from my Father and now I’m going to reveal to you who **you** are.
 2. You’re not just Simon Bar-Jona, you are Peter “and on this rock I will build my church.”
 - B. Whose church? -His church.
 1. The church is not built on confessions but on confessors.
 2. It is not simply on top of Peter’s faith that the church is built, but on Peter, himself.
 - a. Jesus takes this weak man, coupled with the grace he receives from the Father of divine and catholic faith and says, you, I’m going to build it.
 - b. The Church is not solid because of Peter’s faith, but because of Peter’s receptivity.
 3. The strength comes from the fact that Christ is the builder.
 - a. Did he not just tell us that we should not build our houses on sand but on rock?
 - b. Jesus assumes his own advice and makes of Peter a rock.
 - i. There is no doubt in the scriptures of the weakness of Peter.
 - ii. The Church cannot hide the weaknesses of every man who has sat in that chair, some saints, some sinners.
 - iii. It doesn’t matter because what makes it solid is Christ himself, who is the stone that has been rejected by the builders and has become the cornerstone.
 4. Christ so identifies himself with Peter that Peter becomes a rock, the Vicar of Christ.
 - a. It is not Peter’s humanity, his flesh and blood, which is the strength of the Church.
 - b. We should therefore never be scandalized when flesh and blood, even of the highest prelate, fails.



Notes From the Podium (cont)

- c. A unification takes place
 - i. Our Lord building in Peter, through Peter, His own church.
 - ii. Christ is the cornerstone and so identifies Peter with himself that he has to call him a rock.
- C. “And the powers of death shall not prevail against it.”
 - 1. “Hades” - classically divided up into the Elysium where the good go and the “tartares” where the evil go.
 - 2. Our Lord introduced another possibility called Gehenna and that of course is the hell of the damned that never return.
 - a. A place where children were sacrificed and because of such heinous crimes it was a place that was good for nothing for the Jews.
 - b. It was used as a garbage dump, where trash was burned and the flames never went out.
 - 3. Here our Lord uses the word “Hades” in contrast to “Gehenna”.
- D. “And the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”
 - 1. So often we think that this means that the Church will not be defeated but when was the last time you attacked someone with the gate?
 - a. The church is on the offensive.
 - b. She is attacking the imprisonment of souls and those gates will not hold.
 - i. The gates of Hades were thought to be such that no mortal could move them they were so strong.
 - ii. But for the church that Christ is building, and acts in, those gates are nothing.
 - 2. Peter speaks of this in his letter referring to when Christ went down among the dead to free them on Holy Saturday, saying that He vanquishes the enemy, destroys the gates and leads the righteous home.
- E. “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”
 - 1. Now it’s the vice-regent who keeps the keys of the kingdom.
 - 2. Every kingdom has a gate and doors.
 - 3. The king entrusts them to someone and he gives them to Peter.
- F. “And whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
 - 1. This was traditionally a function of the priests and Pharisees, to bind and to loose.
 - a. To loosen from the bonds of death, to free, ultimately, from the bonds of sin.
 - b. So much so that our Lord himself would be bound to make this happen.
 - i. He himself would be nailed down so that the power that comes from that self emptying might flow into his body, the Church.
 - ii. That power would flow from that body to souls who are in need of the freedom.
 - c. This sword of grace he gives to Peter to wield.
 - i. Peter is to use those keys to unlock souls from their imprisonment
 - ii. No gate shall stand in his way.



Notes From the Podium (cont)

V. By Virtue of the Cross

- A. From that time..." (This is six months before the cross.) "...Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."
 1. This is the price of giving him that capacity.
 2. This is the price of destroying the gates of Hades.
 3. This is attached to this great commission given to Peter.
 4. His Church is going to be constructed by virtue of the cross and on the third day be raised.
- B. "And Peter took him..."
 1. Peter took him in the same way that it says that Satan took him. He grabs him.
 2. "...and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord!"
 - a. And it's a wonderful statement, "Have mercy, may God have mercy on you!"
 - b. He's asking the Lord's mercy down upon God himself, saying this cannot happen to you, may it never take place,
 3. Why does Peter do this?
 - a. Peter loved him.
 - b. This is a question of dueling loves:
 - i. The love that Christ has for his flock
 - ii. The love that our Lord has for his Father's will
 - iii. The love, all be it misdirected, that Peter has for Christ
 4. "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men."
 - a. He calls him Satan; for Satan took him away and attempted Him worship someone other than the Father.
 - b. The Son's fundamental orientation is always moving toward the Father and if someone stands in His way they will receive a rebuke from Christ.
 - c. Peter's confession of knowing who Christ is came from the Father, but this statement comes from flesh and blood, from Peter's weakness, not wanting to lose what he has.
 5. Peter will not lose Christ, he must follow Christ.
 - a. Christ says to Satan when Satan tries to put himself between the Father and the Son, "be gone", simply "be gone".
 - b. But not with Peter. With Peter He adds, "opis omun", "fall in, fall in behind" and "come after me".
 - i. You're not going to lose me, you're going to go the same way that I go.
 - ii. This is how we go to the Father.
- C. "If any man would come after me," ("opis omun" come after me), "let him deny himself"
 1. Peter denied Christ three times and Christ has commanded us not to deny him but to deny ourselves.



Notes From the Podium (cont)

- a. When we fear death, loss, or sacrifice, who do we deny, Christ or ourselves?
 - b. Do we say to ourselves in those moments of fear, I do not know Him?
 - i. This is the voice of the old man, of flesh and blood.
 - ii. This is not the voice of the Father, who confesses Christ.
 - c. Or do we deny ourselves and embrace the cross and follow Him?
2. “For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”
- a. St. Augustine said how little a thing life is to give Him in comparison to that which we receive, to receive in Christ Himself and His life.
 - b. “For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?”
 - c. “Or what shall a man give in return for his life?”
3. For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay every man for what he has done.”
- a. What kind of payment are you going to receive?
 - b. The only payment/inheritance that we ultimately want is Christ, the Son of the living God.
4. “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”