

Text: Matthew 16:18-19

Theme: Some Things Last Forever

August 27, 2017

How many times have you heard someone say, "I guess nothing lasts forever?" The washing machine that used to last 30 years, now lasts less than ten. The lawn mower that used to be a hand-me-down, seldom makes it past the first ten years. Today, many things around us clearly fail to meet even our revised expectations. Our text today reminds us that the invisible Church made up of all true believers will last forever. As we look at His forever Church, we consider how it will last forever and what it offers us forever.

I. God has declared that His Church will last forever. Even so, His Church, at the present time, is struggling. 1. It's struggling because we have forgotten our need for God. Forty years ago, were we more dependent or less dependent on God? For so many, the common refrain today is, "Who needs God? If I need it I can buy it. I've got my credit card!" In recent years, that's become the way of the world, but it's not a good way. It's not good for His Church and it's not good for us. We just think it's good because the world has convinced everybody else that it's good. And if that many people say it's good, it must be good, even though it isn't good.

2. His Church is struggling because we've forgotten the power of His Word and Sacraments. Thirty or forty years ago, how often did people gather in this place to hear God's Word, to kneel at His altar? If we looked at it based on pews, how many pews were once full, but are now nearly empty? God's Word has power. His Sacraments have power, the power to survive, to relieve our guilt, to get us through the week. But the sad reality is that many are gathering on a far more infrequent basis, on a convenience basis to hear His Word and partake of His Sacraments. As long as God's Church is merely a convenience, His Church and His people will suffer.

B. Even though His Church is struggling, why will God's Church last forever? 1. It will last forever because it is established by God. Who created the Church? It may have been your great-grandparents who were instrumental in establishing this church, but the One who established the Church of God is God Himself. Jesus said to Peter in our text, "On this rock I will build My church," and that's precisely what Christ did. The fledgling church of the New Testament, the church that bonded together as a unified power with Christ as the foundation, that was God's doing and because God was the builder, His Church, the body of true believers, will last forever.

2. His Church will last forever because God has spoken. The bumper sticker serves as a constant reminder: God said it; I believe it, and that settles it." When Christ spoke, He established the church that was guaranteed to last forever. Recall His own words, "On this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Were those idle words, words used merely to get the disciples on board with His movement? His words were fact. Because He spoke, it happened and to this day His Church, the gathering of all true believers, continues to exist. Church buildings may disappear, but the Church of God, that church will last forever.

3. His Church will last forever because it's His avenue for transforming the world. Christ said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever

you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” God could have done it another way. Yet, God chose His Church as His means of transforming the world, of bringing Christ to the nations, of sharing the good news of Jesus, of making disciples, of teaching them all things. Today, we are privileged to be part of His Church, active participants in the movement that, because it’s blessed by God, will change the world.

C. As privileged members of His Church, what does His forever Church offer us?

1. It offers a foundation on which to build our lives. Our Sunday School kids and even some of us as adults remember the song, “Wise man build his house upon the rock.” Beyond the song, we have recorded the account of the wise and foolish man and their dream homes. As we hear the account, it sounds so logical, so plain and simple. Who would build on the sand and watch his house float away in the storm? The forever Church of Christ - that’s our rock. That’s where we build our faith-house and when it’s build on that rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

2. His forever Church offers us an avenue to understand God’s plan for our lives. Why did God create you? Why are you in this place at this moment in time? Because this is God’s plan for you. As we gather in this place to hear His Word, as we read and study it in our homes, as we kneel at His altar to receive His personal pronouncement of forgiveness, as we ask God to show us His plan, God does what we ask. Using His Word and Sacraments as the primary communicator, God unveils His plan, His Will. This place, this entity that is connected to His forever Church - this is where He displays His plan, His intentions to you and to me.

3. His forever Church is our connecting link to eternal life. Whatever you bind, whatever you loose, whatever promises God has made to His people, His forever Church is the link here that connects us to the reality there. Suppose someone offered you a set of keys and said, “These keys belong to a brand new house on River Drive. I am giving you these keys because that house has been gifted to you with no strings attached. When I return, I will take you to your new home.” Would you put the keys on the counter and never go and look? As members of His Church, heaven is our home. When He returns, He will take us to our forever home.

4. His forever Church offers us the opportunity to serve Him all our days. If someone gave you a brand new \$500,000 house and the opportunity to say, “thank you,” would you express your thankfulness? While we remain on this side of heaven, we have a unique opportunity, an incredible privilege. We have the opportunity and privilege of saying, “thank you” to our great God. That expression of thankfulness isn’t a one time event, but a life-long, daily privilege for us as members of His Church to say, “Lord, I don’t understand why I have been given this privilege, but, because of Your grace, Your act of love, I will serve You all my days.”

5. In a world where nothing lasts forever, Christ says to us, “Gather together where I meet you. Then, go out into your community and be who you are - My Forever Church.” Amen.