

The St. John's Pulpit

St. John's Baptist Church 300 Hawthorne Lane Charlotte, NC 28204
704.333.5428 www.stjohnsbaptistchurch.org

IMAGINE A CHURCH

Matthew 16:13-19

Second Sunday in Kingdomtide, September 10, 2017
The Rev. Dennis W. Foust, PhD, Senior Minister



Last week, four people arrived early for a meeting and were waiting in the hallway. Six more folks were yet to arrive. As I turned the corner, I rattled my keys and remarked to Dr. Raleigh Godsey, “*Evidently, when Jesus gave his followers the keys to the kingdom, he did not include a key to the Conference Room.*”

Beloved, many people in metro Charlotte are feeling locked out of the kingdom of God. You have in your hands the keys to unlock the doors so they can enter. Today's scripture passage tells of the day when Jesus handed imaginary keys to his followers; keys designed by The Loving God to fit the doors of the kingdom of God. Through the centuries, these keys have been passed down to you.

If your ministry in daily life is expressed through the vocations of law, medicine, nursing, education, counseling, accounting, real estate, banking, financial services, or financial advising, you know what happens to people in your professions when they are guilty of malpractice. I submit that many churches are guilty of church malpractice?

Jesus said, “*Whatsoever you unlock or whatsoever you lock will be unlocked or locked because the key has been designed by The Loving God.*” Some churches have deleted the word, ‘*whatsoever*’ to insert the word, ‘*whomsoever*.’ They misinterpret Jesus to have said, “*Whomsoever you include will be included and whomsoever you lock out will be locked out of heaven.*” **Malpractice begins as people think the Kingdom of God belongs to them. Thank you for being stewards of God's kingdom.**

Today, we set aside these deacons to be servant leaders among us. Deacons, we ask you to be exemplary stewards of the keys to the kingdom of God. Church, I ask you to unite in spiritual renewal today, imagining a church wherein,

- **Compassion is our culture;**
- **Hope is our message;**
- **Shalom is our vision;**
- **Discipleship is our commitment; and**
- **Active Faith is our life together.**

Across metro Charlotte, thousands of people need a church like this. When we unlock a culture of compassion, we lock up a culture of condemnation and cruelty. When we unlock a message of hope, we lock out hostility. When we unlock a vision of shalom, we lock out schism. When we unlock a commitment to discipleship, we lock out dissension. When we unlock active faith as our life together, we lock out inactive faithlessness. All around us, people are needing churches that are faithful stewards of the keys to God's kingdom. We must let them know about us and invite them to join with us. Deacons, please lead us in compassion, hope, shalom, discipleship and active faith. May Charlotte hear us rattling these keys! Amen & AMEN!