

No Other Route Matthew 16v13-27

The Christian life is often likened to a journey. We have to continue, inevitably, from where we are today. Jesus says the only place we will find life is him and his glory. That's the destination. So *what are the 'places' we need, individually and together, to go through? What is it that you intend to avoid, rightly or wrongly?*

Three things that tell us what the journey looks like and what it means truly to be "church":

1) Brought together by the King (16v13-20)

The question "Who is Jesus, the Son of Man?" could not be more important (v13-15). It has been revealed to Simon Peter by the Father (v17) that Jesus is the "anointed one" (the "Messiah" or "Christ") and the Son of God (v16)—the King, descended from David, whose kingdom will last forever. The word Jesus uses for "church" here is "ekklesia", which means gathering or assembly of people. Notice in v18, the church is Jesus' church. He is its King. It belongs to him and he is building and bringing people together. Jesus' power and authority over death and evil (v18) are present here. And Jesus gives that power and authority of the Kingdom of heaven to Peter and the other apostles (v19), and to his church (Matthew 18v18, John 20v21-23). *Give some reasons, therefore, why the church is special. How does that affect our approach to our common life together?*

2) Served by the King (16v21-23)

From that time on (v21), Jesus explains he must suffer for his people, be killed and on the 3rd day be raised to life. This isn't what Peter expects the King to do (v22). He is taken up with the things and the concerns of this world (v23) and he doesn't yet understand Jesus' humble heart and Jesus' self-giving to his people. Peter thinks Jesus' position means this could never happen to him, but Jesus knows this is the only route—the route of self-denial and self-abandonment to the Father and to the people he loves.

3) Following the King (16v24-28)

That same route is the only route, v24, for us to enter life and glory. There is no other route for the church than the one that goes via the cross. It involves dying to self (dying to holding ourselves back from Jesus) and dying to things in the world we put in place of Jesus. Jesus says there is a simple and vital choice and everything hangs on it: we either try to save our lives and hold ourselves back from him (v25), or we put it in all his hands, no matter what might be lost. The promise is that, if we do, we will find true life and the identity we crave. Loving the world in place of Jesus means losing yourself (v26, John 12v25-26a). There isn't any bartering with this King. You can't buy your way out of the necessity of putting your whole self into his hands (v26b). *Given what's on offer, why would you want to?* Jesus is going to come (v27) in the full glory of his Father, and the Father is going to honor the one who follows Jesus on this one way. The only route into life that lasts is the way of the cross—the way of self-abandonment to Jesus, open-hearted love for Jesus and vulnerability to Jesus.

In the light of this passage, what does it mean for us at Abbey to be Kingdom people?

