

Ordinary 21A - 2026

Authority

What did Jesus mean by "the keys of the kingdom?" The day in which Jesus spoke there were religious teachers known as scribes. These scribes were the teachers of the bible. The scribe wore around his waist a belt and on that belt hung some keys which were symbolic of the knowledge of that scribe. Jesus said, "I am going to give you keys that will unlock heaven and will lock up the powers of hell and bind the devil and loose the power of God." What are those keys that Jesus gave to Simon Peter and what are those keys he has given to you. The keys of the kingdom are the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. (by Adrian Rogers, Sermon on Matthew 16:13)

"Who do you think I am?"

In 1896, after fifteen centuries, Athens renewed the Olympic Games. You can imagine how proud the Greeks were to host the first modern Olympics. The Greeks were by far the most successful nation in terms of total medals (forty-six), 26 more than the U. S. Nevertheless, their number of first-place finishes (10) was one fewer than the Americans who gained 11. The last competition was the marathon. Greece's entrant was named Spyridon Louis, a water carrier with a little military training, and not much competitive background. He learned endurance by transporting mineral water from his village to the city. When the race started, Louis was far back in the pack of marathoners. But as the miles passed, he moved up steadily. One by one the leaders began to falter. The French hero fell in agony. The hero from the United States had to quit the race. Soon, word reached the stadium that a lone runner was approaching the arena, and the emblem of Greece was on his chest! He even slowed down for a glass of wine. As the excitement grew, Prince George of Greece hurried to the stadium entrance where he met Louis and ran with him to the finish line. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece_at_the_1896_Summer_Olympics).

In this sports' tale, we have something of the history of the human race. Jesus Christ started from way back in the pack. He was born in relative obscurity, never had many followers, commanded no army, erected no edifices, wrote no books. He died young, was buried in a borrowed grave, and you'd think he'd be quickly forgotten. But, no! His reputation has grown, so that today Jesus is worshiped on every continent, has more followers than ever before, and sixteen times has been pictured on the cover of TIME magazine, while Jesus' sayings have been translated into more than 200 languages. Consider: Socrates taught for forty years, Plato for fifty, and Aristotle, forty. Jesus Christ only taught for three years. Yet which has influenced the world

more, one hundred thirty years of classical thought or three years of Christ's? In the Library of Congress there are 1,172 reference books on William Shakespeare, 1,752 on George Washington, 2,319 on Abe Lincoln, and 5,152 on Jesus Christ. Perhaps H. G. Wells best summed up the runaway difference in interest. "*Christ*," he wrote, "*is the most unique person of history. No man can write a history of the human race without giving first and foremost place to the penniless teacher of Nazareth.*" As Emerson once noted, "*The name of Jesus is not so much written as PLOUGHED into the history of the world.*" — Today's Gospel challenges us to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior as St. Peter did at Caesarea Philippi.

In his book, *Jesus' Claims -- Our Promises*, Maxie Dunham tells a story about Lloyd C. Douglas, the author of the best-selling book, *The Robe* -- when Douglas was still a university student. Douglas lived in a boarding house. Downstairs, on the first floor, a retired music teacher had an apartment. The two of them had a little ritual that they went through when Douglas would come down the stairs each morning. Douglas would open the old man's door and ask, "Well, what's the good news?" The old man would bring out his tuning fork, tap it on the side of his wheelchair, and say, "That's middle C! It was middle C yesterday; it will be middle C tomorrow; it will be middle C a thousand years from now. The tenor upstairs sings flat, the piano across the hall is out of tune, but, my friend, that is middle C!" That old man had found something dependable -- something stable -- something he could count on yesterday, today, and forever. For Christians, that's what Jesus is -- the one we can count on yesterday, today, and forever.

Suppose Jesus were to come here.

Without the 19th century essayist Charles Lamb, William Shakespeare would be "*missing in action.*" It was Mr. Lamb's essays that snatched the 17th century playwright from undeserved obscurity after he had been famous for Andy Warhol's fifteen minutes. One night, Lamb and his guests were chatting about the Bard over Spanish port and Cuban cigars. "*Supposing*," someone asked Lamb, "*Shakespeare were to stroll into our dining room at this moment.*" The essayist replied, "*We would raise a glass of port to the great man.*" "*Supposing*," said another, "*Jesus were to come here.*" Lamb answered, "*We would all get down on our knees.*" — There is the essential difference between the Man from Nazareth and all other great people you can think of. "*The Christ is God, and all others, no matter what their deeds, are but fools who strut on the stage for a brief time and then exit.*" (Fr. Gilhooly)