

# Heroes Pt. 1

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, May 19, 2019

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**Main Theme** – Considering the qualities of a ‘superhero’ and how Christ is ‘super-heroic’ & more.

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## WORSHIP & PRAYER COMMUNION

**USHERS** – Please come forth to distribute the emblems of Communion (symbolic significance).

In my studies I came across an early Christian PRAYER that was associated with the Lord’s Supper. I find it particularly beautiful, moving and insightful. I would like to share it with you now. Please consider the following:

“**[1]** Be known to us in breaking bread, **[2]** but do not then depart; Savior, abide with us and **[3]** spread Thy table in our heart.”

**KEY** – Prayer HIGHLIGHTS:

- Early Christians Viewed Communion as an Opportunity to CONNECT with Christ **[1]**
- Early Christians Desired More than a Momentary Connection – ONGOING Connection **[2]**
- Early Christians Called Upon the Christ to Use this Connection in a TRANSFORMATIVE Way **[3]**

**Q. To what degree can we LEARN from our spiritual predecessors and offer the SAME prayer?**

### **1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)**

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Regular Events**
  - Potluck Supper – Taking Place NEXT Sunday, May 26, After Service
  - Men’s Ministry – Taking Place Saturday, June 8, from 9–10:30am
  - Women’s Min – Taking Place Tuesday, June 11, from 6:30–8pm
- **Special Events**
  - Royalty’s 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday Party – Open to All (Post-Service – Sunday, June 2)
  - Teen Challenge Sunday – Scheduled for Sunday, June 30 (Whole Service)
- **Town Events**
  - Memorial Day Proceedings – Monday, May 27 (More Information to Come)
- **SPECIAL THANK YOU** – Church Clean-Up Day Volunteers & Participants (God Bless You)

## MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work  
 -Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN’S CHURCH**
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## INTRODUCTION

As always it is wonderful to see you. I do look forward to these moments of corporate worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today. Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes (**SLIDE**).

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

This morning I want to bring forth a rather UNIQUE MESSAGE that is based upon a current pop-culture PHENOMENON (**FYI** – a phenomenon I am personally interested in). So, yes, there is a bit of self-indulgence in this message – though I believe it IS still of the Lord.

**KEY** – I am speaking about the record-breaking released of *Avengers: Endgame* (i.e., a film that is the CULMINATION of 10-years and 20+ Marvel Cinematic Universe movies). Let’s begin with a few quick QUESTIONS:

**Q. How many of you have SEEN *Avengers: Endgame*?**

**Q. How many have seen MULTIPLE Marvel Cinematic Universe movies?**

**Q. How many have abs. NO IDEA what I am talking about (mandatory movie-binge)?**

**NOTE** – Whether you have SEEN the movie(s) or not—and whether you ENJOYED them or not—I believe there will still be MERIT to this message. Please consider what the Lord has for you today.

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

As has been noted, *Avengers: Endgame* is a pop-culture PHENOMENON that has been labeled a “once in a generation” event. This movie has DECIMATED (good word-play) nearly every box office RECORD, including the following:

- Highest ticket pre-sales of all time
- Widest N. American release (4,600+ theaters)
- Highest grossing Thursday ‘previews’ (\$60 million)
- Highest opening & single-day gross (\$156.7 million)
- Fastest to reach \$100, \$200 and \$300 million dollars
  
- Highest grossing opening weekend (domestic) (\$350 million)
- Highest grossing opening weekend (worldwide) (\$1.2+ billion)
- Fastest movie to reach the 1 billion mark (it took only ‘5 days’)

### SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

**NOTE** – As we gather, the film has taken in \$2.5 billion at the box office (taking 2<sup>nd</sup> place with Avatar in sight for the title of all-time top-grossing film). And this is just ONE Marvel Cinematic Universe movie of more than 20 TOTAL.

**FYI** – Total gross intake for all MCU movies EQUALS more than \$22 billion (with more on the way).

- 1) Clearly there is **MONEY** to be made in superhero movies
- 2) Clearly people are **FASCINATED** by & **DRAWN** to superheroes

**FYI** – And I am NOT just talking about nerds like me. The totals I just shared INDICATE an audience comprised of ALL manner of people (e.g., men & women; rich & poor; every ethnicity, etc.). All of this raises the question...

- Q. Why are people so fascinated and/or captivated superheroes?**
- Q. What is it about superheroes that draw such collective interest?**

**NOTE** – I would like to offer some ANSWERS to these QUESTIONS—answers that come from ME (personal fascination)—and answers that stem from some RESEARCH into these matters. Time permitting, I want to offer 5 elements of superheroes that DRAW our INTEREST and INVESTMENT.

### ORIGIN STORY (SLIDE)

The 1<sup>st</sup> item that audiences find compelling about superheroes is the heroes ORIGIN STORY...

**FYI** – For those who may not know, the term ORIGIN STORY has to do with how a particular superhero BECAME a superhero. i.e., What events took place &/or what circumstances occurred that LED to the creation of the hero?

**NOTE** – This is always a topic that intrigues ME personally. When I encounter a new character for the first time, I WONDER how the figure became a hero in the first place. WHY? Because a character's origin story is an INTEGRAL part of who they are and often speaks to what motivates their heroism.

**ILL** – Bruce Wayne was MOVED to become Batman—the dark knight who pursues and punishes criminals—as he helplessly watched a criminal murder his beloved father and mother in his youth. There would be NO Batman apart from this moment of ORIGIN.

**ILL** – Tony Stark was MOVED to become Iron Man in an effort to escape capture by terrorists in an Afghani cave. This was ALSO the moment he realized that the weapons his company made were being used to harm those they were designed to protect. There would be NO Iron Man apart from this moment of origin.

## **SUPERPOWERS (SLIDE)**

The 2<sup>ND</sup> item that audiences find captivating about superheroes is their SUPERPOWERS...

**FYI** – By superpowers, I mean those EXTRAORDINARY abilities/capacities that TRANSCEND the capabilities of the average human. It is often a hero's POWERS that puts the SUPER in superhero!

**KEY** – I'll allow a little bit of crowd interaction. I will name a hero—you tell me their superpowers:  
-Thor; Hulk; Professor X; Doctor Strange; Spider Man; Captain America; Iron Man; Scarlett Witch.

**Q. Does anyone have a favorite superhero (of any comic universe) they want to name? Powers?**

## **MORAL RESOLVE (SLIDE)**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> item that audiences find compelling about superheroes is their MORAL RESOLVE...

**KEY** – i.e., Superheroes possess a definitive SENSE of right/wrong AND possess an unwavering COMMITMENT to that moral system or code – even IF abiding by that code COSTS them GREATLY.

**FYI** – For some time Captain America has been my FAVORITE Marvel character, and it is PRECISELY his moral resolve that makes him my favorite. Captain America POSSESSES a definitive sense of right and wrong; he is unwaveringly COMMITTED to that system of right and wrong; he is willing to pay the PRICE for that moral code if necessary.

**NOTE** – He is the EMBODIMENT of the following QUOTE (shared by Sharon Carter in *Civil War*).

“Compromise where you can. Where you can't, don't. Even if everyone is telling you that something wrong is something right. Even if the whole world is telling you to move, it is your duty to plant yourself like a tree, look them in the eye, and say ‘no, you move.’”

**Q. What do you call a hero who casually casts aside their moral code (right/wrong)? A ‘VILLAIN’**

## RELATABILITY (SLIDE)

The 4<sup>th</sup> item that audiences find fascinating about superheroes is their RELATABILITY...

**NOTE** – This point is an interesting one. On the one hand, we love superheroes because of their extraordinary powers and ethical resolve. Yet, on the other hand, we lose interest if a hero becomes too extraordinary—if they are unrelatable/lose their humanness.

**ILL** – Everyone loves Robert Downey Jr’s IRON MAN because—as heroic as he is—he is still WONDERFULLY HUMAN. He has close personal FRIENDSHIPS; he has a WOMAN that he loves (and often has a hard time PRIORITIZING); he struggles with ANXIETY and feels OVERWHELMED by the pressures placed upon him. He FEARS failure and KNOWS what it is like to fail/experience defeat. The average movie-goer may NOT be able to relate to flying in a metal suit, but they can RELATE to the man in it!

**ILL** – Everyone loves BATMAN because we all know what it is like to feel powerless; to be helpless; to powerlessly face LOSS and have to put broken pieces back together. We may NOT know what it is like to hunt criminals in dark alleys at night, but we can EMPATHIZE with the man who wears the cape and the cowl.

Comic writers have DISCOVERED time & again that great characters must be RELATABLE/HUMAN.

## SACRIFICE (SLIDE)

The 5<sup>th</sup> item that audiences find captivating about superheroes is their willingness to SACRIFICE...

**NOTE** – We love heroes because they are WILLING to sacrifice themselves in order to rescue the helpless and save the day. Whereas a VILLAIN is willing to sacrifice others in order to accomplish a goal (Thanos sacrificing his daughter, Gamora), a HERO is willing to give himself that others may live. Since some of you have NOT seen *Avengers: Endgame*, I will REFRAIN from spoilers!

**ILL** – To paraphrase a quote from Star Trek: Deep Space Nine – “In the best melodramas” the hero is “forced to sacrifice himself for the people; for the cause. One final grand gesture.” How true this is.

**KEY** – You show me a HERO and I will show you one who is WILLING to selflessly sacrifice himself...

## SUMMATIONS

Thus, audiences are drawn to superheroes for the following reasons (in way of summary):

1) Origin Story; 2) Superpowers; 3) Moral Resolve; 4) Relatability; 5) Sacrifice

## TRANSITIONS

**KEY** – I find this incredibly interesting & I want to make a statement accordingly (hear me closely):

EVERYTHING that we LOVE about heroes can be FOUND IN the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.  
EVERYTHING that DRAWS us to superheroes is somehow RESIDENT in the Life/Ministry of Christ.

**NOTE** – Allow me a few moments to MAKE my CASE (**SLIDE**)...

## ORIGIN STORY

Let's begin by discussing the subject of ORIGIN STORY. It is rather INTERESTING to think of the life and ministry of Christ in terms of an ORIGIN STORY.

### 1) In One Sense—Being Eternal—Jesus is Fundamentally Without Origin

#### John 1:1 (NIV)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

#### Micah 5:2 (NKJV)

2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,  
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me  
The One to be Ruler in Israel,  
Whose goings forth are from of old,  
From everlasting [lit. days of eternity]"

### 2) In One Sense, Jesus Identity & Mission Was Never Shaped by An External Force/Event

i.e., Jesus did NOT become the Christ/move to save the world because He was bitten by a radioactive spider, etc. His identity and His mission were ESTABLISHED from eternal ages past. Thus, in this sense, Jesus did NOT have a traditional ORIGIN STORY.

**KEY** – Yet His entrance into this world was unique &, thus, His point of ORIGIN is worthy of note:

**Luke 1:26–37 (NIV)**

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

34 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[a] the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail.”

## **SUPERPOWERS**

And what of the issue of SUPERPOWERS? Even the most CURSORY reading of the Gospels reveal that Jesus POSSESSED capacities/abilities that TRANSCEND that of the ordinary person. He was SUPERNATURAL in nature!

**NOTE** – The miraculous works of Christ REVEAL His power over FOUR KEY AREAS:

**1) NATURE** – Jesus’ miracles demonstrated His dominion over the NATURAL world (e.g., Feeding of the 5,000; Feeding of the 4,000; Miraculous Catch of Fish; Walking on Water, etc.)

**Mark 4:35–41**

35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” 41 They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”



**2) DISEASE** – Jesus’ miracles demonstrated His dominion over PHYSICAL DISEASE (e.g., Healing of Blind Bartimaeus; of 10 Lepers, of the Woman w. the Issue of Blood, etc.)

**Luke 5:12–13**

12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy.[b] When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.

**3) DEMONIC** – Jesus’ miracles demonstrated His mastery of the SPIRIT WORLD

**Luke 4:40–41**

40 At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. 41 Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

**4) DEATH** – Jesus’ miracles demonstrated His authority over DEATH ITSELF (e.g., the Raising of Jairus’s Daughter; the Raising of Lazarus; the Widow’s Son)

**Luke 7:11–15**

11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”

14 Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

**KEY** – But the GREATEST demonstration of His POWER was His own Resurrection!  
Consider the mighty power NECESSARY to accomplish/fulfill the following promise:

**John 10:18**

18 No one takes it [i.e., my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

## **MORAL RESOLVE**

**NOTE** – Allow me to note the following about the MORAL RESOLVE of Christ:

### **1) Jesus Possessed a Moral Code/Lived by it Unwaveringly**

#### **John 6:38b**

38 . . . I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

#### **John 8:46 (Jesus Speaking)**

46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?

### **2) Jesus Was Unwavering in His Obedience to His Father/Moral Resolve – Even if it COST**

#### **John 6:60–61, 66–69**

60 On hearing it [i.e., a difficult teaching of faith/commitment], many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”

66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

69 We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

**KEY** – Jesus would have CONTINUED in the mission even IF He had to go forth alone!

## **RELATABILITY**

**Q. WAS/IS Jesus matchless in His power? Yes**

**Q. WAS/IS Jesus matchless in His moral resolve? Yes**

However, there is a WONDERFUL humanity in the life/ministry of Christ. Though He was God in the flesh, there is a HUMANNESSE/a RELATABILITY to Him that any person can consider and appreciate!

### **1) Jesus Knew Weariness**

#### **John 4:6 (Upon Entry into Samaria)**

6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

### **2) Jesus Knew Hunger**

#### **Matthew 4:1–2**

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

### **3) Jesus Knew Thirst**

#### **John 19:28**

28 Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

### **4) Jesus Knew Anger/Frustration**

#### **Matthew 21:12–13**

12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. 13 And He \*said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a robbers' den."

### **5) Jesus Knew Sorrow/Loss**

#### **John 11:35**

35 Jesus wept.

## 6) Jesus Knew Anguish

### Matthew 26:36–39

36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

## 7) Jesus Knew Isolation

### Matthew 26:40

40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?”

## 8) Jesus Knew Betrayal

### Matthew 26:47–50

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” 49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

50 Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”

**KEY – REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING TEXT...**

### Hebrews 4:15

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

## **SACRIFICE**

**NOTE** – A hero is one who is **WILLING** to offer himself for the **SAKE/SALVATION** of others.

**Q. Is this not PERFECTED in Jesus Christ?**

**Mark 10:45**

45 For . . . the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**Galatians 1:3–4b**

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins . . .

**1 John 2:2**

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

## **CONCLUSION**

**NOTE** – In closing, I find it **INTRIGUING** that so much of what we love about superheroes is **FOUND** in Jesus Christ. I think of a statement from Joe Shea: “All great stories connect to the Gospel and all great characters point to Christ.”

It would seem that our generation is **SEARCHING** for a hero/longing for one who can save. This morning I would tell this generation and those present here today: **LOOK NO FURTHER. Jesus IS** what you are looking for.

**KEY** – We give our time, our energy, our finances and emotional investment to **MOVIE** characters.

**Q. What—precisely—should we give the Lord? OUR VERY LIVES**

**2 Corinthians 5:15**

15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.