

# **We Are the Church**

**Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, April 28, 2019**

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**Main Theme** – Considering the biblical truth that the Church of Jesus Christ is ultimately a people.

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## **WORSHIP & PRAYER**

## **WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **Regular Events**
  - POTLUCK SUPPER – Taking place TODAY following the AM Morning Service
  - Men's Breakfast – Taking place Saturday AM, May 11, from 9–10:30am
  - Women's Ministry – Taking place Tuesday, May 14, from 6:30–8pm
- **Special Events**
  - National Day of Prayer – Thursday, May 2, at Noon on the Barre Common

## **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 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.

## **SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1**

This morning I want to engage a VAST biblical topic with a very SIMPLE standalone message. In fact, EACH of the 5–6 points that I will present in the moments to follow could EASILY become 4–6-part sermon series in themselves. Thus, this one message could be used to introduce app. 6-months worth of teaching (which it will NOT serve to do). Yet, I do feel it necessary to share the following at this time.

Monday, April 15 was a typical busy MONDAY for me (and not because it was Tax Day). As I do on most Mondays, I spent the greater portion of the morning/early afternoon at DCF with our foster daughter, connecting with Misty after she got off work in the afternoon. In the course of time we decided to pay a visit to my mother (before going home for the evening). It was during this visit that my mother said: “Did you hear about what happened today in France?” Since I had NOT listened to the radio or watched TV all morning/afternoon, I was OBLIVIOUS to any of the day’s happenings. So, I grabbed the remote control and tossed on the news to see an image similar to the following (**SLIDE**).

## **SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2**

When I saw the NEWS report of the BURNING of Notre Dame, I honestly felt like someone sucker-punched me. Though I am NOT a Roman Catholic, I was absolutely HEARTBROKEN as I watched this centuries-old sanctuary BURN. I felt a real sense of LOSS, as something nearly 1,000-years-old—something that silently-witnessed so much history—was turning to ash. I thought back to my recent Palm Sunday message, wherein I shared on my love of HISTORY—only to realize that I was WATCHING history!

I spent much of that day and the next following the news REPORTS and ongoing UPDATES. Did anyone perish? Was the fire caused by an accident or—Lord forbid—an act of terrorism? Was anyone able to save any of the artifacts and artwork contained within? Would the cathedral be catastrophically ruined OR would some part survive? Would/Could it be rebuilt?

**Q. And what of those who would NOT have a church to worship in during Holy Week?**

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

It was in the midst of the reporting that one commentator (of NO discernable religious persuasion) made an insightful COMMENT that I needed to be reminded of. Yes, even pastors need reminders! **Q.** What was the insight?

**KEY** – The Church of Jesus Christ is ultimately NOT a building (**SLIDE**) – it is a PEOPLE.

Hear me clearly when I say the following (biblical reality/truth):

- 1) WE ARE** the Church of Jesus Christ (corp/ind) [REPEAT AFTER ME]
- 2) I AM** the Church of Jesus Christ (ind/pers) [REPEAT AFTER ME]

We may meet in a BUILDING commonly referred to as a church. THIS might even be a wonderful place to gather for worship, community, instruction and more. But—in REALITY—this is JUST wood and metal. It IS—more accurately—NOTHING MORE than a BUILDING where the TRUE Church of Jesus Christ meets/assembles.

**NOTE** – This building could be lost – yet if WE endure the CHURCH endures...

This morning I would like to offer 5–6 thoughts on the Church universal—the PEOPLE of God...

**Q. What can we say regarding this people/about us from a biblical perspective?**

Allow me to offer the following insights – LET’S DELVE IN

### POINT 1

**POINT 1** – The Church is a SAVED PEOPLE

The Church of Jesus Christ is comprised of the REDEEMED throughout SPACE and TIME. It is made up of ALL who believe on Him through the ages, REGARDLESS of gender, race, language, economic level, etc. This point is evident throughout the NT Scriptures:

#### **Revelation 7:9a (NIV)**

9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

#### **Galatians 3:26–28**

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**KEY Q** – If the Church is a SAVED people it begs the question – SAVED FROM WHAT?

### **1) Saved from the PENALTY of Sin**

Sin has a PENALTY (Rom. 3:23a). Sin makes us liable to divine JUDGMENT (in this life/life to come)—as we exist as objects of His wrath (Eph. 2:3). The work of Christ DELIVERS us from WRATH (1 John 2:2) and CONDEMNATION (Rom. 8:1), restoring us to PEACE with God (Rom. 5:1).

#### **John 3:18**

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

### **2) Saved from the DOMINION of Sin**

Those who live APART from Christ live under the MASTERY of sin. NOT SO with the Christian. Through Christ, we are FREED to rise above our fleshly instincts to serve the Lord in the beauty of HOLINESS through the POWER of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Ezekiel 36:26–27**

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

#### **Galatians 5:16, 22 –23a**

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . . 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.

### **3) Saved from the ANXIETIES of this Life**

Every day of life contains STRESSES/TRIALS in one form or another. Matters of finance, careers, schedules, family, challenging circumstances, etc., can ALL exert terrible pressure upon us. When we enter into relationship with Jesus Christ, we become partakers of His divine promises. We have NO need to fear the elements of His life when we are His. Rather, the anxiety that we feel apart from Him is REPLACED with joy and a peace of mind that remains.

#### **John 14:27**

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

#### **Philippians 4:6–7**

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## POINT 2

### POINT 2 – The Church is a SANCTIFIED PEOPLE

The Church of Christ is SANCTIFIED in that we are a people SET APART/DEDICATED to the Lord's USE. We are to be SEPARATED FROM the sinful ways of this world and CONSECRATED TO His divine SERVICE.

In fact, the Greek term for Church is 'ekklesia' (lit. "called out ones")

**KEY** – There is NO place for sinfulness – we are to be DEDICATED to godliness & good works

#### 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will live with them  
and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they will be my people."

17 Therefore,

"Come out from them  
and be separate, [CALLING OUT FROM]  
says the Lord.  
Touch no unclean thing,  
and I will receive you."

18 And,

"I will be a Father to you,  
and you will be my sons and daughters,  
says the Lord Almighty."

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God [CONSECRATED TO].

**Colossians 3:5–10, 12–14**

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**Ephesians 4:25–32**

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**Titus 2:11–14**

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

## POINT 3

### POINT 3 – The Church is a SPIRITUAL PEOPLE

#### 1) We are a people SPIRITUALLY CONNECTED TO Jesus Christ (i.e., ABIDING SPIRITUAL UNION)

##### John 15:1–4

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

#### 2) We are a people who PRACTICE God-ordained SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

##### [WORSHIP] Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

##### [WORSHIP] 1 Peter 2:9

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

##### [PRAYER] Matthew 6:5–9a (Emphasis Mine)

5 “And **when** you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But **when** you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And **when** you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 “This, then, is how you should pray [i.e., Lord’s Prayer...]:

##### [FASTING] Matthew 6:16–18 (Emphasis Mine)

16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

### **3) We are a people who NAVIGATE a SPIRITUAL REALM**

#### **Ephesians 6:10–18**

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

#### **2 Corinthians 10:4**

4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.



## **POINT 4**

### **POINT 4 – The Church is a SUPERNATURAL PEOPLE**

#### **1) A people whose LIFE/LIVING is EMPOWERED by the supernatural agency of God**

##### **John 15:5**

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

##### **Galatians 5:16, 22 –23a**

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . . 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.

#### **2) A people whose WITNESS is EMPOWERED by the supernatural agency of God**

##### **John 14:12**

12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

##### **Mark 16:15–18**

15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

##### **1 Corinthians 2:1b–5**

1 . . . When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.

## **POINT 5**

### **POINT 5 – The Church is a SOBER PEOPLE**

The Church of Jesus Christ is to be a SOBER people. I am NOT referring herein to the relationship between the Christian and alcohol (though the Word has much to say on that topic). RATHER, the church is a people who are SERIOUS about/DEDICATED to the Commission of the Lord.

#### **Matthew 28:18–19**

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**Q. To what degree does your life reflect a sober (serious) response to this Commission?**

**Q. What have you done to personally accomplish the Commission of winning the lost?**

**Q. What have you forfeited? What have you sacrificed? What exactly has it cost you?**

**NOTE** – Let us aspire to the example of someone like the apostle Paul...

#### **Colossians 1:28–29**

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

#### **1 Corinthians 9:16b**

16 . . . Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!

#### **Romans 9:1 –4a**

1 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—  
2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.

## KEY CONSIDERATION

**KEY** – Ultimately, the Church is a SECURE PEOPLE

God's PURPOSE/AGENDA for the Church of Christ will be FULFILLED – it CANNOT be thwarted.

**Matthew 16:18b [Jesus Speaking]**

18 . . . I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

**Q. What is Jesus saying herein? What is the MEANING of this promise?**

**A1.** The phrase “gates of Hades” was a figure of speech for DEATH among the ancient Jews. A GATE is a “point of entry”; HADES was “the realm of the dead”; **Q.** How does one enter the realm of the dead (gate)? What is the gate into Hades? DEATH.

**A2.** THUS, in saying that the gates of Hades will not overcome the Church, He is PROMISING that NOT EVEN DEATH can hinder His agenda for the Church. The Church can rest SECURE that—no matter the earthly circumstance—VICTORY is assured.

**KEY** – NOT EVEN DEATH will ultimately TRIUMPH.

**1 Corinthians 15:55**

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

**APP** – On EASTER SUNDAY, scores of Christians in Sri Lanka were KILLED in the midst of their worship. These DEATHS, though a great TRAGEDY, in NO way HINDER the work of Christ or SECURE ANYTHING other than ultimate VICTORY:

-Those who were truly His were brought directly into His presence upon death (VICTORY)

-God has used persecution to advance the work of the Church/advance His kingdom (VICTORY)

**Matthew 16:18b [Jesus Speaking]**

18 . . . I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [i.e., ‘death itself’] will not overcome it.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Q. What is the Church?

1. It is a SAVED people
2. It is a SANCTIFIED people
3. It is a SPIRITUAL people
4. It is a SUPERNATURAL people
5. It is a SOBER people
6. It is a SECURE people

### Q. Are you part of it? Not do you ATTEND church – but ARE YOU the Church?

**KEY** – The Church is comprised of those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ

- God in heaven
- I have sinned against you
- I deserve death for what I've done
- But I believe Jesus Christ died for me
- I believe He died and rose again
- I confess Him as my Lord
- I trust Him as Savior

**NOTE** – If you prayed this prayer – TALK WITH ME after service (next steps)