

Easter Sunday 2022

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, April 17, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us this Easter Sunday! Whether you are here in person or online you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a short space of time. Please turn to Matthew 28.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – In recent days I have found myself often thinking upon a figure named Charles Krauthammer. Though Charles was neither a professing believer nor someone that I met or knew personally, I admit he has had impact upon my life (e.g., political perspective and worldview). A luminary who excelled as a psychiatrist, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist, author, political commentator and media personality, Charles was a man that I could, and did, listen to for many hours, being of keen wit and insight. Having passed in 2018 from a battle with cancer, he is sorely missed.

NOTE 2 – As a communicator, I was always fascinated by his fascination with the written and spoken word. You see, he was captured by the idea that stringing the right words together in the right order could have profound effect upon individuals, nations and civilizations. Look back upon world history and you will find that words have been used to change the course of human affairs (i.e., for good or for ill). Allow me to share a brief sampling of famous words with you...

QUOTE 1

Let us begin with the following selection...

QUOTE – “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

NOTE – These remarks, born of American colonists who languished under the tyrannical rule of King George III, laid the groundwork for the establishment of a new nation: the United States of America. Our lives would be quite different if not for these words which form the preamble to the Declaration of Independence!

QUOTE 2

Let us continue with the following selection...

QUOTE – "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

NOTE 1 – Some months after the Battle of Gettysburg of the U.S. Civil War, wherein a combined 51,000 soldiers were killed, injured or otherwise lost to action, President Lincoln was asked to deliver a message at the dedication of the Gettysburg Civil War Cemetery (c. November 19, 1863). The featured speaker for the occasion was Edward Everett, a former dean of Harvard University, and one of the most famous orators of the day...

NOTE 2 – Everett's speech lasted for two hours. Lincoln delivered his address in approximately two minutes. Since this speech was delivered, despite its brevity, it has "come to be recognized as one of the most powerful statements in the English language and, in fact, one of the most important expressions of freedom and liberty in any language."

KEY 1 – It appears that stringing the right words together in the right order can impact individuals and nations.

KEY 2 – Once again, Charles Krauthammer was correct in his assessment.

THE MOST PROFOUND OF WORDS

At this point in the message you may be asking...

Q1. Why has Pastor taken the time to establish such a foundation on Easter Sunday?

Q2. Why is he addressing the power of words and offering these illustration(s) in kind?

BECAUSE...

A. I cannot think of words more impacting, transforming, inspiring, hope-filled or world-changing to individuals, families, communities, nations and the whole course of human affairs than the phrase: HE HAS RISEN. These words, uttered by angelic witness and recorded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, strung together in this order and believed upon, have enduring impact.

FYI – Please consider that these words are taken directly out of the biblical text...

Matthew 28:1–6 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; **he has risen**, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

KEY – Let us take a few moments to consider the varying segments of this simple phrase...

SEGMENT 1 – “HE”

Scripture records “HE” has risen. Thus said, we do well to consider the “HE” that is being referenced herein...

Q. To whom is “He” referring?

A. This term refers to the Almighty One, the Alpha and the Omega, our Advocate and the Author and Perfector of Our Faith. He is the One who has been given all Authority, the Bread of Life, the Beloved Son of God, the Bridegroom and the Chief Cornerstone. He is our Deliverer, He is Faithful and True, He is the Head of the Church who functions as our Good Shepherd and Great High Priest. He is both the “I Am” and Immanuel, God’s Indescribable Gift and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the Light of the World, the Lord of All, the Mediator and Messiah or Christ, our Hope, our Peace, our Prophet, our Redeemer and the Risen Lord. He is our Rock, our Savior, the Son of Man and the Supreme Creator of All. He is the Door, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way the Truth and the Life, the Way, the Word, the One True Vine, our Judge, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace...

KEY – We tend to simply call Him, Jesus (lit. “the LORD Saves”).

SEGMENT 2 – “HAS”

Scripture records that he “HAS” has risen. Thus said, we do well to consider the “HAS” utilized herein...

NOTE 1 – Matthew 28:5–6a would read quite a bit differently if the word “HAS” was removed and/or replaced. For instance, consider how this passage would read if the following “alterations” were made within...

Matthew 28:5–6a (PJV 1, Emphasis Mine)

5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.
6 He is not here; he **may have** risen OR **he has likely** risen . . .”

Matthew 28:5–6a (PJV 3, Emphasis Mine)

5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.
6 He is not here; **I can most certainly say with utmost confidence that I am not quite sure if Jesus has in fact definitively risen . . .**”

NOTE 2 – The term “HAS” is key because it speaks unequivocally to an event that took place in space and time. This is no nebulous statement that is unclear or vague, but one that is sure, firm, certain and a suitable bedrock upon which to build the superstructure of the faith we call Christianity.

SEGMENT 3 – “RISEN”

Ultimately, Scripture records that he has “RISEN”...

Q. What does this mean?

A. It means that Jesus rose bodily from death and the grave.

FYI – There have been many false claims concerning the Resurrection of Christ over the centuries...

NOTE 1 – Some have maintained that Jesus did not physically rise from the grave, but only spiritually appeared to return from death (e.g., “ghost”). The Gospel record makes it clear that the Risen Jesus went out of His way to debunk such an assertion! Consider...

Luke 24:36–42

36 While they were still talking about this [i.e., Claims re: the Road to Emmaus], Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

NOTE 2 – Others have maintained that Jesus’ disciples stole the body from the tomb and began to proclaim Christ Resurrected. Why men would willingly face hardship, prison, poverty and death for a deception of their own making strips this claim of serious consideration. In fact, this accusation has been around since that first Easter Sunday...

Matthew 28:11b–15

11 . . . some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13 telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ 14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” 15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

KEY – The Bible continually presents Christ as One who rose victoriously from death and the grave, so let us not foolishly diminish, dismiss or deny the reality of the Resurrection. To do so is to dismantle and discredit the faith that we profess (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12–19).

TRANSITIONS

As I segue into the final section of this sermon, I noted earlier that the right words in the right order have the power to impact, and that no words are more impacting upon the human condition than “HE HAS RISEN.” Allow me to note a few of the ways in which this three-word phrase changes everything (i.e., non-exhaustive treatment)...

EXAMPLES

1) To the Spiritually Dead

The message “HE HAS RISEN” is transformative to those who are dead in sin (i.e., to those condemned under the penalty and power of sin, separated from God for time and eternity). You see, a dead Jesus would be of little help in remedying such a spiritual condition. If He could not save Himself, how could He ever save us? However, the Risen Christ is able and willing to pardon, that we might be restored to the Lord and to life in Him...

Ephesians 2:1–6

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus . . .

John 3:16–17

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

2) To the Guilt-Ridden

The message “HE HAS RISEN” is transformative to those who languish under the burden of their sinfulness. You see, many live with an ongoing sense of shame or guilt for the crimes they have committed against God and others. Of course, a dead Jesus would be of little use to alleviate the regret we feel. However, the Risen Christ is able and willing to pardon and to assuage the conscience of the pardoned...

1 John 1:8–9

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Isaiah 1:18

18 “Come now, let us settle the matter,”
says the Lord.

“Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.”

3) To the Afflicted and Weary

The message “HE HAS RISEN” is impacting to those who are both afflicted and weary due to the trials of life. How many know what it means to be afflicted and wearied by the challenges you face? A still-dead Christ would be of no benefit, for how can the dead help the living? Yet the Risen Christ is ready to offer companionship, preservation, renewal and strength...

Isaiah 43:2

2 When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

Isaiah 40:29–31

29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
31 but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

4) To the Burdened

Similarly, the message “HE HAS RISEN” is impacting to those who are burdened by the cares of this life. Oftentimes we find ourselves carrying burdens that God has not called us to carry. A dead Jesus would have no ability to shoulder such burdens, but the Risen Christ enduringly extends to us the following invitation...

Matthew 11:28–30

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

5) To the Confused and Directionless

The message “HE HAS RISEN” is impacting to those who are unsure of their ways in this world. Who knows what it is like to lack a clear sense of direction (i.e., not knowing what path to take as choices or opportunities present themselves)? A still-dead Jesus would be of no use, for who takes direction from a corpse? Yet the Risen Christ is present to guide and establish your steps. He calls you to the following....

Proverbs 3:5–6

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
6 in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

James 1:5–8

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

6) To the Anxious and Fearful

The message “HE HAS RISEN” is transformative to those who struggle with matters of fear, worry and anxiety. I posit that we all know what it is like to feel “inner-disturbance” over matters of life and living. If Christ is yet dead, you would be truly helpless and alone. However, we revel in the diligent care of the Risen Christ who offers and ensures the following...

John 14:27

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.

7) To the Hopeless

The message “HE HAS RISEN” is transformative to the hopeless. Many live in under the conviction that there is nothing good in store (i.e., either for this life or the next). Of course, a still-dead Jesus would be a very uninspiring thing, for there is little cheer in a graveyard! Yet the Risen Christ lives to remind us of the good purpose of the Lord...

Jeremiah 29:11

11 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

John 14:1–3

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

FINAL REMARKS

KEY 1 – This morning it is my joy to proclaim that “HE IS RISEN” (cf. Matt. 28:6).

KEY 2 – These three words, uttered first by angelic witness and recorded for all time under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, strung together in this order and believed upon, have enduring impact. As I have posited, I cannot think of words more impacting, transforming, inspiring, hope-filled or world changing to individuals, families, communities, nations and the whole course of human affairs than this simple phrase.

Q. Yet what shall you do in light of this truth?

Q1. Will you resist, reject and revile the message of the Resurrected Christ?

Q2. Will you receive this message and confess Christ as you Lord and Savior?

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this local work of Christ.

NOTE 2 – Please check out the website for the calendar of upcoming events and more. Until we meet again.....

Numbers 6:24–26

24 “The Lord bless you
and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”

HAPPY EASTER!