

Easter Sermon 2023

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, April 9, 2023

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.

READ ALL ABOUT IT...

NOTE 1 – In recent days our nation experienced something quite unprecedented: the indictment of a former President on criminal charges (i.e., for which I have found this headline and news report) (**SLIDE**). Please note that this sermon is neither for nor against Trump, so please do not tune out or get riled up depending on your political stance. I am simply noting the historic nature of this news, which is now forever chronicled by this headline.

NOTE 2 – As I pondered such things as of late, my mind began to think upon famous news reports and headlines throughout our history. I even took some time to scour the internet for the most famous of news stories and corresponding headers...

NOTE 3 – I came upon a number of top-10 and top-20 lists of the most iconic news headlines. Though there was some variation present in each of the sites I visited, there were a number of banners that repeated time and again. Do any of these sound familiar?

(**SLIDE**) “Dewey Defeats Truman”

The Chicago Daily Tribune ran this headline on November 3, 1948, referring to the 1948 election between Republican Thomas Dewey and Democrat Harry Truman. There was just one problem: the headline was wrong! In fact, Truman had defeated Dewey in an upset victory. The Tribune went to press before the results were read, relying on a political analyst to predict the winner. About 150k papers were printed with the incorrect headline, one of which made its way into the hands of Truman himself. He triumphantly displayed the paper in St. Louis Union Station, which of course made it even more notable.

(**SLIDE**) “Kennedy Is Killed By Sniper As He Rides In Car In Dallas; Johnson Sworn In On Plane”

The death of a President will always make for national news, but the assassination of a President is something else entirely. The New York Times ran this headline on Saturday, November 23, 1963, the same day that Kennedy was killed by Lee Harvey Oswald. Note the amount of information packed within this statement. Readers not only learned that Kennedy was killed, but how and where. It also answered the immediate Q. of Pr. succession.

(**SLIDE**) “Greatest Crash In Wall Street’s History”

The greatest financial disaster of the century, the Wall Street crash signaled the end of the roaring twenties and the beginning of the Great Depression. Beginning on September 4, 1929, and lasting to mid-November, the Wall Street crash devastated the global economy. On Friday, October 25, 1929, the Daily Mail ran this headline, depicting the massive extent of the damage, and the historic nature of the crash itself. It came just one day after Black Thursday, which is considered the true start of the crash (i.e., owing to the large amount of panic selling). With this headline, people knew the world was spiraling into chaos.

(SLIDE) “The First Footstep”

History was made on July 21, 1969. It was on that day that astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped foot on the moon. Even today, it is widely considered one of the greatest scientific and engineering feats of all time—perhaps even the greatest. The Evening Standard of London depicted a reconstruction of the lunar module aided by the headline “The First Footstep.” It is a gorgeously poetic headline, with three simple words encompassing the unbelievable accomplishment. It celebrates ambition, creativity, and ingenuity, and it is everything that a great headline should be.

(SLIDE) “War on America”

9/11 is the type of moment that inspires a range of headlines. Perhaps one of the most effective front page belonged to Britain’s The Daily Telegraph. It read simply “War on America,” with an accompanying photo that spoke louder and clearer than any words possibly could. Contrasting against a blue sky was the horrifying sight of an exploding tower and debris raining onto the ground below. This combination of headline and photo hauntingly depicted the surreal events of that fateful September morning (not to mention the foreboding questions that the future held).

(SLIDE) “Titanic Sinks Four Hours After Hitting Iceberg”

On the morning of Tuesday April 16, 1912, people woke up to this horrible headline. The front page of The New York Times displayed a picture of the gigantic ship along with the haunting and protracted headline “Titanic Sinks Four Hours After Hitting Iceberg; 866 Rescued By Carpathia, Probably 1250 Perish. Ismay Safe, Mrs. Astor Maybe, Noted Names Missing.” It is a tantalizing headline for what it represents about early 20th century America. The information was wrong, as approximately 1,500 died in the sinking v. 1,250. It also includes details about the elite, including White Star Line chairman J. Bruce Ismay and the wife of John Astor, who was the richest man on the ship.

(SLIDE) “PEACE!”

What better way to signal the end of World War II than with one simple word? The word “Peace!,” complete with an exclamation mark, was plastered across the front page of Sydney’s The Sun on the morning of August 15, 1945. This day marked Japan’s surrender, and the war officially came to an end when the surrender document was signed on September 2. It is rare that newspaper headlines display emotion, but this world-changing event called for it. The word itself covers much of the front page, and the exclamation mark serves as a nice addition to convey the elation of the event. This exuberant headline matches the enthusiastic energy that millions were feeling at the time. **(SLIDE)**

KEY 1 – I could go on like this, touching upon iconic headlines like King Elvis Dead, Beatle John Lennon Slain, Martin King Shot to Death, Diana Dead, Hitler Dead, Nixon Resigns, Mandela Goes Free Today, and so forth. However, I think I have cited enough examples of news reports and headlines for the purposes of this message!

KEY 2 – I could also note that each of these moments in time were and remain significant. Each had far-reaching implications that changed the soul of the nation and the fabric of our culture, captured in large, enduring print! Volumes could be—and certainly have been—written on the ramifications of each news story, as our world has been irrevocably shaped by each and every one of them. Time will not permit me to elaborate herein, but I ask...

Q. How many remember where they were when J.F.K. was killed, Armstrong landed or the planes hit on 9/11?

KEY 3 – The youth among us will certainly experience headlines of your own, with world-changing implications. None of us can be certain as to what a day may bring, and what things will be forever captured by a news headline!

THE NEWS OF EASTER

KEY – Yet one thing I can say for certain is that NO story or headline can rival the news of Easter Sunday (**SLIDE**)!

NOTE 1 – I posit that the Resurrection of Christ, which we celebrate on this day, remains the single most impacting event in human history, with wide-ranging implications that no minister could hope to summarize! The news of the Resurrection was chronicled by the four Gospel writers, as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit!

Mark 16:1–6 (NIV) (cf. Matt. 28; Luke 24; John 20) (Emphasis Mine)

1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. **He has risen!** He is not here. See the place where they laid him."

NOTE 2—The Resurrection of Christ from the dead also served as the core or cornerstone of the apostolic message!

Acts 2:22–24 (Peter's Pentecost Sermon) (Emphasis Mine)

22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But **God raised him from the dead**, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

1 Peter 1:3–4 (Peter to Christians of His Era) (Emphasis Mine)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

2 Timothy 2:8 (Paul to Timothy) (Emphasis Mine)

8 Remember Jesus Christ, **raised from the dead**, descended from David. **This is my gospel**, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.

Romans 10:9–10 (Paul to the Church at Rome) (Emphasis Mine)

9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that **God raised him from the dead**, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Ephesians 1:18–21 (Paul to the Church at Ephesus) (Emphasis Mine)

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he **raised Christ from the dead** and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

REAL IMPLICATIONS PT. 1

Q. Have you ever considered the implications of a Christ who is risen from death?

A. The apostle Paul did! In fact he addressed this topic (i.e., in the negative), A the Q...

Q. What if Christ be dead? What if Christ has not been raised?

1 Corinthians 15:14–15, 17–19

14 . . . if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. . . . 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Q. What are the ramifications of a still-dead Jesus?

A1. Verse 14a. If Christ has not been raised, the preaching of the gospel is useless (i.e., empty, futile or pointless). The hallmark message of the Church of Christ since its inception has been Christ Crucified and Resurrected. We proclaim a living, not a dead, Savior. However, this message comes to nothing if the Savior Himself is truly gone.

A2. Verse 14b. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is also useless. Consider the various things we trust Jesus for (e.g., salvation, healing, provision, guidance, etc.). Each of these things is contingent upon His being alive. Remove a living Savior and what exactly are we trusting in? Who, precisely, are we praying both to and through?

A3. Verse 15a. If Christ has not been raised, the Church must contend with some serious credibility issues. Apostolic figures and the early disciples of Christ claimed He was alive. If the Resurrection did not occur, this would put everything they taught into dispute. They must, rightfully, be deemed false witnesses! Moreover, every believer throughout space and time who proclaimed the Risen Christ must be deemed unreliable as well.

A4. Verse 17. If Christ has not been raised, we are still in our sins. Theologically, we are not saved solely through the death of Christ, but also by His Resurrection. His Resurrection validated that His sacrifice was acceptable and sufficient to pay for our sin. Without the Resurrection we have no certainty that the Father has made a way for us to enter heaven through Christ. Ultimately, if Jesus could not save Himself, can He truly save you and me?

A5. Verse 18. If Christ has not been raised, the dead in Christ are truly lost. This is an especially painful point to consider. We derive comfort from the hope that dead believers are ushered into heavenly glory. We derive joy in knowing that we will see them again when our time comes. Yet if Christ was not raised, this sense of comfort and joy is futile. Dead believers are not with Christ but separated from God for all eternity. There is no grand reunion to take place across death's shores: only the certainty of judgment.

A6. Verse 19. If Christ has not been raised, those who trust in Him are to be most pitied. Believers sacrifice and endure hardship because we believe that Jesus will make it worthwhile in the end. Yet, if Christ is dead and there is no reward in store, this is all for nothing! How tragic to place faith in one who, in the end, cannot save!

KEY – Christianity has endured much through the centuries, including peril, persecution and more. However, Christianity could not endure a still-dead Jesus. Remove the Risen Lord from the faith and the whole of the faith comes crashing down like a clumsily built house of cards.

Yet if Jesus' Resurrection be true (and this headline proves to NOT be fake news), Christianity is fully affirmed...

NOTE 1 – We must contend with the inverse of the remarks of the apostle Paul...

- 1) The Preaching of the Gospel Shifts from Being Futile to Essential
- 2) The Place of Faith Shifts from an Act of Futility to an Act of Necessity
- 3) The Credibility of Dutiful Witnesses is No Longer Negated but Bolstered
- 4) The Hopeful are No Longer in their Sins but Free from its Power & Penalty
- 5) The Dead in Christ are Not Lost but at Home w. Christ (Awaiting Our Arrival)
- 6) The Believer is Not to be Pitied for God Shall Reward Every Sacrifice/Hardship

REAL IMPLICATIONS PT. 2

NOTE 1 – We must also note that the report of Jesus' Resurrection is good news to...

1) To the Spiritually Dead and Condemned

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 . . .

2) To the Afflicted and Burdened

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.”

3) To the Anxious and Fearful

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.

4) To the Hopeless

John 14:1–3

1 “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.”

KEY – Our faith, hopes and lives are not built on the mere memory of a dead icon—they are built on a Living Christ!

APPLICATIONS

The news story has gone out and it has been proclaimed for nearly two-thousand years...

- Q1. Have you heard it?**
- Q2. Have you believed upon it?**
- Q3. Has it found application in your life?**
- Q4. Have you told someone/anyone else about it?**

A FINAL POINT

NOTE 1 – As I begin to move to a close, please allow me to note the following...

KEY 1 – This one headline and/or news report shall only be outdone by one other. (**SLIDE**)

NOTE 2 – Scripture speaks at length to the Return of the Resurrected Christ to this world—a Return that will have truly cosmic implications for this world as we have known of it. If the Resurrection marked the beginning of a great work, His Return shall bring about its completion (i.e., as the author of the Book of Hebrews notes)...

Hebrews 9:28 (Emphasis Mine)

28 . . . Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; **and he will appear a second time**, not to bear sin, **but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.**

NOTE 3 – We are a people who live between two poles (i.e., advents or appearances). In this intervening period...

- Q1. Are you waiting for Him?**
- Q2. Are you 'watchful and readied'?**
- Q3. Do you 'long' for the Return of Jesus?**
- Q4. Do you 'long' for what change it shall bring?**
- Q5. Are you sharing Him with others until He Comes?**

- Q1. Do you know the Christ who has Risen and who shall come again?**
- Q2. Have you placed your faith in and committed yourself to the Living One?**

KEY 2 – These are not casual or light questions. They deserve the most sober of considerations...

ULTIMATELY...

- Q1. What will the headline of your life and living be?**
- Q2. What banner do you want over your time on earth?**
- Q3. Shall it say "FOREVER LOST" or "FOREVER FOUND"? ULT.**

KEY 3 – You get to choose, so choose Christ by faith! NO neutrality...

QUOTE – "Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important." –C. S. Lewis

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Feel free to participate in our “beyond-Sunday” ministries (MM, WM, B.S.).

NOTE 3 – We would love to have you join us for some coffee/refreshments downstairs.

NOTE 4 – Please note that there is a bevy of free books, studies and videos for the taking!

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.