

Sermon April 12, 2020 Easter Sunday

Message "He Rose from the Grave"

Good morning again. Happy Easter to all.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Some of us may have some different ideas about Easter. What really happened on that day, and why is it important for Christians today.

VIDEO "The Promise of Easter"

Well, today we are going to learn more about God's power and how it can literally change our lives.

But first, let's pray...

Prayer "O Lord, speak to us where Your love finds us this morning, speak to us in our minds, speak to us in our hearts, speak to us by the words of my mouth, and in the thoughts we form. Speak, O Lord, we, your servants, are listening. Amen

I emailed you a sermon outline this week ... week 6 of our sermon series titled "Against All Odds?", and I would encourage you to reference it as we continue. And I believe it is also posted on our Web page at rigbychurch.com for future reference.

For the past 5 weeks we've been in a series called *Against All Odds*.

The series is based on a monumental chapter in the Old Testament ... Isaiah chapter 53.

This chapter is full of predictions about the life of Jesus and was written some 700 years before Jesus was born. He describes 24 actions the Messiah would experience that were all fulfilled by Jesus during Holy Week.

He predicted that...

- The Messiah would be despised, betrayed and rejected.
- That He would be silent when facing His accusers.
- That He would bear our sorrows and sins.
- And by bearing our sins, He would heal our sickness.
- And pay the price for our sins.
- And that He would rise from the dead.

24 predictions in all.

The reason we've called this series, *Against All Odds* is because several years ago, a mathematician named Dr. Peter Stoner did some work with probability theory.

He sat down and determined the odds for any one person fulfilling just eight prophecies of Scripture. Stoner's calculations showed that the probability of fulfilling 8 prophecies was

so miniscule, it would be virtually impossible.

Stoner said, "...the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} "

That number is one with 17 zeros behind it. It's called "one hundred quintillion." A number that big is hard to grasp, so Stoner illustrated it like this.

He said, "Suppose we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the state of Texas. They will cover all of the state in stacks two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state.

Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar, and see if he picked up the marked one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? 1×10^{17} "

What are the odds that anyone could fulfill over 300 prophecies of Scripture? That number is SO big, we can't calculate it, and would certainly not have a name for it.

In His life, Jesus not only fulfilled 48 prophecies in His death, but He fulfilled more than 300 prophecies in His life.

What are the odds? THEY ARE IMPOSSIBLE ... other than in the hands of God.

Today being Easter, we're not going to talk about 48 prophecies, we're just going to talk about one ... the greatest prophecy - Jesus' Resurrection from the dead.

What are the odds that a dead person could come back from the grave?

Perhaps a person can be revived after he/she has stopped breathing or their heart has stopped.

But here is the key point ... Jesus wasn't REVIVED, He was *RESURRECTED*. (let me say that again)

What are the odds that someone who had been...

- crucified and pronounced dead by a professional Roman executioner, who had thrust a spear through His heart, and watched clear pericardial fluid gush through the open wound, showing that His heart had burst and the chambers of it collapse,
- His body pried from the nails that held it to the cross, wrapped in 200 pounds of spices, including His face, nose and mouth, and laid behind a 2,000-pound stone.

What are the odds that someone could revive Himself, move the stone, walk 14 miles that afternoon, and convince His friends that He was completely restored to health?

What are the odds? There is ZERO possibility.

Jesus' resurrection was truly a miracle, AGAINST ALL ODDS.

We make a big deal out of Easter, because Easter IS a big deal.

Jesus came back to life,

- Proving that God is powerful.
- Demonstrating that Jesus WAS and IS who He said He was.
- And that there really is life after death.

Isaiah 53:10 says...

“It was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer.” (That’s Good Friday.)

“... though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin...”
(That happened at the crucifixion.)

“He will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand”. (That’s us!)

After he has suffered, he will see the light of life... (that’s the Resurrection!)

“...the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.”

God’s program is the church. With branches in every nation of the world today, I believe it is doing very well.

Verse 11 says...

“After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied, by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”

What are the odds that this could happen? Would happen? Did happen?

Let me walk you through the story today. I’d like every one of us today to be able to think through and understand exactly what happened on Resurrection Sunday.

All four gospel writers record it. So, what do we know about what HAPPENED on Easter? Let’s spend a few moments walking through what we know:

First

1. Just before dawn, three women went to the tomb to finish dressing Jesus’ body. Lk. 24:1-12; Mk. 16:1

John mentions 2 Mary’s and a Joanna. Mark mentions the 2 Mary’s and a daughter of one of the Mary’s, whose name was Salome. So probably, 4 or more women witnessed the resurrection.

Which is just the opposite of what you would expect if you were fabricating an account. Because having women witnesses would do you no good in a court of law, since females in that culture could NOT testify in a court of law.

The second thing we know is that

2. While on the way, there was an earthquake. Mt. 28:2

There was a whole lotta shakin goin on. Earthquakes aren't common in Jerusalem. They remembered this one, since it split a crack in the ground that you can still see there today.

Third,

3. Angels announced that Jesus was risen. Lk. 24:4; Jn. 20:12

These angels appeared in the form of men. Matthew tells us that one of the angels appeared like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow.

Fourth,

4. The women reported the news to the Disciples. Lk. 24:9-10

Fifth,

5. On the way to report, they encountered Jesus in the flesh. Mt. 28:9-10

Sixth,

6. The Disciples didn't believe their report. Lk. 24:11

After all, would you? They just saw Jesus die a horrible death. They watched the Roman soldier thrust a spear up under His ribcage, piercing His heart, and having clear, fluid gush from the wound. The presence of such fluid proved that the chambers of His heart had burst.

And seventh, Peter and John were intrigued enough by the women's report that they ran to the tomb to investigate the tomb for themselves.

7. Peter and John investigated the tomb for themselves. Lk. 24:12; Jn. 20:3-10

That's what happened Easter Sunday morning. Everyone was freaking out, wondering if it was really true, and wondering how they could find out if it WAS true.

Imagine being there, staggering around all day, trying to process this information? But then, you realize there is more.

Luke also tells us about Easter afternoon. He says on that afternoon,

8. Jesus revealed Himself to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Lk. 24:30

Luke continues with the two disciples returning to Jerusalem to tell their story to Jesus' Apostles.

Luke says on the night of Easter...

9. Jesus came to the Disciples in the evening (probably in Bethany). Lk. 24:36; Jn. 20:19

Since that's where they had been staying all during Holy Week.

Luke says that ...

10. Jesus walked through the wall to get to them. Jn. 20:19

Once inside...

11. Jesus showed them His wounds. Lk. 24:40; Jn. 20:20

And He did that simply SO that they WOULD believe. Notice that Jesus' wounds are still with Him, even after death. Jesus' death changed Him, forever.

And while He now had their full attention, He essentially did a Bible study with them...

12. Jesus explained the Scriptures to them. Lk. 24:45-46

From first to last. He helped them digest the events of the past few days. So that is Luke's account of Easter Sunday.

John, who wrote his eyewitness account after Luke's gospel had already been published, wanted to add a few more details for us.

So, he wrote his own account of the Sunday evening meal with Jesus. The two important details John wanted us to know about Easter were simply this...

13. John wanted us to know that the Disciples rejoiced and believed that evening after SEEING Jesus.

John 20:20b

What they saw, heard, felt, and experienced convinced them that the resurrection HAD really happened, and that Jesus was alive again and in their midst.

And secondly, but just as important...

14. Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit and authority. John 20:22

If you've got God's Holy Spirit inside of you, that is all you will ever need.

Easter Sunday was QUITE a day, wouldn't you agree?

Jesus rose from the dead,

- met with and proved Himself to no less than 16 people, including 4 women, 10 Apostles (remember Judas had deserted Jesus, and Thomas wasn't there on that first Sunday), plus the 2 other disciples on the road to Emmaus.
- He walked through a wall – demonstrating just one of the upgraded features of what our resurrected bodies will be like.
- And He ate some fish demonstrating that He really was flesh and blood, not a ghost or apparition.

The Resurrection CHANGED everything. It means that there really is life AFTER death, and God has made a way for us to get there. You no longer need to doubt and wonder "Could it possibly be true?"

It means that we are not evolutionary accidents, but intentionally created sons and daughters, made in God's image, with all of God's love and hopes and dreams for us and with us.

It means that life has meaning and purpose, and something far better to look forward to in our futures.

Jesus Christ is Risen from the dead. He is the living Lord of creation.

He is the Lamb who was slain for the sin of the world – your sin, and mine.

He was crucified, but He returned.

He's the Resurrected Savior, who ASCENDED,

But left behind His people to share the Good News with others.

He is the eternal Son of God.

He is someone you can trust.

Some of you may feel powerless over the challenges you are facing right now. But hear clearly ...

Jesus' resurrection means that NO SITUATION is too hopeless! NO PROBLEM is too big.

Jesus is still in the resurrection business - and He alone has the power to change your life ... LET HIM. Amen

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. I believe you died for me. I believe you rose for me. And I want to live for you. Be my Lord and be my Savior. I will serve you forever. Amen.