

THE RESURRECTION

Final Week of a 2-Week Easter Series

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Okay; you guys ready?

I want to talk about life. And I want to talk about the life that moves through our bodies on a regular basis. And the question that I have for you tonight is: Do you feel fully alive? And if you don't feel fully alive, do you remember the last time you had that feeling?

Because I want us to really look at life from the highest spiritual point of view. Because I think sometimes we take life for granted. And sometimes we do things that don't really enhance our life experience, but we say, *"Oh well. I'm going to feel better tomorrow."* Or, *"Oh, well; if I eat the whole piece of cake or if I eat the whole pizza or if I go through the whole buffet, I'm not going to feel good tonight, but I'll feel fine tomorrow."* Right? Or if we drink too much or eat too much, or whatever we do ... right?

So there's idea that life is so strong in us that we don't always have to pay attention to it. And what would happen if we got right with life? Because life is a spiritual experience; it's of God. It's not physical; we experience it physically, but it really is a spiritual quality. And as we get right with it, it's like there's more to be had.

There's this Scripture from John 10:10:

"The thief comes only to steal, to kill and destroy; I came that you might have life, and have it abundantly."

And so what I want us to look at honestly is: Are there any behaviors in your life that you know are not life-enhancing? That are actually stealing and killing and just slowly destroying yourself? Because you just assume that the life force in you is great enough that it doesn't really matter; that you can just overcome it?

And what would happen tonight if we decided that we were going to fully participate with the life force that's within us? And express it in the highest level?

We know that there are certain things physically that we can do; and that's where I want to kind of begin tonight: is that physical discussion. We know that there's physical things that we can do to enhance our life and to live a healthier life. Eat less; eat right; exercise; get more sleep; drink more water; minimize stress; stand more; sit less. How many of you have heard most of those ideas? Right? There's really not ... It's not too revolutionary, right?

And from the psychological aspect, we know that the studies that, if we have deep meaningful relationships, we're often healthier. If we live a life of gratitude, we're often healthier. If we have a joyful life, we're often healthier. If we forgive, we're often healthier. But life is eternal and it's infinite.

When we go ... If you live in the desert and you go to a lush forest where there's ferns growing everywhere and you look at the abundance of life, it's really kind of amazing. And then we come back to the desert, and the desert has a different form of life. But if we pay attention, even in the desert we see that life is infinite. Like, everywhere we look, there's life! And it is vibrant! And it may not be like in a lush, green forest, but the desert is alive!

You know, we've stuck submarines as deep as we can go in the ocean. And it's dark! And yet life survives even there. And some of the creatures that live down there are just weird, right? [Congregation laughs] Little things sticking out; the flash. It's different! It's a different experience.

But what I want you to see is: The life of God cannot -- and will not -- be denied. The life of God always wants to be expressed. And everywhere we look, we see life.

And in this discussion of life, I wanted tonight to talk about healing and resurrection. I know that we talked about resurrection on Easter, and I want to just kind of revisit this issue. Because I think that, for most of us, there is a deeper understanding we can have of the difference between healing and resurrection.

So I'm going to go to the Gospel. I'm going to go to John. I know it's the Easter quote, but just indulge me. And I think hopefully -- God willing -- it will make sense. Beginning Chapter 20:

"Now the first day of the week Mary Mag'dalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.'

Peter came out at once with the other disciple and they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw that the linen cloth was lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb and saw that the linen cloth was lying there. And the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloth but rolled in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in and saw and believed; for they did not know the scripture that he must rise from the dead. And then the disciples went back to their home."

[Laughs] Okay; so this cracks me up, right? So Mary goes, gets the disciples; she's in a panic that Jesus is gone. The disciples run; they get there; they go look in the tomb. He's not there, so they go home. Such a man thing! Right? [Congregation laughs] *"I looked for it!"* Right?

As men, like, do you ever lose something and you're like, *"I'm sorry; it's permanently lost."* And then somebody else goes and they say, *"Did you look where's it's supposed to be?"* *"Oh! Do you think it would be there?"* And there it is, right?

And so sometimes it's a kind of masculine thing. We do the superficial "once over." We look at it with physical eyes; it's not there. We didn't see it; we go home. You know, not a lot of stress. We get the ballgame back on and we're good to go. [Congregation laughs]

"But Mary stood there weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. And they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' And she said, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.'"

Now, do you think the angels just showed up after the men left? Anybody want to take a stab at that? Like, the angels: do you think that maybe they were in the tomb all the time, and the men -- in their hurry to find Jesus -- just went in. It physically wasn't there, so they ran home. And they just didn't notice the angels at all. Right? It was like a, *"Oops!"* Right?

But Mary actually was in the experience, right? She's weeping; she's having a feeling. She's in the experience. And when she looks in, she looks in from a different point of view. From a spiritual point of

view, if you will. And from that spiritual point of view, she has a very different experience. Because, for her, was the tomb empty? No! Right? Jesus wasn't there, but the tomb was not empty. She saw the spiritual presence of two angels, and she begins to talk to them. And not only does she talk to them, but what happens? They talk back to her!

"... 'Because they have taken [him] away, and I do not know where they've laid him.'

Seeing this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there and did not know it was Jesus. And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?' And supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will go and take him away.'

And Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' And she turned and said in Hebrew, 'Rab-bo'ni!' (which means teacher).

And Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them I am ascending to my Father and to your Father; to my God and to your God.'"

See, there is a level of life that I believe is always present. But if we just look at life from the physical, we miss it. Even if we look at life -- life itself -- just from the physical point of view, we often miss how full, how rich, how amazing life is. So because Mary was willing just to sit still and be in the experience, she had a very different experience.

And I truly believe that, for all of us, if we live just at the physical level -- if we just experience life from the physical level -- we have a very different experience than when we experience life from the spiritual dimension. When our spiritual eyes are open, we have a very different relationship with life. We have a different relationship with God. Because the best parts of life are non-physical. And as we open ourselves to experience that, there's a depth and a meaning that is greater.

So I want to talk tonight about what Jesus went through. And I want us to understand the spiritual significance. Because many of us are praying for a healing in our life. You know, we want to be healed. And when we're praying for a healing, we want to be restored to a level of health that we've already had.

So in many ways, when we're praying for a healing, we're actually praying to go back to someplace that we liked. And there's nothing wrong with that! I want you to be praying for a healing! I want us all to be praying for each other for a healing! But I want you to see the difference between a healing and a resurrection. Because a resurrection is a level of life that we have not yet experienced. Healing is going backward -- and it's wonderful! How many of us would -- even for just 24 hours -- take our 20-year-old body back? [Congregation laughs] I would be crazy! I would line up! It would be fabulous, right? I know what I looked like when I was 20! I didn't have a problem with that, right? [Congregation laughs]

But healing really is going back to what we thought we had and lost. But resurrection is actually claiming a spiritual reality that we have not yet known. And in that way, I want us to truly understand the difference and the importance of resurrection.

I believe that, within us ... And what I'm about to say I cannot prove, but I believe it. And so if you want to dismiss it, okay. But I believe that, within our DNA, we have been prewired for every level of life, from the lowest form of humanity to the highest spiritual humanity. That we have already been prewired for that. That it's already within us; it's in our DNA. It's in the code.

Now, just because we're not living it doesn't mean it's not there. And what I believe happens -- through the process of resurrection -- is that we actually move forward to a higher manifestation of ourselves

that we have not yet known. And I think this is so important that we understand that this possibility is totally available to us, but it's not healing. It looks like healing, but it's not healing. It's actually the fulfillment of the promise that God has made to each and every one of us from the moment we were created.

When we heal, it's fabulous! But it's kind of going backwards. When we resurrect, we're actually becoming that which we have never been before.

You know, one of my teachers is Paramahansa Yogananda. And in his Discourse 75 from the book, *The Second Coming of Christ*, he writes this:

"In the resurrection, Christ consciousness is perfectly ..."

And this is going to be a little "woo woo" for some of you. [Congregation laughs] Alright? Did you hear me say it's going to be a little "woo woo"? It's going to be a little "woo woo," so just ... Just ... *"It's Richard."* Just ...

"In the resurrection, Christ consciousness is perfectly manifested for those whose eyes have been opened. On Easter, Jesus' soul rose into oneness with Spirit -- the soul's ascension from the delusory confinement of the body consciousness into the native immortality and everlasting freedom. At his death, Jesus entered the highest unified state: a God-realized soul's conscious ascension from the physical body at the time of death, merging his consciousness into the blissful presence of the Cosmic Consciousness of God the Father. As he rose from the dead, Jesus began to loosen, with the supreme-soul science of liberation, the knots of life and consciousness that both enabled and resulted from his earthly incarnation."

So how I understand this ... So Jesus came into form. And he brought his huge spiritual consciousness into form. But in the crucifixion and through the resurrection, at the end he actually released the limited and stood in oneness with God and fully Let me; let me ... His words:

"I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go and say to my brethren I am ascending to the Father and your Father; to my God and your God."

That he was actually ascending to that spiritual perfection that is available to all of us! And the reason it's so important is that it is available to all of us! And that, many times, we need to move the focus off of our healing nature and we need to put more focus on resurrecting into the next highest greatest version of ourselves.

There's nothing wrong with going backwards, but it's only in resurrection that we fulfill the promise that was made to every soul on who we were actually created to be!

Charles Fillmore, the co-founder of Unity, wrote this on resurrection:

"The restoring of the mind and body to their original, undying state. This is accomplished by the realization that God is Spirit and that God created man with power like that which He Himself possesses."

So we actually have the power of God and the ability to be that which we were called to be ... that's actually, in my belief, within our DNA to be the man or woman in the perfection of Spirit and know our oneness with God.

Romans 8:11 ... And I know I've read this I don't know how many times. But this week, this one just jumped out and grabbed me.

"If the Spirit of Him .."

Meaning God.

"If the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you."

This is Paul telling us that it's already in you! But if you don't activate it, it's not helpful. If you're not intent on living it, then we just go through the cycle over and over again, and we never get to the promise.

So how do we resurrect? Jesus, in his last week -- where he raised Lazarus from the dead -- I believe he gave us the model of how to do it. Because it would be a cruel situation if someone said to you, *"You know, there's this really cool thing that you can do, but I'm not going to tell you how to do it. So good luck; God bless ya; and I hope you get by."* I mean, that's not nice! That's just mean! Right?

So in the last week, in the raising of Lazarus, I think he gives us more than a clue in John, beginning with Verse 17:

"Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been dead in the tomb for four days."

So, four days in ... [Laughs] Not always, but in the Jewish culture, four days was dead dead. Four days was past ... like, you're not opening that thing. It's ripe. It's dead dead. Okay?

"Bethany was near Jerusalem about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. When Martha heard Jesus was coming, she went and she met him. And while Mary sat in the house, Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And even now, I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.'

And Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

And Martha says, 'I know. I know. He'll rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'"

And then Jesus says these few words.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

I want you to hear this! He acknowledges the process, right? He says:

"I am the resurrection and the life."

And I want us to go all the way back to Moses when it was the *"I AM that I AM."* And he gives us the teaching. The teaching is: The I AM is the way we resurrect! That everything we link our I AM to that is lifting us up is the way to resurrection.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Will you say that with me?

[With congregation]: *"I am the resurrection and the life."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I am the resurrection and the life."*

So every time we link our I AM to something that is lifting us higher -- something that is fulfilling the spiritual purpose for which we have come -- we are in the process of resurrecting.

Now, when we say, *"I am healed,"* there's nothing wrong with that! But it's not the same as saying, *"I am the resurrection."* Because the resurrection is actually claiming that you're ready to fulfill the full glory of God and be the full man or woman that you've been created to be from the beginning of time.

So every time we link our I AM, let it be for something that is lifting us up, not something that tears us down. Because we have that power to use the I AM in either direction!

We could say, *"I am dying here."* Now, is that the fulfillment of the promise that God made to us? No! Are you going to die? Maybe! But it's not the fulfillment; it's not the glory of God. But every time we link our I AM to the highest level of life -- that *"I am the resurrection and the life"* -- we are actually moving to the fulfillment of the promise that God has made to all of us.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Will you say that with me one more time?

[With congregation]: *"I am the resurrection and the life."*

Charles Fillmore -- as I said earlier -- was the co-founder of Unity. And in his Easter message ... And I'm going way old-school! In his Easter message from 1912 ... Wow! That's a few years ago! This is what he said; the guy had it:

"Now, as we this morning give attention to the Spirit, let us realize that it is the I AM. I AM is Spirit; I AM is the lifting power. I AM is also the tearing down power."

Right? You understand that, right? It's either going to lift us up or it's going to tear us down.

"The resurrection -- the lifting up -- is the one dominant idea. That is now being put forth by all people who really think and understand. For we are here to set the mighty I AM Power into expression in all of its fullness; in all of its Truth; in all of its right relation."

"Then, let us pray to the Great Power omnipresent. Let us affirm the presence of that spiritual relation by quietly entering in the silence of mind and praying and affirming and realizing that 'I AM is the resurrection and the life.'"

One more time: [with congregation] *"I am the resurrection and the life."*

See, I wanted to speak to this tonight. Because I don't think that most people fully grasp what the resurrection is and why it's so important for spiritually-minded people to realize that the resurrection ...

Anybody ever played ... It wasn't Candyland. Chutes and Ladders; remember Chutes and Ladders, the board game? Did anybody play that? Nobody's as old as me? Okay; great. Alright. Chutes and Ladders. In Chutes and Ladders, there were these spaces, and if you land on the space you could slide backwards a long way or you could slide forward a long way. And you could win the game by landing on the right space, right? I don't know why I thought that was necessary to say ... [Congregation laughs]

But here's the point: Until we understand resurrection, I believe that we are missing something spiritually significant that we should be applying to our life. Because for many of us, we have been taught that healing was it. To be a healer; to want to be a healer; to be healed. And there's nothing wrong with healing! There is absolutely nothing wrong with healing.

But I want you to fulfill your spiritual destiny. I want you to know complete oneness with God. And in Easter -- in the crucifixion and the resurrection -- Jesus demonstrated the spiritual potential of all of us. And I think that is so significant that I don't want any of us to miss it.

"I am the resurrection and the life."

Will you say that with me?

[With congregation]: *"I am the resurrection and the life."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I am the resurrection and the life."*

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the Spirit of God that's within us. And tonight, we activate our divine potential. And we affirm that I AM: I am one with that resurrecting power. I am created in the image and likeness of God. And every time I use my I AM in a way that lifts me up, I am fulfilling the purpose that God has given to all of us.

I am the resurrection and the life. I AM. I am the resurrection and the life. And so it is. Amen.

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