

I AM THE RESURRECTION

Final Week of the Lenten/Easter Series, "I AM"

April 7, 2021

Rev. Richard Rogers

INTRODUCTION/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Richard Rogers: Hi; I'm Richard Rogers, and this is Wednesday night service at the Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center. And I am so glad you're here! How did ... Did you enjoy your Easter celebration? I'm going to talk a little bit about the resurrection before I move on. Like, before we move on and just move back to normal, I want to do a little "sport recap." I want to do a little "Sport Center," a little "ESPN 11 o'clock at night," where they go over the games and tell you what you missed. I want to go over this story, because I want to make sure that we all understand the resurrecting power of the Christ within. Because, no matter what you're going through right now, there is a power within you that is greater than the events of your life. And I want us to know how we take our life up to higher and higher levels. So that's what we're going to do today!

Alright; before we get any further, I want to set the tone. Let's start with a moment of prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

I want you to set the intention in your life that you're ready to resurrect. That you're ready to go higher. That you're ready to leave those things that no longer make sense and no longer work and no longer serve you, and that you're ready to resurrect into a higher level of good. That we allow the full power of God to set us free from the limiting conditions of the past. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Alright! A couple of announcements I want to call your attention to! The first one is: We're going LIVE! *[Claps]* June 9th – Wednesday night. Going LIVE! We're two months away! I want you to hold that in prayer, that everything works together so that we are actually back together again. June 9th; it's going to be a celebration of community. It's been too long, and I'm looking forward to seeing you.

Also, next week – the video (service). I'm going to be talking about "Wonder Over Worry." And I know that many of us over the last year have spent – more than we like to acknowledge – time worrying about things. And I want to talk about wonder over worry: how we use the power of our mind to really broaden our experience of wonder and minimize our experience of worry. So that's where we're going to go next week. So I want you to be a part of that.

Alright; let's go! Rusty's got a great song for us; let's go!

SOLO

Guest artist Rusty Ferracane sings, "Still Believe"

I haven't seen his face
But I have seen his miracles
I haven't heard his voice
But his spirit speaks to my heart
I haven't felt his hands
But I have felt his peace

And blessed are those who haven't seen
And still believe that he lives
And still believe that he walked upon the earth
And though my faith is just a seed
I still believe

I didn't walk with him
But each day he's here by my side
I didn't watch as he healed
But his love has changed my life
I didn't see the cross
But I know it was for me

And blessed are those who haven't seen
And still believe that he lives
And still believe that he walked upon the earth
And though my faith is just a seed
I still believe

I haven't seen his eyes
But someday he'll look into mine
And if he bids me come
I will worship at his feet
For blessed are those who haven't seen
And still believe

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Rogers: Rusty, fabulous! Fabulous; fabulous; fabulous! We just ... I just love having you here! Thank you; thank you; thank you!

Alright! So tonight we're talking about the resurrection. And I know that Easter was last Sunday, and you think, "*Richard, let's move on! It's time just to move on!*" But sometimes we move on before we get the full measure of the experience! Have you ever had to repeat an experience? Like, have you ever done ... made the same choice over and over again [*laughs*], 'cause you really didn't get it? Like, have you ever had to take a test [*laughs*] more than once? Or take a class more than once when you were in college? Because, apparently, the biology class that you tried to take [*laughs*] was a little outside your wheelhouse? Right?

So I wanted today ... I wanted to look at the power of the resurrection. Because it is fundamentally important that we understand the resurrection. Because the resurrection is the spiritual power within all of us that takes us from where we are and moves us to a much higher place. The resurrection is not about an even exchange; it's not about getting back to the glory days. The resurrection is about taking you into the spiritual fulfillment of who you are. It's when Jesus let go of his physical experience for his spiritual experience. Where Jesus let go of us physical body for his body of light. And the body of light was that vessel that was the incarnation of both his physical presence and his spiritual presence fully integrated into one energetic experience. And he was pure light! He became the living manifestation of God.

Alright! So let's get going to it. I want to begin by reading from John 20:

"Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene 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 my Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' And Peter came out with the other disciple and they went toward the tomb. And they both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first, and stopped to look in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came and followed him, and went into the tomb, and saw that the linen cloth was lying there, and the napkin that had been placed upon his head was lying with the linen cloth, rolled up and placed by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and saw and believed; for it was yet to be understood in the scripture that he must rise from the dead. And then the disciples went back home."

So the boys went in [laughs], and they see that he's gone. And whatever their reaction was, it was of so little consequence [laughs] that they just go home. Right? *"Oh; I guess he's gone. Party's over! Thanks a lot; we're not sure what happened, but he's gone."*

Now, Mary Magdalene [laughs] actually has an emotional experience. Right? Her teacher, her friend, is now missing. Right?

"So Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. And as she wept ..."

She was having an experience! It wasn't like, *"Oh; he's not here. Let's go get lunch."* Right? [Laughs] She actually had an experience of weeping: of being sad, of wondering. Right?

"And so, as she wept, she stooped and looked 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."

Now, what's interesting about this is, we kind of have to decide for ourselves: were the angels always there, and the boys just missed it? That's really my belief. My belief is that the boys were operating out of their human experience; they went in to investigate, and what they found was all the physical elements that were there rolled up, tucked away. But they didn't really have any kind of an emotional or spiritual experience.

Like, how many times – and I really want you to see this! How many times in your life have you gone rushing into an experience – into the physical level of an experience – and you completely miss the emotional or spiritual aspects of the experience? That you didn't really slow down enough to let yourself fully embrace that experience?

And what I want you to see is: We're teaching the resurrecting process of God. We're teaching your soul's journey from limitation to overcoming. And what I want you to see is that it's not a physical experience! Yes, there is a physical dimension to the experience, but the experience, by and large, is totally a spiritual experience.

And so, if we're going to have a spiritual experience, what we need to know – what we need to remember – is that we need to really slow down and have a spiritual experience! Like, most of us do not have deep, meaningful spiritual experiences at 90 miles an hour. Most of us cannot put on our calendar or "to do" list: spiritual experience – 2:15 to 2:30. Good, done, go. Right?

Really, to have a spiritual experience, there is that place – that I'm going to do that series starting next week – where we have to open to wonder. We have to open our mind, our heart, our soul to really experiencing something is beyond the physical. The Jesus resurrection had a physical element to us, but it was a spiritual experience.

Alright; so Mary's there, and she's weeping. She looks in and she sees the two angels.

"And they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' And she said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' Saying this, she turned around, and she saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him."

Right? So she sees something that she does not recognize as Jesus, right? What's interesting about that: like, she had been with Jesus forever. Right? She'd been with Jesus day and night. Even though she wasn't one of his disciples, Mary had been with Jesus day and night for over three years. Some believe much longer than that. So she didn't recognize him. So we kind of understand, at a level, that there was a deep transformation going on within Jesus that he was not completely finished yet. He was not finished baking yet. He was still in the spiritual process of the transformation from physical to spiritual.

And so she says, *"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."* Turns around and sees Jesus standing there.

"And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?' Supposing him to be the gardener ..."

So: so much not recognizing him, supposing him to be the gardener!

"Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' And then Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' And she turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means teacher). And Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.'"

Like, the moment he stepped in and spoke to her, Mary instantly – at a soul level – recognized who he was. And that his work – this deep spiritual transformation that was at work in him – wasn't yet completed. And yet, his ministry was continuing in that he wanted her to be a messenger to his disciples about what was going on. Because they had missed the best part, right?

So they'd been with him for three years. They'd been learning from him; he'd been teaching him. They'd been walking this journey with him, but they'd missed the best part! And the best part was they got to physically, spiritually, emotionally witness the transformation from the physical to the pure spiritual. From the physical to the body of light. That transformation.

And what I want you to see from there is that, if Jesus can go from that level of transformation – from physical into pure spiritual – then you can, through the power of God in you, you can transform any situation. That's the Easter message! That is the deepest, most profound aspect of Jesus' teachings: is that the Spirit of God within you can overcome any situation.

So let's look at the transformation. What is the resurrection? And how do we open a space for that? Because, you know, when you look at sports, you hear a lot about comebacks. You know: a pitcher who blows out his elbow, and is he going to have a comeback? Is he going to be able to come back as good as he was? Or maybe a football player who blows out a knee, and then he has surgery. And the question is: can he come back and play at his old level.

And so, what we're used to – what we think about – is comebacks. Right? The idea that we're going to go back to a better time. We're going to go back to a time that we thought we were better. That's not what the resurrection ... it's not what it's about at all! It's not about moving backwards. It's not about moving to your heyday or to your glory days. And I really want to speak to this, because what's happening for many of us is that we're getting older. And as we get older, we think, *"Well, man, if I was in my 20s or my 30s or even my 40s, I'd take my 50s ... boy, those were the good old days!"* Right?

But resurrection really is about moving spiritually into the spiritual fullness of God in you. It's moving into the body of light.

So how do we allow the world to resurrect? How do we move our world out of this pandemic? Our of this economy? Out of addiction? Out of fear? How do we move into resurrection to move to our unlimited self and express the fullness of God?

Well, the part that we don't really want to acknowledge, right? *[Laughs]* The part that we don't really like to acknowledge at all is that the first step in the resurrection is crucifixion. And you know *[laughs]*, when you say that, it's like, "Is there anybody else? Can I get a second opinion?" Right? Because we kind of want to blow through crucifixion and just get right to resurrection. We don't really want to have to let go. We don't want to have to really change. We don't want to have to give anything up.

We want resurrection: we want the fullness. We want all the good; we want to be prosperous, happy, healthy, whole. All that! But we don't really want to have to let go and die to the old ways to get to the new ways. We want to kind of hang on to where we are.

It's like: imagine running the bases in a baseball game. We get to first base and we actually pluck it up and grab it and run to second. Right? Because we want to get to second, but we just don't want to leave first base to get there! We want to take all our good! We want to take all of our stuff with us.

So we actually have two ways to go through crucifixion. And the only two ways you can get through crucifixion is either consciously or unconsciously. We can either do it willingly or unwillingly. We can either align our will with the transformative power that's asking us to die to the limitations, to die to the old ways. Or we can be a big, fat victim to it. Right?

And we know when we're consciously moving into crucifixion, because we know we're letting go of the limited for a greater experience. We know we're doing it unconsciously when we feel like a victim. And I want you to think about those times in your life where there was a change going on in your life: maybe it was a job or a relationship that was ending. Maybe it was a business deal that didn't work out. And you just felt like a big, fat victim in that. You just felt like there was no way it was ever going to work out. And that's doing crucifixion. Right? It's 100% crucifixion! But it's doing crucifixion unconsciously. It's doing it unwillingly. It's being dragged through our spiritual journey.

And what I want us to really look at on this special day – on this special week and this special time – is that we're really willing to move into crucifixion from a place of willingness. And this is how Jesus said it. In Luke Verse 42, he said this:

"Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done."

Right? That's the prayer, right? When you're going into crucifixion – when Jesus could see crucifixion on the horizon – he willingly moved toward it, even though if there was a way ... *[Laughs]* "God, if there is a way you can change this; this looks awful! This looks nasty! I don't want to give this up; this looks hard! This looks painful; I don't want to have to go through this. And if there's a way that I can avoid this, my answer is 'Yes!' I'm all over it! My answer is 'Yes!' If there is a way that we can change this, and it's not going to be like this, my answer is 'Yes!' But more importantly, thy will be done." Because the moment your soul acknowledges and aligns with the will of God – the more you align your free will with the will of God, the more you actually accelerate and quicken your path through the crucifixion.

When you're unwilling – when you're in resistance; when the Universe has to drag you through those crucifixion experiences – it actually takes so long. You can spend years in a crucifixion experience, because you won't let go. You just keep hanging on and hanging on and hanging on, until your fingers are just ripped from the experience. Because you don't really believe – you don't trust – that God's going to resurrect in your life something better. That we have to be willing to let go!

I think about some of the crucifixion experiences I had. You know, this year – 15 years ago – I had probably the biggest crucifixion experience of my life, where I left this ministry; I got a divorce; and my dad died ... all within 90 days. And it felt like everything in my life was being ripped from me. Right? And it was hard. It was painful. It was scary. And literally within 90 days, the life that I had known completely ended. I was living someplace else. My life had radically, radically changed.

And while that was one of the hardest – no; the hardest – experiences of my life, it actually blessed me in so many ways that I am the man that I am today because of so much of that. But when we resist our crucifixion, we actually make that experience so much harder and so much longer. When we actually move toward it consciously – willingly – and allow the Spirit of God to transform, it becomes a much easier experience.

What I want you to begin to see is what happened when Jesus went into the crucifixion experience. Was it hard? Yes! Was it messy? Was it gory? Yes! Yes! Yes! And as it happened – as Jesus was crucified – what I want you to see is that he was then carried to the tomb.

Now what's the significance of that? That, as we surrender all the way to God, it looks like we no longer have control over literally anything in our life. And what I want you to see is that, when you surrender all the way – and allow yourself to go into that crucifixion experience – Spirit actually carries you through it! Carries you through those experiences, and takes you to a safe place. And that's what the tomb represents! The tomb represents those places in your life where Spirit will carry you to the safe place, and then they roll a stone over the door. So you're completely safe in those crucifixion experiences to go through the transformation that you're called to go through, even when your conscious mind doesn't know how to do it.

And I love that imagery that God will place an angel at your head and an angel at your feet, and you will be wrapped in a shroud of light. That – if you're willing to go through the crucifixion and get to the resurrection – you will be carried; you will be blessed; you will be protected; you will be watched over; and you will be wrapped in light!

Now, if Jesus was still fighting the Romans on the cross – cursing them, swearing at them, poking them [*laughs*], fighting them, doing anything he could come up with – that would have been so much more awful! Right? But he surrendered to the crucifixion and he was carried out of it.

You can say, "*Well, Richard, he was dead.*" But what he demonstrated to us all was that life was eternal! That his spirit was greater than that limitation! That every limitation in your life can be overcome!

So what do we take away from this? What's the benefit? Well, one of the things I want you to look at is what I believe is a daily crucifixion experience. Like, every night before you go to bed, I want you to have an experience where you review that day. Where you actually learn from that day. Where you go over kind of the highlights and the lowlights of that day. Where you look at some of the things you did really well, and maybe some choices you could have made differently ... and really learn from those moments. And if you need to spend some time with forgiving yourself and forgiving others, so that every day – when you're complete with that day – you review that day. You take the good from that day. You allow yourself to go into sleep that night knowing that every day is complete on itself. And then you wake the next morning as a new creation.

See, I think that some of us are actually waking up the same every morning being the same person we've been for the last 10, 20, 30, 40 years. That we haven't had the growth or the transformation that's really been available to us, because we haven't really owned each day as an opportunity for transformation. That, as we heal each day – as we complete each day with a time of forgiveness, as a time of review, as a time of really making amends for the things that we've done – then we wake up every morning as a new creation.

Over the last seven weeks, I've been teaching the "I AM" statements of Jesus. And each week, we've looked at one of the aspects of the "I AM" statements Jesus made.

"I AM the light of the world." And he said, *"He that will not walk in darkness."*

"I AM the way." And no one comes to the Father but through the "I AM." And the "I AM" that we've been looking at is the nature of God in us. And every time we claim the "I AM," we really are opening.

The third one is, *"I AM the gate."*

And the fourth one: *"I AM the good shepherd."*

"I AM the vine." I am connected to all that God is!

"I AM the bread of life." And you will not go hungry again!

And the final one is, *"I AM the resurrection."* And here's where it gets ... Here's how we move into the resurrection. When we begin to use the power of our words to take us higher. That every time we have a transformative moment ... Every time the old situations we're being asked to let go of ... Any time that we're going through a time of change or letting go ... what I want you to be very clear about is: God in you can use that moment to resurrect you to higher ground.

We are not here to keep living the same day – the same year, the same week – over and over again. We are here to move into the fullness of God. Into the body of light. Into the fullness of all that God is! You are the living, resurrecting power of Spirit! And every time you claim your "I AM" at a higher level – every time you claim your "I AM" and it expresses more God, it expresses more good, it expresses more love, more peace, more abundance – you are resurrecting out of a life of darkness, of fear, of worry, of pain, into the fullness of God. Into the light that God has offered each one of us. That is the Easter message! That is what each and every one of us is called to do.

I want you to look at your life right now and say: where are you being asked ... Where are you being crucified from the old? Where are you being asked to let go of the old so that you can give birth to a higher experience? Have you engaged the crucifying power of God? Have you engaged the power of God that is trying to set you free from the old limitations? Have you allowed the power of Spirit to set you free from the old limitations so that you can move to higher ground?

Today, I want you to claim the "I AM." I want you to claim the "I AM" in a way ... *"I am spirit."* *"I am whole."* *"I am powerful."* *"I am wise."* *"I am loving."* *"I am kind."* I want you to claim your "I AM" in a greater way that allows you to transform your life and be the man or woman that God desires that you be.

We did not come here to live in a life of limitation. We did not come here to live the same pain and fear and suffering that many of us have known in the past. We are here to demonstrate the fullness of God! So let's take that into prayer.

MEDITATION

I want you to take a deep breath, and I want you to feel the power of God right here, right now, setting you free. And I want you to actually feel yourself letting go of all the conditions that you've graduated from, that you've transformed, that you've released. All the small limitations that no longer serve you.

Take a deep breath and just let go. God, I give you all the old. I give you my past. I give you my future. I give you my hopes and my dreams. My fears and my insecurities. I give it all to you now, God. I hold nothing back from you, but I allow you to transform every aspect of my life.

There is only presence and one power; there is only one good: God. And I allow that good to manifest and fully express in my life right here, right now. I am stepping out of the old, stepping out of the tomb. And I am ready to experience the full bright light of God. The stone has been rolled away. The power of God is at work this day for good, and only good.

Take another deep breath. Feel the activity of God at work in your life. Feel the presence and power of God healing you, blessing you, transforming you. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God, for the resurrected Christ that is moving through aspect of my life. And feel that presence of Jesus Christ that is lifting you higher. That's calling you out. That is ready to bestow upon you all the good that God

is. In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we say thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

CLOSING/COLLECTION

Alright; this is the time of the giving of our gifts and tithes. I invite you to hold them in your hand as we bless them together. Our offering blessing is: *“Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive.”* Together: *“Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive.”*

So, God, we just say thank you for every gift, for every blessing, for every good thing. And we dedicate it all to you. And we give this day – and we know that every gift and every giver is going to be blessed, and blessed fully. That we give thanks for every gift and every giver that blesses this ministry, and we dedicate these gifts to the will and the work of the Living Christ moving in and through this ministry of light. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.

Alright, friends! We’re going to close tonight with the affirming of our Prayer for Protection:

The light of God surrounds us;
The love of God enfolds us;
The power of God protects us;
And the presence of God watches over us.
Wherever we are, God is!

God bless you, friend! Have a great week! And the choir’s going to sing the Peace Song. Have a fabulous week!

Unity of Phoenix Choir sings:

Let there be peace on earth
and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth;
the peace that was meant to be.

With God as Creator,
family all are we.
Let us walk with each other
in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me;
let this be the moment now.
With every step I take,
Let this be my joyous vow:

To take each moment
and live each moment
in peace eternally!

Let there be peace on earth
and let it begin with me!

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