

Fresh Life Church | When Everything Changed | Pastor Levi Lusko | Good Friday message

Well, I have a message from God's word this Good Friday that I'm really, really thrilled to bring to you. Did we get Instagram up live? Are we live on Instagram as well? No?

Ah, we failed at Instagram Live. That's OK. We're on YouTube. So before we jump into our message, if you wouldn't mind, grab that Share button even right now, and either share this link to a text message to a friend, or maybe share this link to your Facebook page. And I believe that God could use-- are you doing that?

Can I get a thumbs up if you're sharing it? I guess you can't multitask. Maybe send me a thumbs up once you've shared it, and then I know that we're going strong on that. I hope so. Amazing.

Well, the message I have to bring to you from God's word this Good Friday comes from two parts of scripture. One is Matthew chapter 27, and the other is Colossians chapter 2. So if you can turn-- thank you. I'm seeing all the thumbs up and all the strong arm muscles. Amazing.

Also, on the YouTube archive-- oh, that's funny. Someone gave me a Spock. I like that. We are looking at the comments after the fact. So, of course, I'm talking right now live to the audience who's joining us this evening. But if you catch this message later, leave your comments, leave your thoughts, leave your prayer requests.

We are praying especially for the parts of our country that are stronger-- are harder hit by this horrible virus, especially New York. I heard on the news today that New York, just the State of New York, has more coronavirus cases than any country on Earth, just the State of New York. So we're especially sending prayers out. God's just had New York so strong on my heart. We're praying for you there.

California I know has been hit hard. We're just asking for God to heal and to touch. We're praying for miracle stories and, in the midst of times like this, that God would just reveal special things to hearts. So we are praying for you in areas where you're just really dealing with fear and, on a high level, suffering from this all.

But Colossians chapter 2 and Matthew 27. The title of my message is When Everything Changed. When Everything Changed. And I want to first read to you the account of the death of Jesus on the cross from Matthew 27.

And then what we're going to read in Colossians 2 is almost like a split screen where we're going to see the impact and the so what factor for us, because the interesting thing about Good Friday, of course, which is today and the day we remember the death of Jesus, is that we're simultaneously mourning what happened that was horrible. But we're also celebrating the outcome of it, that was God's sovereign plan to supersede what the enemy intended to accomplish his own purposes. So we don't have to hide our emotions. They're conflicted, and rightly so, that we would see that it's so awful, our sin and this broken world, that God had to die, but that we're also simultaneously rejoicing in the fact that God loved us so much that Jesus was willing to die.

So to put it more saliently and make it a little more rhymey, so maybe more sticky, we should be broken because our sins were so bad that Jesus had to die, but we should rejoice because we are so loved that Jesus was glad to die. And it's those two truths held in tension that we would ever approach the bread and ever approach the wine, remembering the awful, terrible reality that it was only that that could save us. It was those dark measures.

It was the worst thing in history that's ever happened that had to be done for us to be able to be saved, but that we are so greatly loved, and prized, and valued by God that he was willing and glad even. The Bible says "for the joy set before him." And we're going to talk more about that on Easter Sunday. So I hope you'll be with us.

God has given me a very specific word, a very specific assignment, I would say, for Easter Sunday. And the clarity with which God gave me my message is one that I don't always have. A lot of times, you know, I've described preaching as trying to arm wrestle an octopus in the dark into a straitjacket. And putting an octopus in a straitjacket is not easy. Eight legs, and they're all squirming around. And to do so in the dark, that's sometimes how preaching feels because you're trying to receive from God, trying to communicate the word.

But this one was one where it just, it was like lightning striking. It was a Eureka moment for me, for sure, from the Holy Spirit. So I hope you'll be with us on Easter Sunday. But what a wonderful thing that we are loved even in the midst of what it took for us to be loved into righteousness.

So two passages. One's the story. You've heard it before. Let it hit you anew. And then the second is the outcome and the results of the cross, results of the crucifixion. Matthew 27 verses 50 through 56.

What's my title? Come on. Shout it if you remember it. When Everything Changed. Why? The cross. If you get one thing I say tonight, the cross for us is when everything changed.

"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." Come on, everyone in the chat, tell me which direction the tearing took place. Was it from bottom to top? No. It was from top to bottom.

"The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, 'Surely he was the Son of God!' "

And then jumping forward to the book of Colossians-- that's very clever with arrows. I see you. I see you there letting me know which direction the temple veil tore. Colossians 2 verses 13 through 15, rather, not verse 11.

Verse 13 says, "When you--" someone chat. "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

And Father, I pray that you would help us this Good Friday to properly absorb just what wonderful things, what terrible but wonderful things took place on that long awaited day of salvation, that long foretold day of redemption. You took your time. You didn't rush.

It seemed to those of us on this planet that you had forgotten about us. But then, at the perfect time, at the right time, in the fullness of time, you sent forth your Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem us from the law, by becoming a curse for us. "For everyone who hangs on a tree is cursed." And that is what you did. You hung on a tree for us, to save us and to redeem this broken world.

And so, in the midst of this COVID-19 crisis, we look to the cross. Our eyes are on you, and we have reason to be expectant of you to do great things, not only in this moment but in every moment. So we trust you, we believe in you, and we ask for you to even now, in this moment, do miraculous things in our hearts and lives.

Shift things, Father. Open our eyes. Impart things to us. Help us to have perspective that as bad as this is, this will pass. We will move through this. And on the other side, you have new things you want to do. And so God, we want everything you want to give to us now, so we're ready to do what you've called us to do later.

And we ask that if even one person watching this message on YouTube, either now, or archived, or watching on Church Online who doesn't know you, who just stumbled upon this link, clicked it because someone put it on their Instagram story, and they clicked to swipe up, and now they're watching. I pray that you would communicate your peace to them, and they would find salvation through the name of Jesus. And we ask this in your name. And we all said together, chatted together, typed together, amen, amen, and amen.

When Everything Changed. It feels a little bit like everything's changed in our culture. Everything's changed. It's so funny to be in the city that you live in but to not feel like it's a place that you belong. It's not the same city.

It's kind of like being in your home when there's a blackout or a brownout. A while back, really just a couple days ago, we were in our home, and the power went out. And we like, because it's all kind of crazy right now, we're like, oh my gosh. Now the power. The coronavirus cut the power.

And my kids were doing school online or trying to. I was trying to write a message. My wife was trying to corral me and the kids, and then the power goes. And, of course, online school is not a reality, because it wasn't just the power. The power controls the internet.

So I thought, well, I'll make a hotspot with my phone, make internet for the house. I'm resourceful like that. So I pull my phone out. The phone's down. At that moment, I'm going to be completely honest with you, I began to panic just a little bit.

You can take my power. You can take my mobility and ability to move about the country on Delta Airlines, but you take the cellular service down, and I'm going to be a little bit apprehensive. I'm like, I can't text anybody. I can't call anyone. I can't look anywhere to figure out what's going on.

And I began to feel like a-- so I needed to do something. I'm like, I'm going to go fill the cars up with gasoline. Because I just need a purpose in this moment. So I leave my wife, leave my kids to fend for themselves while I'm filling up the car with gas.

And when I go to do that, I notice there's all kinds of traffic. And of course, I realize that the traffic lights are down. So there's no traffic. There's no sheriff in Nottingham. There's no king in Israel. And the people were doing was right in their own eyes. Cars are just driving whichever way they wanted to go.

And so eventually, I make my way into the road, and I see sirens up ahead. And I go, because I'm, like you, curious. So I'm like, I'm going to-- well, I can't get gas anymore. I'm just going to figure out what's going on here.

Turns out a guy had been trying to turn into Safeway, probably cause he was out of toilet paper. Turning into Safeway, he crashed into a phone line, and the phone line had fallen down on top of his car. And the power lines had been hit in the process because the phone line coming down crashed into the power line and then landed on his car. Then the power lines were stretched out across the highway, low enough to where you could limbo under them barely.

But cars, of course, have stopped in both directions. This guy is trapped inside of his car. It was unbelievable. And I'm just sitting there watching this, of course, on my Instagram story. Well, I'm filming it to put on my Instagram story later, because I couldn't post it because there's no cell service.

And I'm just thinking, how vulnerable is our little life, that one dude pulling into a grocery store too quickly can take down the power for a city, can take down the internet for a whole city, and also can take down the entire cellular service where you couldn't even get one single text message out? The phones just said no service.

So I eventually got back home. And it took until 7 o'clock to get the power back on. And being in our home without the power, it almost felt like a different home because everything had changed. And I and all my kids-- of course, we're telling our kids, don't open the refrigerator, because you got to keep the food good. Don't open the refrigerator door. Of course, Lennox did that; he opened the door. And then we're like, ah, the food's all going to

spoil.

And then my daughters kept saying, I kept going upstairs trying to turn the lights on because it's habitual just to turn on the light. And it just felt like we had been betrayed, because everything had changed. And that's a little bit how life feels right now, like what we were used to with school, what we were used to of work, the rhythms we're used to when we approach each other to give a hug.

I saw on the news today that there are now experts saying that, even when this is all over, that we should probably as a country stop shaking hands. And I clicked the article to read that they're saying that instead of shaking hands, we should approach each other with a slight bow when we say-- I mean, just to think of how different our culture will be without the handshake and just-- and maybe it's good. I've seen too many guys blow out of the bathroom without washing their hands. But to think of like, we're going to have to change expressions, like my-- I'll take you out your bow. It's going to be completely different to-- but and to some extent, our world has changed.

All of us want to get back to normal, but there really is no getting back to normal after something like this. We're going to get through this, but there are going to be the impacts of this. I mean, just to think of the fact that as of the preaching of this message, the death toll in our country alone is 18,000.

And those people who have lost a loved one to COVID-19-- the woman in Michigan who I was reading about in the news today who lost her husband and her son this week. And at the funeral, she was forced to stay in the car and could not get close enough to watch both her lover and partner and her baby boy, who was just a graduating senior this year, she could not even go and stay close to them because of the risk of infection and the social distancing. So there's no getting back to normal for that woman. There's no getting back to normal for anybody who's lost someone.

One of the most insensitive things you could ever ask someone who's had to grieve is, so are you over it yet? Because you'll never get over loss. And all of us, to some extent, have lost something, but some have lost very significant things. And so we won't ever get over this. We will get through this, and God will bring us on the other side to rich reward and blessing that he intends for us if we'll keep our eyes on him in the midst of this.

So When Everything Changed is an appropriate word for us today. And yet truly, God's seeking to broaden our horizons even more as we look to the cross, as we have tunnel eyes upon Jesus. And we will see that those three words, perhaps better than anything else we could say, articulates what was unleashed on our lives at the moment Jesus died.

Truly for us, the cross is the moment when everything changed. And I want to show you three ways that's true

tonight. Before we take the bread and drink the wine, hopefully you found your way to some elements. It doesn't matter if you don't have Welch's or if you don't have a Cabernet. It doesn't necessarily have to be the fruit of the vine.

Jennie and I, at our wedding, we wanted to take communion, but no one thought of actually getting communion elements. So two minutes before the sermon and the ceremony, rather-- and so when you watch our wedding video, when we watch our wedding video-- I'll never post it, because I had bleached tips, and earrings, and a puka shell necklace under my ill-fitting tuxedo. And at the ceremony, you see-- if you watch it, if you can kind of read the lips after we take communion.

One of Jennie's bridesmaids had run to a gas station and bought a Snapple. So you see her lips, the moment we take-- I hand her this goblet, and she drinks it. And she goes, that's Snapple. You just watch her lips say that. Can God bless Snapple? Well, our wedding is doing pretty.

This month-- well, actually really soon-- April 16th is really soon. Wow. It's like this week. OK. This week-- hello, Jennie. I love you. I have put no thought into a gift. I am so sorry.

We'll be celebrating 16 years, 16 years of marriage on April 16th. So it's so special. So that Snapple-blessed union has lasted us this long, and our wedding has never been better. Our marriage has never been better.

So if you don't have any grape juice or red wine, I think maybe grab a Snapple, or whatever it is, God will bless it. The point is, when Jesus and his disciples were having a meal, he grabbed what was right there and pointed to it. So in a little bit, we'll do that. And I hope you have something handy for that moment.

But I want to show you three things that have changed for you as a Jesus person because of what happened as Christ died at the hill shaped like a skull. And the first thing is your past has changed. It's almost like a-- you know those movies, the time travel movies? You're like, which one? They're all the same. They have to rush to get something changed in the past, and when they change it in the past, its impact is felt in the future.

Once it's done, just like almost this ripple wave. All the photos change. *Back to the Future*, which is streaming, by the way, on Netflix. And I plan to show my children immediately because that so informed me culturally, my world view. Anybody else with me? Impacted by Marty McFly, Doc. Anyhow, flux capacitors and all the rest.

So this impact of the cross, as you believe in it today, when your faith intersects with what Jesus did 2000 years ago, your past is changed, not just the past when Jesus died, but the reality of the living Lord and what he did on the cross that day. As you touch him with your faith, it extends into your past, your past issues. What does that mean? It means this. That Jesus's payment was accepted on behalf of your sins, his payment for your sins.

That's what Matthew tells us. It was such a colossal event that there was the shaking of the ground. It's almost like the fabric of all things was being altered because as Jesus hung there on the cross, the Bible says in Isaiah 53 that all your sins were laid upon him. So here's Jesus hanging there, and hadn't done anything wrong and yet was dying because he wasn't dying for anything he had done wrong; he was dying for what we had done wrong.

And there's no confusion about who killed him. There was a big push from the Jews to get it done. Pilate wanted to wash his hands. So who do we hold responsible for Jesus's death?

He died praying, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." Who is that prayer for? Now we're almost like in a Carole Baskin situation, right? Like, who killed Jesus? Who did it? Whose fault was it?

But we don't have to. It was, yes, it was the Romans. It was, yes, it was Pilate. It was, yes, it was the Jewish leaders. It was, yes, it was you, and, yes, it was me. We killed Jesus.

It was my sin that caused Christ to come and to hang on that cross. That's what he was doing. He was paying for our sins. And the moment you believe in Jesus, his payment that was made, his resource, his blood money, this righteous innocent man who was also God dying, the moment you believe, your past is completely altered.

So today if you've trusted in Jesus, your past is different than it was while you were doing the deeds in your life. Everything you've ever done has been forgiven. That's what Colossians is saying. It's saying that as he died, he-- this is verse 13. "He forgave us all of our sins." How? He canceled the note of indebtedness.

Our text that we read, the version we-- I just shifted into New King James. We read out of the NIV which says, "He canceled the written code." What code is that? Well, it's two things.

It's, number one, the code of our conscience, that all of us are aware of the wrong things that we've done. All of us deep down inside of our hearts, we know when we've sinned. We know to do better. Not one of us-- I mean, I was talking about this to my daughter, Clover. I love you, Clover, if you're watching this at home.

I was talking to Clover because she was asking about church and asking about God, asking some really great questions. And I asked her, if you saw someone hurt a child, would you know that's right or wrong? And, of course, the answer is it would be wrong.

And I said, what if you saw someone breaking a stick? Would you feel the same way? Of course not. There's a reality of the value of humanity. We recognize that we each are made in the image of God. And so something inside of you recoils at the thought of a person being hurt.

And while all of us have hurt people, lied to people, done wrong things, those things we know inside to be wrong.

Our own conscience accuses us, but there's more. There's also God's word. God has spoken through his word.

And specifically in the Old Testament, he revealed thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not lie, thou shalt not commit adultery. All of these things that he codified, a written code that he even clarified and said, if you even look with lust on a woman in your heart, if you even go to Pornhub while in quarantine, if you even are on Tinder looking to have a one night stand with someone, the Bible says clearly, those things, not only because of our conscience, also because of scripture, are revealed to be sins.

And, "The wages of sin is death." The Bible says, the soul that sins must surely die. So as Christ hung there, he was doing so because of your bill and my bill. And the Bible says, as he died, the moment he breathed his last, the Bible says, he did so on a cross that had a bill of indebtedness nailed to it, a written code nailed to it.

Now, the cool thing about this is that he's using a word in the Greek that's like chiro graphon, I'm not speaking Greek to you, but it's useful when you understand it means a handwritten IOU, like if I wanted to buy something from you, and I couldn't afford it. So I say, hey, look, I'll pay you later.

But I want to give you something, not just my handshake or my bow. I'm going to actually write something down with my own hand. I would sign something saying, I promise to pay this back to you when I can or on this schedule. If I gave that to you, you would now have leverage over me. And if I don't meet the terms, if I don't pay this back, then you can, of course, act on it in a legal way because I promised to do something to you.

Well, the Bible says that we all, fallen guilty as we are before God, have a note of indebtedness, an IOU to God because we know what's right, and he revealed to us what's right. And we all have sinned and fallen short of his glory. We've all separated ourselves from him. That's why there's sin in this world.

Make no mistake. The reason that there's COVID-19 in the world is not because God wanted it to be; it's because we invited death into this world through sin. We spoiled the goodness of this world. And that's why animals have diseases, and there's brokenness, and curse, and crying.

It was not God's heart. It was our fallenness, our brokenness that brought this in. He, however, is so good that he has a plan to redeem the dark things and eventually to vanquish them altogether. And it happened and it was made possible because of what Christ did on the cross.

And he died with an IOU with your signature nailed above his head that he, the great King of the Jews, died for us, died as though he were us. And because that's true, verse 14 says in another translation, he "has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads." And he "completely annulled it by nailing it over his own head on the cross."

Because of those things that we've all done that caused us to fall short, he was willing to have it nailed above his head. That means this, that he didn't just die for you; he died as though he were you, before God's sight. And that's why the Bible says God turned his face away from the Son. And Jesus said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Because in that moment, he was being treated like you and I deserved to be treated, so God could treat us like Jesus deserves to be treated.

But consequently, once we've accepted that payment, then from that moment forward, every wrong thing we've ever done has been forgiven. Your past is completely changed. It's completely altered. Because of the cross, everything about your whole life up until this point has been altered. And God can't even see those things that you've done that you wish that you could forget. For as he sees you, because of the cross, he only sees his son, Jesus.

This is how Romans 8 verse 33 is able to say, "Who then can bring a charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies." I want you to celebrate. In the chat, you should be throwing emojis with tears, like Rachel Williams did, because in this exchange that happened on the cross, the Bible says that God has chosen you. And those sins were paid for in full.

And so now, for all eternity, every sin in your past makes you feel so bad, he's like, I can't even see it. All I see is my son, Jesus. We can't understand that kind of love. We can't explain that kind of love.

But what can we do? We can accept that kind of love, lean into that kind of love, and be completely transformed, down to every cell in our bodies by that kind of love, the kind of love you can't explain, that can't stop, can't be defeated, and can't ever go away, because what he did on the cross, he did once and for all. There was a permanence to what he did.

In fact, one translation puts it this way. This is the Passion Translation. "He erased it all-- our sins, our stained soul-- he deleted it all and they cannot be retrieved." How good is our God?

I did an interview last week. And after the interview was done, it was going to air. They told me the air date for the interview. They let me know later, we need to do the interview again.

I said, oh, did we not do a good job? Is it not OK? They go, actually no, the file accidentally got deleted. Oops!

And I said, that's totally fine. We went and did the interview again. And maybe, just maybe, it was better the second time. I don't know.

I said, maybe the first time was just for us on the call, there's just something about us was-- I actually have a hunch they didn't even push record. I think deleted it-- I don't know who would delete the file. I think maybe just,

oops, they forgot to the record that Zoom call or something.

But what caught a crazy thing that that file got deleted. And once it's deleted, that's it. The Bible says that God deleted the file of your sin.

So any of this fear of, oh, is he going to judge me? Is he mad at me? Does he love me? No. The Bible says he's chosen to delete your sin. It's like it never happened.

So that, then, is the cure for our mistaken reaction to our guilty feelings, which is to try to do better. That's often what we do. Instead of leaning into the cross, which doesn't allow us to be the hero, which doesn't allow us to puff up our chests, many of us respond to our guilty feelings by, instead of trusting Jesus, just trying harder and doing good deeds. And I'm going to offset that. And I know I've got some work to do, but I'm really going to improve myself.

And that is a mistake, which is actually why Colossians was written. We don't have time to go into all of it. But basically, Paul had started this church in Colossae indirectly. They were like grandchildren to him because he had started a work, and that had led to this work.

And they all started by trusting in Jesus, but then they mistakenly turned from following Jesus because some people had come in telling them, that's just a good starting point trusting in Christ. But you got to do this, and this, and this for it to really become good. Instead of what's true, teaching that Jesus paid for our sins, they were being told, Jesus just paid the down payment on the cross. And now you have to pay your monthly payment to stay in good standing with the bank, like my grandma did. She paid my payment for my car, and then I had to keep up the payments.

But Paul wrote Colossians in part to say, that's crazy, and that's ridiculous. Jesus couldn't help but overpaying with what he did. If your sins were like a paperclip, he has-- he died. He gave a gold bar. I mean, he gave-- he couldn't help but overpay because he is infinite God dying for finite, created man. And he paid for every last drop of your sins. So you turning to religion, to try and beef yourself up, muscle yourself up, is not only futile; it's insulting to think that he did what he was willing to do on the cross and that you then are going to somehow add to that.

Think of it this way. If you and I could just go to church, and read our Bibles, and be better, then why on earth would God ever allow his son Jesus to do what he did? When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane saying, Father, if there is any other way, let this cup pass from me, don't you think the Father would have just said, well, Son, we could just tell them to be good? No, friends. There was no other way for us to be saved.

And that is why God was willing to send Jesus. And Jesus, for the joy set before him, was willing to die on the cross for our sins. The gospel and what happened on the cross is not about bad people becoming good; it's about

dead people coming to life. And the only way that dead people could come to life is that the author of life was willing to die.

It was really at the cross a solution to a problem that's eerily similar to what's going on today in our world, a shortness of breath. If I'm honest, one of the things that has given me the most apprehension about the COVID-19 respiratory virus is, in addition to it being so contagious, is the way it lands in the lungs and attacks in the lungs. And it has brought up a lot of memories for me, painful memories for me with PTSD a little bit on the most challenging night of my life.

I did CPR on my daughter as she was coming to an asthma attack that would eventually take her life. And so having watched someone die from asthma, to think of what so many around the world are dealing with is challenging for me, to go into that sort of space of memory and life. And it's challenging knowing that I still have a daughter with asthma. It's challenging for me knowing I have asthma, having many family members and people that I love have asthma, as many of you, no doubt, in the chat, and to think about all of this.

But the solution to our shortness of breath, if I may, is to point you to Jesus who knows exactly what that feels like. For it was not the nail wounds, it was not the whip marks on his back. It was not the crown of thorns or the blows to his face. It was, in fact, a death by suffocation.

For doctors who have looked into the science and the practice of crucifixion have said that basically, hanging as Jesus was by these nail wounds in his hands and his feet, that his whole chest would have been collapsed, sunken in. And his normal function of his pectoral muscles and diaphragm and the intercostals were basically severely impinged. And so you couldn't breathe as he would hang. The only way to breathe would be to scrape up his back that had been whipped to a point of being raw meat and to come up, putting the weight of his body on the nail wounds in his feet. And then he could breathe.

And doing this over and over again, would have, of course, eventually lead to cardiovascular distress. And, in fact, that's what happened. Jesus there on the cross, he died of suffocation. And it was a cardiopulmonary issue. It was an issue of breathing. It was an issue of his not being able to breathe. So he literally suffocated to death on our behalf.

I think about the fact that the act of Christ dying for us on the cross was essentially the reason we're trying so hard as a nation and as a world to get ventilators to the hospitals that need them. Ventilators breathe for people who can't breathe for themselves. That is the cross. Jesus Christ, our ventilator, he came into our ICU unit of this world, and he was willing to die for us a death of suffocation. The only way for us to breathe would be for him to stop breathing.

And that is why the first thing he did when he rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples was to breathe on them. You see, his act of sacrificial love was to put the air in our lungs that had been knocked out by the fall. Come on, just celebrate with me this Good Friday in your hearts. Right there in your home, worship Jesus.

Let even just right now a renewed sense of appreciation, and awe, and holy fear come upon you as you realize that Christ died to put air in your lungs. You never need to fear dying. You ever need to fear no matter what comes against you, because the worst thing that could happen has been sorted out. Your sins have been forgiven.

I have the authority on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ to speak to you who believe in him that your sins have been forgiven. They were paid for at the cross. You no longer need to beat yourself up or carry them around. You no longer need to walk in shame. I speak shame off you, for there is full payment and pardon. Because of the blood of Jesus that has been accepted, that list of all your wrongs was nailed above his head. And he was glad to die so it could be canceled out.

The second thing that changes, that changed, is your future. When you trust Christ, not only is your past altered, but your future is completely opened up. Your future is completely changed.

In fact, the text speaks of this resurrection power. And it's hinted at this idea of his life in you. What life is that? The resurrection life.

His action of dying on the cross was the first in a series of dominoes that will continue to be knocked over for infinity, for all eternity. His coming up from the grave in the same body he went in to the grave in, this is so important. He didn't just have a spiritual resurrection. He wasn't just like a ghost.

In fact, he said, give me some food. You want to see that I'm not a ghost? Come on, give me some food. I'll eat. He ate in front of them. He said, touch me. You see that I have bones. And then he said, ghosts don't have bones.

Why was he being so almost like creepily-- like, we get it. You're alive. No, touch me, touch me. Ahh! All right? Almost to absurdity. It's because he wanted to nail down that, I'm in the same body that I lived in before, but it was different, too. The same but different.

I came out of the body physically. Our existence is going to be for all eternity a spiritual one, yes, but a physical one also. And the same bodies we live in now we will live in ultimately. What is this? This is a part of him bringing everything, reconciling everything to himself because of the power of the cross.

If you saw the video that played before we began worship, we referenced Colossians 1, a chapter previously. But in verse 20, one of the most important verses in the Bible with regards to our future, he says this, Paul does, "By

the blood of his cross, everything in heaven and earth is brought back to himself, back to its original intent, restored to innocence again!"

Now, when you hear that, if you're like me, you think to yourself, well, it looks pretty much the same. If when he died it all was restored, all was right, if all creation was reconciled to him, it doesn't seem like he did a very good job. No, you have to understand, this is what theologians refer to as the already but not yet.

We are living in the already in that what was needed to be settled and taken care of for everything to be reset has already been secured. But he has not yet allowed the final dominoes to tip over. Why? Because he's patient and loving and wants many to be saved before that happens.

If he were to even right now hit that button and cause it all happen, well, all instantly who do not believe and have not believed would enter into a Christ-less eternity. He continues to unfold his grace, continues to unfold his love so that many would put their faith in him. And when that all takes place, when that grand resetting of all things actually is executed on, that he has the authority and the power because he paid for, he's able to take that scroll. He's able to do so because he laid down his life, and he's able to open up the seals.

All of Revelation, all of the prophecies from Isaiah of the trees clapping their hands and of the mountains singing. What will your body be able to do? Jesus was able to eat but also walk through walls. He was able to fly, and he was able to run really fast. All the things he did in his body were normal and extraordinary, and all that will be for you.

What is it that I'm trying to say? I'm trying to say this is so amazing that because of the cross for you, friend, there is life after death, and there is life after life after death. What do you mean? Well, life after death is heaven, the heaven that we know of right now, the heaven that the Bible speaks so little of.

There is almost no information given to us about life after death. You're like, wait. No, no. You just said trees are clapping, and fields are-- there's Hawaiian Punch in the water fountains.

You just said-- yes, I did. But that's not life after death. That's life after life after death. There is an intermediate state. There's a version of heaven that we are given almost nothing about.

Why are we given so little about it? Well, because the Bible just says we're with Jesus, and he thinks that should suffice. To be with Jesus is to have it pretty good. Paradise and with Jesus, that's pretty much what we know.

So there's life after death. So that should right there just give you peace. If this situation is what were to take your life, or any other, because eventually something will happen, we should begin to just settle into the grace of God. He knows the hairs of our head. He knows how many days you're going to live and what the situation is going to

be like when you die, whether it's a car accident or cancer, or you drift peacefully off to sleep at the age of 105.

When that happens, what's going to happen to you? Life after death. But the Bible also says, just so you know, there's also life after life after death, which is to say the resurrection, which is to say the lion laying down with the lamb, which is to say this whole world getting a renewed version of itself.

Not a different world. This world but the sin pulled out, this world but going into the ground as an acorn, coming out as a mighty tree. This world as it was meant to be, as it will always be without sin or anything that defiles.

So because of Jesus and his blood on the cross, we have the promise of life after death and even more beyond that. And our bodies will get their own Extreme Makeover Body Edition. Philippians 3:21, he "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body." So our fear of death should dissolve into basically nothingness. Why? He already defeated it for us. Jesus did it. He stared it down.

In fact, this is what many people believe David was getting at when he talked about, you know that beloved Psalm 23 verse 4, the shadow? I will not fear though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, for your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Many people believe that he was actually hearkening back to the Passover, and to the Exodus, and to Moses' rod and the Red Sea parting, that because of the power of God demonstrated through Moses' rod, the water had to part. But because of the tenderness of Moses' shepherd's staff, they knew who to follow as they went across on dry land.

David is saying what you should be able to say confidently today on this Good Friday. I am not scared of this plague or any other. My life is in God's hands, and I'm going to take all the wise steps and wash my hands and social distance because I love, and I want to serve the city and give healing and alleviation, putting my needs behind those needs of other people.

You think about, oh, I'm not going to fear God. So I'm just going to be out. No, listen, we should be serving the city and loving those people, especially those in our world who don't know Jesus yet. But we are not going to fear death because we know when we die, Jesus is going to stand there with his rod, and death is going to have to part. And he's going to stand there with his shepherd staff, and he's going to show you the way through the valley of the shadow of death.

You will not touch death. He already touched it for you. So it has to part as you approach. This gives me the greatest comfort, that I know that the night that my little girl, Lenya, she left her body to go to be with Jesus while awaiting life after life after death, that I know Jesus was there with his rod. And death, that wanted to collapse in on her, had to part for her, that he with his shepherd's staff led her as his little lamb to be with him in paradise until that glorious day.

And the same is going to happen to you, friend. If you've trusted in Christ, your future is secure. When you breathe your last here, you don't have to be afraid. Death can't touch you. It touched him.

So what will touch you? Just the shadow. And you're like, that sounds pretty bad. Well, let me ask you a question. Would you rather get hit by a car or a car's shadow? Exactly.

F.B. Meyer put it this way. Christ met the substance, so we just encounter the shadow. The monster is now deprived of teeth and claws. The wasp stung the Good Shepherd to death and has left the stinger fixed in that cross where he died.

Come on. If you believe your future is certain, give me a cross or a heart in that chat. You just let that praise rise up from your home, as God sees. We saw a minute ago West Virginia, Arkansas, California, Montana, Utah.

Let the praise rise up. Come on, from all of our homes, just like the death angel passed over in Egypt during the plague of the firstborn dying, we can believe that all of us, as God sees it from heaven, his blood on our homes, his praise on our homes, his protection and power upon us. We will not fear. Our future has changed. Church, everything has changed, our past, our future, leaving only-- Solomon, help me out-- our present.

The third and final thing I want to show you that has changed because of the cross, and that makes this a truly Good Friday, is the fact that our present has changed, too. Our present has changed, too. I want you to understand, and God put it heavy on my heart to tell you that God didn't just send his son Jesus to die to save you from something or to something but for something.

If he wanted to just save us and get us to heaven, if he wanted to just save us and get us out of our sins, he could have just sent us to heaven, loaded up a big bus the moment we all believed. But we're here for something. He spared us for something.

There are many things that could have taken you out, many times that you had no idea guardian angels were sent to save you. If you're alive today, if there's breath in your lungs today, if you're a Jesus person today, he has you on this Earth for a purpose, for a reason. He has a plan. What am I trying to say? Everything shifted, when Jesus died on that cross, with regards to your present, because now, he has a plan to use you to touch, and love, and serve, and impact all kinds of people before you go home.

The text that we read from Matthew says the veil was torn top to bottom. Not bottom up, as though we earned our way up, but top to bottom because God saw what Jesus did and was able to tear open what separated to invite us into his presence. The reason I think that's key when you remember your present right now, his plan for you, to use you, to bless you and to bless others through you, is to remember that's a lot that weighs on you.

And so you have access to God for help in time of need. You have access to God, to His presence to receive the help that you need to do all that he's called you to do because it's a big mission. Much like Frodo getting that ring into the volcano, it's a big mission. It causes us to say things like Frodo did. Mr. Gandalf, I wish this ring never came to me. And Gandalf wisely said that no one gets to pick the times that they are handed. They just get to do the best for the times that they're in.

And so here we are in these times like never before, with opportunity to reach out, and to show love, and to get behind the Kingdom of God coming and being felt on this Earth as it is in heaven. 2 Corinthians 5, Paul puts it this way. "God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us--" someone shout, "Us."

Come on, shout, "Us." Come on, someone shout, "Us." "God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing." We have been called and born and chosen for just such a moment as this. It's not an accident that of all the generations, he would allow us. It's not a mistake that we're alive in these historic times.

And it is for us to let the world know that there is fresh life, that there is forgiveness, that there is peace, that there is a relationship with God that can change everything for them. God did it all on the cross, but the delivery of that news, he's left to you and to me. And because that's so heavy, we must remember we have access. There's no veil.

We don't have to show up on one day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement like in the Old Testament. We don't have to show up doing the song and dance of kosher kitchen and this, that, and the other. We don't have to worry about circumcision. We don't have to make the mistake of turning to religion, of turning to tradition, of thinking something like circumcision could save us.

It's not an outward thing; it's an inward thing. We get to rush into the veil. Dad, I need help. Jesus, I need you. Fill me with your Spirit.

Send me into my neighborhood. Send me into the social distancing chalk drawing on the sidewalk, whatever it is that you're called to do to express that love, but that you would use your microphone, your platform to articulate to a dying, broken world what Jesus did on that cross 2,000 years ago where the enemy thought he won. But he actually served up the situation that would bring about the salvation of the world.

The enemy, at the cross, thought Jesus was their prisoner. But it turns out, as the forces of darkness took the life of the Prince of Light, that they were actually becoming his prisoners. And that's where I want to end this message with this beautiful idea that Jesus, when he was killed, he through that action disarmed principalities and powers, making a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

And every commentary I've read on this passage-- and I consulted this week probably 12 or 15 of them-- agrees that Paul is explicitly referencing the tradition in the Roman Empire, because remember, we don't have to ask who killed Jesus. We know it was under the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who tried to wash his hands of it because of the Jews and ultimately because of our sins. But through that Roman Empire, there was a tradition. If a general of Rome won a battle in a far-flung province or area, he got a victory parade when he showed back up in the capital city.

If you were Maximus-- Maximus, Maximus-- they're cheering for you, Emperor. No, they're cheering for you, Maximus. If the victorious general, who did such a great job on the battlefield, was able to defeat the enemy wherever he fought the war, when they came back to Rome, that general would often be given a victory parade, a victory parade. All the people in the grandstands, [CHEERING] Are you not entertained? [CHEERING]."

And then, all of the soldiers who marched under that general would come, broadly swinging their arms as they made their way down the Via Sacra, the main thoroughfare. And last but not least would come that general on a chariot. And there are lots of different things you can read that are very fascinating about that.

One that I read said that a certain emperor would cause there to be a servant whispering into the ear of the general, "Memento mori." Remember you are mortal, trying to keep the general humble, because supposedly the emperor was God, not the general. And I kind of like that, that no what we do for God, God always wants us to remember that the praise goes to him, that he is the true sovereign, the true emperor. Remember we are mortal.

But the beautiful thing would be that general coming down that street. He would have dragging behind him all the prisoners of war, all of the defeated generals that he had defeated on the battlefield. And they would be chained to the wheels of the general's chariot. And he would come, and everyone would be screaming, and giving adulation, and throwing up their Hook 'em Horns or whatever they were doing, basically to say, you have conquered. You have overcome. Look who you have defeated.

And Paul says that is what happened in the corridors of hell when Jesus died. The devil and all the forces of darkness thought that they had won. This is their moment. This is what they thought they could do. They could take the life of Jesus if he couldn't save us from our sins.

They didn't understand his battle strategy was to die. And when he came into hell, he showed up with power. He showed up with glory. He showed up with triumph. And he shackled the forces of darkness.

And he made a spectacle of them, dragging them through the streets of heaven behind his chariot. And all of the angels and all of the Saints in paradise who he brought from the place of waiting to be with him in heaven, they were there celebrating, giving him glory, giving him honor, giving him praise as he dragged the forces of darkness

behind the wheels of his chariot. The enemy thought Jesus would be his prisoner. He had no idea that he served up the circumstances under which he would become prisoner to Jesus.

I'm reminded of a picture of this reality that happened not too long ago in the World War II, the Battle of Midway. And this followed on the heels of Pearl Harbor. It's been called one of the most decisive moments in all of World War II, especially the Pacific theater, and the most decisive naval battle that America has ever been in. And I've just been nerding out looking at it because of the similarities.

In fact, to me read you just one statement that was made about the Battle for Midway. "Almost never in history does history itself tip swiftly and decisively in such a tiny moment." Never. You almost feel like you're hearing about the cross, aren't you? "Never in history does history itself tip swiftly and decisively in such a tiny moment."

Now, that is referencing the Imperial Japanese Army that was seeking to finish the job they started at Pearl Harbor. You see, at Pearl Harbor, they took-- they decimated, of course, our Navy in December of 1941 as we were sleeping on a Sunday morning. And they just came in with their kamikaze planes and torpedoes that had learned to swim in shallow water. And they took out basically our whole fleet.

Fortunately, our aircraft carriers were not in Pearl Harbor that day. They were outside doing some exercises. And so, fortunately, we still had these few aircraft carriers.

And so their big plan, the Japanese plan, was to completely gut our Navy by taking out these aircraft carriers. But to do so, they had to lure them out from Pearl Harbor. They knew they-- shame on me if I'm fooled twice. They're not going to fall for that there. So we've got to get these aircraft carriers out to where we can take them out.

Now, you have to understand, going into World War II, we had like the 17th most powerful military in the world, so not very big. And our Navy was nothing compared to Japan's. After Pearl Harbor, they had 10 aircraft carriers to our 3. They had 9 battleships to our zero. And they had much more sophisticated weaponry.

And so, if they took out these three remaining aircraft carriers, it would be basically a complete loss for us at the sea. And so their plan to lure us out was to attack a little island called Midway, or a group of islands called Midway. And so their plan was to attack the islands and take control over it, basically turning the island into their aircraft carrier to launch planes off of. And when we heard about this, we would rush out-- doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo-- with our aircraft carriers. And they would be able to take them out with a surprise battle fleet that we didn't know about that was hiding out of sight.

Well, fortunately, we were able to discover this plan. And so we were able to get there ahead of time with our aircraft carriers and be waiting and be actually able to do a surprise attack on them. And even though we had the

element of surprise, it all went sideways for just a moment when all of our torpedo airplanes failed. 90% of the torpedoes we dropped didn't do anything.

And so it almost looked like we were going to lose again, as now their ships start sending out their airplanes that are skilled. And they're going to try and take out all of our planes. But fortunately, some very, very brave men began doing dive bombing, which is absolutely taking your life into your hands, to be in a dead dive, and then at the last second, drop a bomb and then pull away. And we were able in five minutes to take out almost all of their aircraft carriers and basically turn the tide of war.

And it's literally been said that at 10:25 AM, it looked like Japan was going to win the Pacific theater of World War II. But by 10:30, it had completely shifted into the side of America. Five minutes changed history. How did it happen? Two things, a rainbow and a code, a rainbow and a code.

You see, there was a man who was a dutiful code breaker. He'd spent his entire life listening to and reading thousands upon thousands of codes being sent by Japan back and forth. And he managed to break the code and figure out this whole plan for the island group of Midway. And so we were able to be waiting and to be there to attack them as they were trying to surprise us. So it was a code being broken.

And then the second thing is it was a rainbow. You see, even though we knew this was happening when all of our torpedo bombers were getting taken out and many were losing their lives, our dive bombers were looking for this surprise battleship group that was floating out there somewhere, hundreds of miles. They were trying to find this, and it's a needle in a haystack in the ocean. And they're running out of fuel.

And at the last second, when they were about to have to turn back and they would have had to leave the Japanese to fight another day, someone, one of these bombers, these dive bombers, in the distance saw a rainbow. And that rainbow caused him to take a second look and turn around. And turns out it wasn't a real rainbow.

It was the rainbow of the sun glinting off the water being kicked up in the wake of one of these battleships that were out there in the water. And so that rainbow he saw on the water caused everyone to turn around and be able to come in and take out this group of battleships and aircraft carriers that day, sacrificially diving down. So think about that, a code being broken and a rainbow in the sky.

Now, here's what we have in Colossians. At the moment when Jesus died, everything changed because he broke the code that was hanging over us all of our lives, keeping us separated from God, the code and the written law of every wrong thing we've done. And because now Jesus has paid for it, we see, God sees, heaven sees the rainbow in the sky. We are no longer at war with God.

We no longer are dead in our sins. We have forgiveness. We have wholeness. We stand on tiptoes waiting for the renewal of all things. And in the meantime, we've been sent into a broken world with the message of peace.

And so, Father, we thank you for your son breaking the code. We thank you that the rainbow still fills the sky. We thank you that because of Jesus, we have safety in that ark. Loaded up in our relationship with you, Father, we can rise above it all. We have the promise of life and the message of peace on our lips.

And I pray for every single person watching, every single person listening to this after the fact on Spotify or on the iTunes podcast. I pray that right now, you would draw many to yourself. And if you would, we're all praying, just bow your head. Close your eyes.

Right there on your sofa or in your kitchen, maybe you're still cleaning up some dishes, mom. Just pause right there. Just turn the water off for just a quick second. Let's just pray together, believing this is not an accident that you're listening to this.

Never in human history has history itself tipped so swiftly and decisively in such a tiny moment as when Jesus hung on that cross. Your past can change, sins forgiving. Your future can change, heaven and resurrection. Your present can change, a plan of peace and hope. But it all swings on the fulcrum of whether or not you've received salvation through the name of Jesus.

So as we're praying with heads bowed and eyes closed, if you would say, Levi, I might be religious, I might know some stuff about the Bible, but I don't have a relationship with God, I would just say that God loves you and wants to save you. And it's for that reason you're listening to this message. If your heart's beating, there's still time.

C.S. Lewis once said that, "It's hardly complimentary to God that we should choose him as an alternative to Hell; yet even this He accepts." Are you ready to stand before God? Are you ready to go into eternity? If not, this is the moment.

You don't have to go to hell. You don't have to live with your sins hanging over you one second longer. You can trust Jesus. Receive Him into your heart. He'll make you new.

With heads bowed and eyes closed, if that's you I'm describing, could you just pray that to him? Could you say, I believe, Jesus. I receive what you did on the cross.

Come into my heart. Make me new. I give my life to you. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

I believe in power that flows through us in response to hands being lifted. The Bible says men and women should lift holy hands. If you just prayed that prayer, could you just right there in your living while we're praying just raise a

hand up, raise a hand up, raise a hand up?

There's a little button that's showing up, Church Online, that you can click to raise your hand digitally. I think the most important thing is that it actually flows through you, through your hand, salvation flowing into your life. God sees you, God sees you, God sees you, God sees you in every home and every situation. He sees the salvation.

Your whole past is changed. Your future is altered. Your present is being made new. Right now, salvation rises because of Jesus.

I would love if you would just take a moment, and grab your phone, and send a text message to let us know that we can be praying for you in these days of you being new in your faith. Just send a quick text message to 97,000. And put the words Fresh Life. Two words, Fresh Life in the text to 97,000, so we can be praying for you.

In the chat of YouTube, you see a link. You can fill it out there if you'd rather do it that way. We just want to be able to encourage you and pray for you in these days, as you begin to take these first steps walking with Jesus.