Elevation Church Sermon Notes
March 5, 2015 – Easter Sunday
THE GENIUS OF JESUS – week 5
“POWER OF PREDICTION (EASTER AT ELEVATION)”


THE POWER OF PREDICTION
• With “March Madness” in full-swing, many people are competing in bracket challenges, with whoever correctly predicts the winners of the most college basketball games winning a prize. Last year, billionaire Warren Buffett offered $1 billion to anyone who could correctly predict all 63 games in the NCAA tournament. The odds of such a feat are 1 in 9,223,372,036,854,775,808 chances. In other words, perfect brackets are unpredictable.
• In the Bible, there are over 300 predictions about who the Messiah would be, with most of them coming hundreds of years before Jesus’ arrival. They are specific too, from how and where he would be born to the bones that would break as he suffered and died to heal many. According to mathematical research done by Dr. Peter Stoner in 1967, the statistical probability of one man perfectly fulfilling just eight of these prophesies would be less than 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. Yet Jesus perfectly fulfills all of them.
• LIFE IS UNPREDICTABLE
  • In life, many of us make predictions about how our lives will end. However, life proves itself time and time again to be unpredictable. People, no matter how reliable they may seem to us, are unpredictable. Pain can be unpredictable, for we cannot control if or when something may happen to us.
  • However, it doesn’t matter what people predict about us, or what life predicts will happen to us. Jesus Himself gets the final say over any and every prediction.

“WE MAKE PREDICTIONS; GOD MAKES PROMISES.”
• Luke 22 depicts the Passover meal that Jesus shared with His disciples the night before He was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death by crucifixion. Jesus predicted three times that he would die and return, but until this point, his disciples may not have known how to comprehend such a prediction.
• In verses 31-34, Jesus specifically addresses Peter (meaning “Rock”), whose original name was Simon (meaning “Shifty”). He says, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”
• Perhaps Jesus referred to him as “Simon” to remind him of the promise He once made in Matthew 16, assuring Peter that he would become the rock on which Jesus would build His church. Jesus didn’t promise Peter he would be perfect, but He promised that his faith would not fail.
• Jesus would go on to predict that Peter would deny knowing him three times. Peter argued, saying, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”
Likewise, many of us resist any predictions for our lives that involve unexpected outcomes. However, with every prediction God makes comes a promise that He will fulfill.

"IT’S NOT IF; IT’S WHEN."

Pastor Steven pointed out that Jesus spoke to Peter as Simon because He knew Peter would fall away. However, just Peter was sure to turn his back on Jesus, Jesus assured Peter that he would turn back. “When you turn back,” Jesus said, not “If you turn back.”

Because Jesus knew Peter would turn back, we have hope today. God is not surprised by any of us falling away from Him. Romans 3:23 says, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”

However, Jesus also knows that it’s not if we turn back; it’s when we turn back. No matter what we’ve done, how we’ve failed, or how far we may be from God, He is ready and waiting with open arms for us to return.

“THE CROSS ISN’T A SYMBOL OF DEFEAT; IT’S A PREDICTION OF VICTORY.”

In Luke 22:34, Jesus tells Peter to strengthen his brothers after he has turned back. Jesus knew the victory that was ahead, and He chose Peter to spread the news. In Acts 3, the same Peter who denied Jesus three times, would become the preacher who led 3,000 people to believe in Jesus in one day. When we return to God, He allows us to partake in the victory He won for us on the Cross.

The chain of events that led to this started three days after Jesus’ death on the Cross. When a group of women went to visit Jesus’ tomb, they found it to be empty. An angel appeared in Mark 16:6-7: “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

All along, Jesus knew that the Cross wasn’t a symbol of defeat; it was a prediction of victory. Peter didn’t know this. So when Jesus’ prediction came true, the angel told the women to tell Peter. The victory was won, and it was time for Peter to celebrate and spread the news. That’s the story of Easter—Jesus isn’t dead; He is risen!