

SCRIPTURE TEXT: Ephesians 1:17-23
SERMON TITLE: "Shock and Awe"

In 2003, the phrase "shock and awe" came into popular usage. The phrase appeared in newspapers and magazines, and was frequently heard over the airways as commentators and analysts described the impact of the United States invasion of Iraq.

All of us around back then remember the images of massive explosions rocking Baghdad, the high tech weaponry, and the awesome power of the U. S. and coalition ground forces sweeping into Iraq. The intent was to pummel the enemy with such a relentless bombardment of missiles and bombs, and to so overwhelm them with superior force, that the Iraqis would suffer both the physical destruction of their military capability, and a psychological collapse of their will to resist.

And the results were impressive. It took only 100,000 coalition troops to topple a regime defended by a military of more than 450,000. The cost to coalition forces was just over 100 dead. A Pentagon official noted that the size of this assault on Iraq "has never been seen before, never been contemplated before."¹ Shock and awe!

So what does all of this have to do with Easter? Well, there's no doubt about it, military might does produce its own brand of shock and awe, but all the military might in the world amounts to absolutely nothing when compared to the "immeasurable greatness of God's power" revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

¹ "Iraq Faces Massive U.S. Missile Barrage - CBS News." [CBS News - Breaking News Headlines: Business, Entertainment & World News](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/24/eveningnews/printable537928.shtml). 18 Apr. 2003. 05 May 2009
<<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/24/eveningnews/printable537928.shtml>>.

Listen for the good news as it comes to us from Ephesians 1:17-23: ¹⁷*I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

My brothers and sisters, many of us have witnessed the power of military shock and awe, but have we seen with the eyes of our hearts, and perceived with a spirit of wisdom and revelation, the truth of this day: The immeasurable greatness of God's power that is our inheritance—has raised Jesus Christ from the dead? Christ is the powerful one! He has called us to hope—not to despair! Every other manifestation of rule and authority and power and dominion in this age in the age to come has been placed beneath his feet. The risen Christ reigns! We are his body—the church. We are the fullness of the one who fills all in all! Shock and awe!

Now if we were to put headlines to this amazing story, they might read like this:

GOODNESS STRONGER THAN EVIL
LOVE STRONGER THAN HATE
LIGHT STRONGER THAN DARKNESS
LIFE STRONGER THAN DEATH
CHRIST LIVES--CHRIST REIGNS—THE IMMEASURABLE GREATNESS OF
GOD'S POWER! ALLELUIA!

Military might can crush a ruthless dictator, but it cannot bring life out of death, or make us right with God and one another, or free a single human life from the grip of sin, or mend a

broken marriage, or heal the sick, or comfort the dying, or crack open hardened human hearts to produce love, joy, peace and mercy. Only the immeasurable greatness of God's power revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ can accomplish these things!

This is the good news that gives strength and courage to the oppressed and puts every human power in its place. On May Day, 1990, in Moscow's Red Square, as the military might of the Soviet Union passed in review before the Communist party elite, a Russian Orthodox priest raised a heavy, eight-foot crucifix to his shoulder.

This priest and a group of his parishioners joined the parade that day as part of a huge crowd of protesters. Behind the tanks, the crowd streamed passed the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Mikhail Gorbachev. They shouted to him: "Bread! Freedom! Truth!"

As the priest and his parishioners moved in front of Chairman Gorbachev, the crucifix emerged from the crowd. The voice of the priest rang out: "Mikhail Sergeevich! Christ is risen!"² Shock and awe: The immeasurable greatness of God's power giving life and placing every human power under the reign of the risen Christ!

This is the good news that gives strength and courage to the oppressed and it changes lives in very individual and personal ways. A woman named Ann suffered from rheumatoid arthritis. The older she got, the more painful the arthritis became. The disease progressed to the point that Ann became bedridden. The disease eventually took her life.

But before Ann died, she experienced the immeasurable greatness of God's power. During the time that she was bedridden and in great pain, Ann began a prayer ministry from her bedside. She spent days on the phone, talking with people who were also suffering. She consoled them—she comforted them—and she prayed with them and she prayed for them. She

² Colson, Charles W. The Body. Waco, TX: Word, 1993, 231.

spent hours in intercessory prayer, praying over pages of names each and every day. Everyone that went to visit her came away affected by the life that was in her. They felt warm and warm and loved. And they could never forget the beauty of her smile.³ Shock and awe: All the military power in the world can't produce a life like this—only the immeasurable greatness of God's power giving life through the risen Christ!

Do we know it? Have we seen it? If not before, then why not today?

³ La Salle, Janice Hearn. "The Stones Will Shout." [Index Page The Sermon Mall](http://www.sermonmall.com/TheMall/01/apr01/04150g.html). 11 Apr. 2001. 05 May 2009
<<http://www.sermonmall.com/TheMall/01/apr01/04150g.html>>.