

Marco Rubio: 'I'm supposed to model Jesus Christ'

Sen. Marco Rubio, R-FL, delivered the following remarks at the Value Voters Summit in Washington, D.C., on September 25. They have been edited for length and clarity. – Ed.

Well, thank you for having me. There's four bottles of water here. Isn't that a bit much?

Thank you so much. I'm really honored to be here with you today, with all of you who are motivated to participate in the public square because of our values. And this is important, because we've always had this debate about what role faith should play in politics. That's a silly debate. For starters, our country was founded on a spiritual principle, on the idea that every human being has rights that are given to you by God, not by your government, not by the king. It was a revolutionary idea.

And second, as a Christian, I am taught from the earliest days of my life that I'm supposed to model Jesus Christ, God made man, and that means I'm supposed to care for the less fortunate. That's supposed to mean that I'm supposed to try to be humble, that there's strength in weakness, that the meek shall inherit the earth, that my job is to care in love for my fellow man because there's never been a person who God didn't love.

People better hope that my faith influences the way we govern, because these are important values. And unfortunately, they're eroding in our country.

And I'm honored to be able to run for president. It's an extraordinary opportunity and one that I'm grateful for the blessing to be able to do.

Many of you probably know this by now, but both my parents were born on the island of Cuba to poor families. My mother was one of seven sisters who was born to a father who, because he was disabled by polio as a child, he struggled his whole life to find and keep jobs that allowed him to provide for his children. My father actually had it even tougher. His mother died when he was only nine. And the day after her funeral, at nine years of age, he had to go work in the streets of Havana with his father.

In 1956 they came to America, to the one place on earth where people like them could have a chance. They earned enough money to buy a home and raise a family and retire with security.

I didn't inherit any money from my parents. But I nonetheless believe that I actually do come from extraordinary privilege, because I'm a citizen of the single greatest nation in all of human history – a nation founded on the fundamental belief that every person has a God-given right to go as far as their talent and their work will take them; a nation who says to us that even the son of a bartender and a maid could have the same dreams and the same opportunities as someone who is born into wealth and into power.

But I was also privileged because I was raised with something that's become increasingly rare. I was raised in a stable home by a mother and a father, a man and a woman who were married who loved each other, who loved their children, who were an active presence in our life, and who raised me and us to believe that if we lived with the right values and with the faith in an almighty God, there was nothing that we could not accomplish.

Today that American dream that my family achieved is slipping out of reach for far too many. Our economy has fundamentally transformed since my parents' time. In fact, it's very different than the one I grew up in. Rapid advances in technology have replaced old jobs with new ones, and

globalization has forced us into competition with dozens of other nations for jobs and innovation.

And yet while our economy is transforming, our government policies are not. We have unfortunately a political class in this country that refuses to toss out its old and outdated ways of thinking when it comes to our economy, the way of thinking that says we need guardians in government to protect us from ourselves, that to help someone climb up the economic ladder, we have to pull someone else down, and that government, not the family, is the most important institution in society.

Our outdated leaders fail to recognize the changes that it will take to seize the promise of this new economy. And as a result, that promise is passing us by. Today businesses are dying faster than they are forming. The cost of everyday life is soaring while wages remain the same. And too many parents feel as if the longer and harder they work, the further they and their children are falling behind.

I want to be clear about something. Even with our many challenges, America is still the best-equipped nation on the planet to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of this new century. Ask yourself this: Is there any country on earth you would rather be? Is there any country you would trade places with? Or here's another way to think about it: When was the last time that you read about a boatload of American refugees arriving on the shores of another country?

But recent years have proven that our exceptionalism is not self-sustaining, that we didn't become special by accident, and we aren't going to stay that way without effort. We're not going to stay that way by looking to the same leaders and the same ideas that have led us to this point.

I believe what the American people are looking for at this moment in our history is clear. They are looking for leaders

who understand the changes that have occurred in our economy, who understand the unique challenges that are facing our families in this century, who will come here to this city and fight the status quo that is holding us back, and in its place offer clear alternatives for the future.

Now, the political class sees this sentiment and they try to make sense of it all. But they can't, because never before, certainly in my lifetime, has the political class of our country, or the mainstream media that covers them, for that matter, been more out of touch with the American people than they are right now.

Look at the deal with Iran, which is basically just a series of concessions to an enemy of the United States. The American people realize how bad the deal is. They oppose it by an overwhelming two-to-one margin. And yet Washington still can't and won't stop it. And the issues like this are numerous. They're so big. They're so consequential. These issues are so generational that people cannot help but ask, how can it be, how can it be that we sent a Republican majority to Congress and yet they're still not able to stop our country from sliding in the wrong direction?

And we'll see how things progress. Just a few minutes ago Speaker Boehner announced that he will be resigning. And with all due respect to people that serve in government, it is important at this moment with respect to him and the service that he's provided to our country – it's not about him or anybody else and I'm not here today to bash anyone – but the time has come to turn the page. The time has come to turn the page and allow a new generation of leadership in this country.

And that extends to the White House and the presidency as well. And that's why, after just four and a half years in the Senate, I decided that I would run for president, because I realized that none of the problems I got elected to solve are going to be solved if we keep promoting the same people to

higher and higher ranks within our government.

Here's the simple truth: To set a new precedent in Washington, we need a new president in Washington.

We need a president who understands that this economic transformation we've undergone is a perfect chance to embrace and reinvigorate the free-enterprise economy, not to abandon it; a president who will fight Washington's special interests in both parties, not be coopted by them; who will take clear and even unpopular positions to confront the greatest threats to our nation.

And most of all, what we need is a president who, on their first day in office, will put the left hand on the Bible and their right hand in the air and promise to uphold the entire Constitution, including the right of religious liberty, including the right to bear arms, and including the God-given and inalienable right to life.

Sadly, it's been almost eight years since we had a president like that. But if I have the opportunity to serve in the highest office in the land, I promise you that I will live by that creed and I will live by that pledge, because when I'm president I will empower our people rather than our government. And I will do that by recognizing that you cannot have a strong people without strong families.

The truth is that what happens in our house, in your house, what happens in my house, is, more often than not, just as important for the future of our country, if not more so, than what happens in the White House. But too often, especially in recent years, Washington has tried to compete with the family rather than support it.

In fact, it's tried to redefine family. It's persecuted and now even prosecuted those who do not agree with the new direction that those seek to take us. It has punished marriage, the foundation of family life, by taxing married

couples more than singles. It has made it harder for parents to keep what they earn and it has challenged the values and supplanted the faith organizations that have provided the centuries of empowerment to our people.

I have a plan to reform our government in a way that empowers families to thrive in the modern economy. And a major component of this will be reforms to family leave policy that I'd like to introduce for the first time here today. Now, I said a moment ago that one of the reasons why I'm so privileged is that I was born to two parents who were married and who were able to be a constant presence in our lives. This was an extraordinary and enormous advantage for me growing up.

And that's why now, as a parent, I struggle with the demands of public life – the public life that I've chosen. It pains me every time that I have to miss a volleyball game or a football game or a field trip, even though I know that I'm doing this for them. And this struggle is not unique to me. It's a problem that almost every parent in America faces today. And the reason this hurts is because we know the greatest gift parents can give their children is the time we spend together, the values that only parents can teach, the love only parents can provide, the encouragement only parents can offer.

And it cannot come via text or cellphone calls sometimes, at least not completely. It has to come through time spent together. And that's why one of the greatest threats to family today is that there are too many Americans who have to choose between being there for their children in times of great need or meeting the basic financial needs of their family. And like so many fundamental problems, this one can be traced back in part to the outdated policies from Washington, D.C.

Our current law mandates that employees offer 12 weeks of unpaid leave to workers with certain family or medical issues, like a newborn child in need of care, an elderly parent with declining health or a personal health crisis. But this has

proven insufficient because taking unpaid leave is simply not a viable financial option for many American. Now, most of our current leaders, including Hillary Clinton, stick to this outdated way of thinking. They say that the only way to solve this problem is the way they think we can solve every problem: raise taxes, grow government, and place crippling requirements on private companies.

I don't need to tell anyone here why that wouldn't work. It's the same reason Obamacare hasn't worked. Our policies should help workers, not cost them their jobs. And I believe we can fix this problem by creatively applying our free enterprise principles in a way that encourages businesses to choose to offer more family paid leave. To do this, we should provide a limited 25 percent, non-refundable tax credit to any business that offers between four and 12 weeks of paid leave. For instance, if you're offered \$1,600 in paid leave for four weeks while you take care of your newborn child, which would be the equivalent of about \$10 an hour, your employer could claim a tax credit of \$400.

This won't solve every scheduling conflict between work and family life. No policy can do that. But it will help ensure that our people don't have to sit behind a desk while the most profound moments of their lives pass them by. And it will help our businesses expand and create new jobs by allowing them to keep more of their money rather than send it to be wasted here in Washington.

Conservatives, by the way, are already fighting hard on this issue. Senator Deb Fischer has been a leader on family leave reform and I'm glad to join her in her efforts as one way to address the problem. Now, unfortunately, our current president prefers not to sign legislation that's common sense. So these efforts will likely be something that we will need to take up if, God willing, I'm president. Doing so will be a step towards reclaiming the American dream in this century, but it will only be one step.

Of course, people cannot be concerned about family leave if they don't have a good paying job to take leave from. So we need our next president to recognize an important fact that no one in Washington today seems to understand: Politicians don't create jobs. The American people create jobs. We need a president and we need leaders at every level of government who stop placing our people's faith in our government and start placing our government's faith in our people. So one way we'll know that I've done the right things as president, is that by the end of my term we won't be talking that much about Washington. We'll be too busy discussing the extraordinary achievements of everyday Americans.

By the year 2020, this is what I hope we will be able to say: That we made our business tax code globally competitive, that we repealed and replaced Obamacare, that we placed a cap on regulations, and that we made our country the best place in the world to create jobs, and that as a result our people are creating thousands of businesses, millions of new high-paying jobs, and their innovations are once again driving the progress of the world.

In the year 2020, we want to be able to say that we reformed our higher education system, we made it more affordable and more accessible to every American. And as a result, our people are earning degrees that empower them to move from jobs that pay \$10 an hour to jobs that pay \$70,000 a year, that millions are beginning to emerge from the shadow of student loan debt, and that high schoolers are graduating with certifications to immediately enter good-paying careers.

In the year 2020, I want to be able to say that we've secured our borders first, that we've reformed our legal immigration system so that people come to this country based on what they can contribute to our economy, on the basis of whether they want to become an American, not simply live in America, not whether they have a family member living here. And that we've done what we needed to do to save Social Security and Medicare

without having to make any changes for people currently on it. And that as a result of these changes, our people are growing our economy at a historic rate, our deficits are finally beginning to dwindle, and the national debt is being brought under control so that it no longer is threatening to take away everything that makes our country so special.

In the year 2020, I want to be able to say that we have defended religious liberty. That we have supported – that we have worked hard to support the right of our people not just to hold traditional views, but to exercise them, to express them. That we've reformed the tax code to encourage marriage rather than punishing it. And that we made it easier for parents to afford the cost of raising their children, and that as a result our families have found financial security, that they're raising strong children with strong values, and that they're instilling in their kids all the hope in the future of America that our parents instilled in us.

That's what I want to be able to talk about in 2020 – the accomplishments of our people, not of Washington. But there's one more important point that needs to be made, one that transcends policy and politics altogether. No candidate for president can claim to stand on the side of our people if they do not believe that every person has a right to exist. And that's why the issue of right to life is more than political or policy related.

It is not a political issue – it is a human rights issue. It is a definitional issue about what kind of country we want to be. In a world where life is increasingly not valued, where people are summarily discarded, America must stand for the belief that all life is worthy of protection, because all life comes from God. And so by the year 2020, I hope we will be able to say that abortions after 20 weeks are illegal, that no taxpayer money is used to fund abortions here or abroad, and that Planned Parenthood doesn't receive a penny from the federal government.

My time is up, so let me just close by saying this: For many of us, for me, for most of you who that were born and raised in this country, it's sometimes easy to forget how special America is, because this is all we've ever known. But I had one more blessing. I was raised by people who knew how special America was because they knew what it was like to lose a country, because they knew what life was like outside this country, because they understood how different America was from the rest of the world.

My parents, my grandfather, they taught me by word and by deed that what makes America great is not that we have more rich people than anybody else – every country has rich people. What makes America great is that the dreams that are impossible everywhere else are possible here. And why is that? Well, it's because of the choices that the people before us made.

Almost every other country in the world chose to have a government run their economy. In those countries, people who can influence the government, they're the ones that keep winning, and everybody else stays the same. The employee never becomes the employer. The small business can never compete with a big business. And no matter how hard your parents work or how many sacrifices they made, if you weren't born into the right family in those countries, there is only so far you can go.

But the Americans before us chose something very different. They chose individual liberty. They chose limited government that exists to protect our rights, not to decide them or to grant them. And yet there are still people in American politics, sadly in both parties, who cling to the belief that America is better off adopting the economic policies of the countries that people come here to get away from.

Now, look – this is a free society. People have a right to believe whatever they want. But I don't have that option. You see, I'm just a generation removed from a very different life.

My parents came here with virtually nothing – no knowledge of English at the time, no money, no friends. The only thing they had was the strong determination to provide their children all the opportunities they themselves never had. And in America they were never rich or wealthy or influential, but their hard work opened doors for their children that had closed for them. Everything that I've accomplished – everything I will ever accomplish – I owe to God, to my parents' sacrifices, and to the United States of America.

For me, my parents' story is the essence of the American Dream. It's a story that's rare in the world, but so common here. Because the truth is, it's all our stories. Here in this nation, we are all but a generation or two removed from someone who made our future the purpose of their lives.

And so now it is our turn. This election is a generational choice about what kind of country, what kind of America we are going to leave for our children, and what kind of country we will be in the 21st century.

The final verdict on our generation is going to be written by Americans who have not yet been born. Let us make sure that they write that we made the right choice – that in the early years of this century, faced with troubling and uncertain times, there were those who believed that the great American story had run its course, but we did not agree. Fear did not lead us to abandon our liberty. We fought for and held onto those things that made us exceptional. And because we did, there was still one place on Earth where the individual was more important than the state. There was still one place on Earth where where you come from does not determine how far you get to go. Because we made the right choice, because we did, we didn't just restore the American Dream, we expanded it and extended it to reach more families and more people than ever before. And because we did, for at least one generation more the American miracle lived on.

So thank you for the chance to speak to you today. God bless
all of you. Thank you.{eoa}