

# This Is My Story

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Preacher: Ray Sweet

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana, and I'm excited about today. Today is Easter Sunday, and I'm excited to talk about our Savior, who not only loved us so much that he came down from heaven to this earth, walked a mile in all of our shoes, a Savior who lived a perfect sinless life, who was mistreated, who was beaten, who was nailed to a cross, who died on that cross, and then three days later, and this is what we're going to talk about today, three days later, he rose from the grave to conquer death, to offer us life on this earth and life eternal.

There's a good reason to celebrate today this Easter story. Now, let me start off with this story about an eight-year-old boy with Down syndrome named Philip.

This boy was the sweetest little guy in his Sunday school class, and while he wanted nothing more than to fit in with the other boys and girls, some of them just didn't understand why he did some things a little differently.

He had a wonderful Sunday school teacher that all the third graders loved named Miss Charlotte, and she did a great job of helping the other students to see how important Philip was to their class, and yet there were still times where they didn't treat Philip quite the same as the others.

On Easter Sunday, Miss Charlotte brought in, if you remember those old legs pantyhose containers that looked like a big plastic egg, and she gave one to each student and told them to go outside to the playground area and find something that represented new life and put that in their egg.

[ 1 : 37 ] Well, all the kids got really excited, especially Philip, as they made their way outside on that beautiful spring day, and within 10 minutes, they all had found something and brought their eggs back in.

Well, as Miss Charlotte opened the first egg, she found a beautiful flower inside, and Haley quickly raised her hand to tell everyone that that was hers. Miss Charlotte then said, Well, great job, Haley. Just a couple months ago, in the cold of the winter, we didn't see any of these flowers, but now look at this beautiful flower. What a great sign of new life. Well, next she opened an egg and out flew a butterfly as the kids went wild, and after she got him calmed down, she laughed, and she told him that a butterfly had just recently been a caterpillar, but now that it had undergone that metamorphosis, it was beautiful and a great sign of new life, and then they opened the window and let it fly away.

Well, she worked through the eggs. Each of the children did a great job, and finally she came to the last egg. Miss Charlotte knew that this had to be Philip's egg, and as she opened it, the egg was empty.

And that's when one of the children spoke up and said, Well, that's not fair. Somebody didn't do the assignment. And little Philip yelled back, Yes, I did. I did, too, do it. But another little boy barked back, Well, Philip, you don't ever do things right.

[ 2 : 55 ] And that's when Miss Charlotte, in her sweet demeanor, quieted the class, and she said, Philip, there's nothing in your egg. Did you understand what I had asked you to do? And Philip, with the biggest smile on his face, got so excited.

And he said, Yes, it's empty because the tomb was empty. Jesus has risen. And all the kids burst out into cheers, wishing they had thought of the same thing.

Oh, this is my story. This is my song, praising my Savior all the day long. Church, welcome back here to the 12th and last week of our series in the Gospel of Mark called Disciple.

And I just want to take a second to welcome our visitors today who may be listening. This is a great church family here at First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana, full of imperfect people just like me, but we serve a perfect Savior.

And we would love for you to join us on our mission to love God, love people, and make disciples, starting right here in Greensburg and spreading to the ends of the earth. But today, as I come to the end of this series, I can tell you in probably 30 seconds what we've talked about.

[ 4 : 07 ] We've been looking at our key verse in Mark 8, 34, where Jesus says, Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

And as we've simply been on this journey through the book of Mark to see what a disciple of Jesus looks like when you strip away all the world's watered-down definitions, and even sometimes the church's legalistic and man-made definitions, we are simply going back to the Word of God, asking the Lord to give us the desire to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, as we seek to be that true follower, as we seek to be that authentic disciple of our Savior whose blood washes us as white as snow.

Now, I probably don't need to tell you that today is a special day for Christians across the world. A lot of new outfits have been bought for this occasion, including my family. Many special breakfasts are being prepared all over the world, and I'll tell you what, our dinners team did a great job with breakfast today.

Extra people are making their way into sanctuaries and probably evening listening on the radio or watching online. Families will gather for meals and egg hunts, and today will be a day of celebration.

Why? Because Easter Sunday changed everything. Because like little Philip said, Jesus is risen. So here's the deal today.

[ 5 : 32 ] I just want to tell you this story, maybe for the 2,000th, 189th time, or maybe for you, it'll feel like the first time. So grab your Bibles. If you got your Bibles, grab those for me.

Turn to Mark chapter 16, Mark 16, about three quarters the way through God's Word, right after the first New Testament book of Matthew. And listen, if turning in your Bible is kind of new to you, and you're not sure where to go, it's okay.

You've got to start somewhere. And if you have a paper Bible, don't forget there's a table of contents in the front that can guide you to the book of Mark and turn to chapter 16. So here's what God's Word says, starting in verse 1.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Now, you have to understand that they didn't embalm in this culture.

And I'm just going to have some fun with this for a second. I can almost picture these women, because you remember Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had already kind of prepared the body. But as would be the case, I'm sure they were like, you know what?

[ 6 : 40 ] The men did it, so it's probably not done right, so let's go do it the right way. But on a serious note, they wanted to honor him in their own way. And so they had the plans to take these spices to anoint Jesus' body.

And I don't mean to be graphic here, but since they didn't embalm, the deterioration of a body would happen pretty quick, and then the odor would be really bad. So all the spices were was a way to mask the odor to give it a sweet smell, at least for a while, okay?

Verse 2, very early on, on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb, and they asked each other, who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?

So you've got to understand in that culture, when they put a stone there, it was meant to not be moved. So it was massive. It took a lot of people or some kind of mechanism to get it in place.

And so these women are going there kind of in faith, not knowing how they're even going to get in to see if they can. Verse 4, But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

[ 7 : 45 ] As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. Now we know from the other gospel accounts that the young man that they saw was an angel.

And that angel apparently appeared as a young man to them. Okay? Verse 6, Don't be alarmed, he said. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified.

He is risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you.

So let me ask you this. Why would he say, Go tell his disciples and Peter? Because isn't Peter one of the disciples? But you got to realize that Peter had just denied him three times in one night. And Peter had to feel like maybe he wouldn't be a part of the disciples anymore. Maybe Jesus would not want anything to do with him after he denied him three times. And so with the angel saying, Go tell his disciples and Peter, he was making it clear to Peter and to us when we fail, when we mess up, that there is grace and he calls us back to himself.

[ 8 : 58 ] Now look at verse 8. It says, Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

And it's kind of this mixture of fear and this holy awe that they're just overwhelmed with just this power of God and fear all mixed into one.

Now the unique thing about the four gospels as they each tell us the story of Jesus' resurrection is that they kind of come at it from different angles. They emphasize certain people and stories that maybe another gospel doesn't.

Just like if you took four of us and we each witnessed something happen and we're in different places witnessing that, we may each tell the story a little differently emphasizing different little things that we saw as important.

And yet, the cool thing about this story is all their stories match up. You can harmonize these gospels and make a big picture of how everything went down that Easter Sunday.

[ 10 : 02 ] See, it all works together to tell the grander message of our risen Savior. And yet, today, as we focus in on Mark's account, if you're a note taker, don't forget, you can go to the YouVersion, Y-O-U version Bible app on your phone, on your tablet.

It's absolutely free. You can download that and then you can go to the menu, go to events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, and then you can see our outline that way.

But here's the first thing I want you to see today. I got one sentence for you today. And here's the first part. A disciple tells the story of our risen Savior. A disciple tells the story of our risen Savior. See, over the last month, we have been talking about some tough things that our Savior endured for us. How He was treated as they plotted to kill Him. He was betrayed by one of His very own disciples as they arrested Him.

Even deserted by the others. He was mocked, spit on, hit, forced to carry His cross. And then Jesus was nailed to the cross where He suffered and died a criminal's death, although He was the perfect, sinless Savior of the world who went to the cross to take the punishment that our sins deserve.

[ 11 : 17 ] And then, as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took His body, they prepared it for burial, they placed it in Joseph's tomb, there was silence. From that Friday into the Sabbath day, which would have been Saturday, and then into the first day of the week, which we call Sunday, there was silence.

Until, in the anonymous words of this poem, the tomb could hold Him no longer, death is strong, but life is stronger. Stronger than the dark, the light, stronger than the wrong, the right, faith and hope triumphant, say, Christ arose that resurrection day.

And this is why our faith in Christ hinges on the resurrection. Because a lot of men died on a cross, and several of them claim to be the Messiah, but what separates Jesus from the rest is that He rose from the grave to conquer death and let the world know that hope is found in only one place, and that's the name of Jesus Christ.

Oh, this is my story. This is my song, praising my Savior all the day long. So, this is where you and I have a decision to make. Because if the resurrection of Christ didn't happen, if this is just a nice churchy thing for us to celebrate, then our faith is useless.

That means that this day is all about a bunny and egg hunts and life has no meaning. But, if He really came busting out of the tomb, then it changes everything.

[ 12 : 50 ] The Apostle Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 15, starting in verse 17. He says, and if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you're still guilty of your sins.

In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost. And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. But then He says these words, but in fact, and I love that word, that word fact.

And you remember in Easter's past, we've talked about the different evidences for the resurrection that hold water, okay? But in fact, He says, Christ has been raised from the dead.

He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. That's my story. That's your story. And in the words of Tony Bazin, the cradle and the cross are of little value without the resurrection. But the cradle plus the cross plus the resurrection equals salvation. And when you and I by faith, when we repent, we're baptized into Christ like the scriptures teach, that's when His story becomes our story.

[14:00] That's when we're filled with the Holy Spirit and become a child of the King. That's when we too have the promise of a glorified, resurrected body where we will someday dwell forever in His presence.

Now, I gotta tell you that I've had many conversations over the years with people who maybe grew up in a much more ritualistic, just kind of check-the-boxes kind of church environment or some who just weren't raised in church at all, like myself, and they've come to their own false conclusions about God just like I did.

And one thing that lights a fire in my belly and gets me out of bed in the morning is to see people like that come into a worship service and it's almost like God just grabs us by the cheeks, looks us in the eyes, and starts to speak right into our hearts.

It's like the TV goes from black and white to color. They go from believing in this very distant, impersonal God, maybe even angry type of God to realizing, wow, God loves me so much that He died a death that I deserve to offer me life in Jesus.

And His greatest desire is to walk with us in an intimate relationship every single day as we seek to live a life of holiness in Him. This is my story.

[15:18] This is my song praising my Savior all the day long. Now let's fill in the rest of the sentence. A disciple tells the story of our risen Savior, and here's what I want you to see next, by living in His resurrection power.

By living in His resurrection power. So I love to tell the story as I walk in His resurrection power. So shortly after I became a Christian, and I'm going to probably date myself here a little bit, I remember listening to a song that came out back in 1995 by DC Talk.

It was called What If I Stumble? And for those who know this, it started off with a man's voice quoting the well-known author Brennan Manning. And sadly, this quote is so true.

It says, the greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and then walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle.

That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable. And to be honest with you, maybe like you, I can think of three or four big moments in my life where I failed miserably in shining Jesus because my flesh, my pride, my selfishness got in the way.

[16:36] And I'm so glad we serve a God of second chances and we can apologize and we can make situations right. But the goal has to be bigger than just attending church, just quitting bad habits or just memorizing 50 verses, although those things can show the fruit of your relationship with Christ.

But contrary to our human nature, it's not about being better or doing better. It's about surrendering more and more over to the Lordship of Christ every single day as we die to self and we let the Lord do in us what only He can do and that will produce those good works that show that our faith is in Christ.

Because here's the question, why would we keep trying to take charge and do better in our own power when we belong to the one who the grave could hold no longer?

When we belong to the one who came busting out of the tomb to show death has no grip on him and his children? See, it's not about doing more, it's about dying more to myself so that the world may see Christ in me.

And in Ephesians 1, starting in verse 18, the Apostle Paul puts it this way, he says, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and listen to this, His incomparably great power for us who believe.

[18:05] That power is the same as the mighty strength He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms. See, I am a hundred percent believer that when we come together as the body of Christ to worship, worshiping through music, through prayer, through the Word of God, through taking communion together, through generosity, through community with one another, that these things are essential to the life of a believer.

God's Word is clear that worshiping in the body of Christ is vital to you and I growing to maturity in our faith, but we have to realize that this isn't Vegas. Say what?

This isn't Vegas. What happens in here, what happens in our worship services shouldn't stay here. What happens in here needs to go outside our church walls and what I love about these ordinary followers of Jesus is that what happened in that room where Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection didn't stay in that room.

See, 40 days after He rose from the grave, Jesus ascended back up into heaven with a promise that the Holy Spirit would come upon His disciples and they would be His witnesses right where they lived, in the area around them, even to those they often saw as enemies and then to the ends of the earth.

So 10 days after that at Pentecost, we saw the power of God as ordinary people walked in resurrection power and we witnessed through the pages of Scripture what happened that day as God ushered in the church.

[ 19 : 47 ] 3,000 people were cut to the heart because of the gospel message and were baptized into Christ. And what I want you to see for the rest of our time is what God wants to do in each of us who by faith are a disciple of Jesus.

And let me start with this quote by the Bible Answer Man, at least that's what he's been called, Hank Hanegraaff. He said, what happened as a result of the resurrection is unprecedented in human history.

In the span of a few hundred years, a small band of seemingly insignificant believers succeeded in turning an entire empire upside down. As has been well said, they faced the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's gory mane, and the fires of a thousand deaths because they were utterly convinced that they, like their master, would one day rise from the grave in glorified, resurrected bodies.

And what I want you to look at with me here in the book of Acts is where Pentecost had just happened. All these people were cut to the heart by what Jesus did on the cross for them.

They were baptized into him, and now they're starting this new life in Christ. And look what it teaches us that they did as they start this new life.

[ 21 : 04 ] It says, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. So that's the word of God. And to fellowship. So doing life together with the body of Christ. It says, to the breaking of bread.

So that's taking the Lord's supper together, like we do every week, and to prayer. So going before the Father, His will be done, praying and seeking Him together.

Verse 43, everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.

So here's a cool thing. When you are in Christ and you are doing this journey like these scriptures just talked about, you're going to be amazed at the commonality that we come to as we put Christ above even our own preferences and what we think.

Verse 45, it says, they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had needs. So we see this amazing generosity flows from a life that is truly in Christ.

[ 22 : 05 ] Verse 46, every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people and listen to what it says last.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Why? Because we have a lot of lost people all around us who have tried everything the world says will fill you up and I tried it too before I came to Christ.

And yet, before Christ, we're still empty. The drugs, the sex, the alcohol, the power, the trophies, the money, the stuff, even religious duty.

And when we as followers of Christ are fully committed to seeking the heart of God just like Acts 2.42 teaches us, walking in that daily relationship with our Savior, it's amazing the transformation that will happen in us as our roots grow down deeper into Christ and we walk in spiritual maturity. And as we do, a lost world will see a difference in us. They'll see hope that's not dependent on a party. They'll see joy that has nothing to do with our circumstances.

[ 23 : 18 ] They'll see peace that's not disturbed by the storms. They'll see a love and a care for others that's genuine and selfless. And here's what they'll really see.

They'll see Jesus in you as you walk in His resurrection power. Now I have to tell you, I'm like a proud papa when it comes to this body of believers here at First Christian Church of Greensburg.

I'll never forget the words of our former pastor Danny Wolford when he talked about the secret to growing a church. He said, honestly, it's simple. You get the people excited about what God is doing and they'll go out sharing the love of Christ and bring people in.

And that's what we've been seeing in our church. A body of believers. It's not about glorifying a pastor, not about the lights or the show, not about programs for the sake of programs.

A church all about our biblical mission to love God, love people and make disciples. A church doing more than just talking the talk but a church committed to walking in the resurrection power of Christ.

[ 24 : 24 ] That's the kind of church that turned this world upside down the first couple hundred years after Jesus rose from the dead. And that's the kind of church that will turn Greensburg, Decatur County and beyond upside down with the hope of Christ.

Now, do you remember the story I started off with today about that eight-year-old boy named Philip? Just a few months after he won over his class with the empty egg representing the resurrected Christ.

Sadly, because his body was not as good at shrugging off illness, Philip got very sick and he passed away. But do you know what those eight-year-olds in his Sunday school class did?

Those friends of his did at his funeral and as the funeral began, they all marched in together and one by one they placed those large legs, penny-hose eggs in his casket and every single one of them was empty showing that because the tomb was empty, because Jesus is alive, we can have life on this earth and life eternal when our days come to an end.

See, Philip was a wonderful example of a disciple who tells the story of a risen Savior by living in his resurrection power.

[ 25 : 42 ] So I want you to say this with me. Let me repeat it first and then I want you to say it with me right from wherever you are. This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

Say that with me. This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for these words of life today.

Thank you for the story of our resurrected Savior, that the grave could hold him no longer and that he rose in triumph and victory and that victory belongs to all of us who are his children.

So Father, thank you that we have the ultimate hope that no matter what happens on this earth, no matter what anyone tries to do to us, that if we are children of God who are walking in the power of Christ who belong to you, then no one can take away from us the hope that we have in Christ on this earth and in eternal paradise someday.

We are so thankful for this amazing promise and we celebrate that the tomb was empty. We love you, Jesus. Thank you for what you did for us and we pray in your precious name, Jesus.

[ 27 : 06 ] The name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen and amen. Hey, I want to give you this simple invitation today. If you have joined us here on the radio, maybe it's your first time, maybe you listen quite often, but if you're listening and God's just been stirring on your heart and you know that what you've been doing isn't working in your life and you're ready to try the one thing that you were designed that would fill you up and that's Jesus.

If you're ready to surrender your heart to the lordship of Jesus Christ, he's ready to come into your life, transform you one day at a time as you grow to maturity and serve him all your days.

So, we would love to come alongside you here at First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana.

Once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor here and we would love to come alongside you, have that conversation, study the scriptures together.

So, please reach out to us. You can reach out by phone 812-663-8488. You can ask for me, ask for Ray or you can email us at ray at FCC Greensburg.com.

Hey, have a great Sunday because he is risen. He is risen indeed.