

# Greatest Day

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Preacher: Ray Sweet

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And as always, you can learn more about us at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to FCCGreensburg.

Facebook page. But hey, Happy Easter to you. Today is the greatest day in history, and we are excited to get into God's Word and dig deep as we become more and more like Jesus every single day.

Now, one Easter morning, a kindergarten Sunday school teacher decided to see how much her class knew about the real meaning of Easter. One little girl named Sarah raised her hand and said, Well, Easter is when all my aunts and uncles come to my house, eat turkey, watch football, and take naps.

The teacher kind of laughed and said, Well, that is a holiday where we kind of say thank you to God, but you're thinking of Thanksgiving. Another little boy named Caden raised his hand, and he said, Easter is when we dress in green so that no one pinches us, and my mom makes quesadilla shaped like a shamrock.

Well, Caden, you're closer in the calendar, but you're talking about St. Patrick's Day. Finally, a little girl named Rose raised her hand and confidently said, Easter is a special day to remember that Jesus hung on a cross, died, and was put in a tomb for three days.

[ 1 : 30 ] Very good, Rose, her teacher said, as she kind of just breathed a big sigh of relief. But listen, Rose wasn't done. And she said, On the third day, everyone gathers around the tomb, and they wait to see if Jesus comes out.

If he sees his shadow, that means six more weeks of winter. Well, that teacher had some educating to do that Easter Sunday.

And while I know that most of us could probably explain a little better the story of Easter, I wonder what it means down deep to you. And don't get me wrong, with being a little more of a casual church when it comes to what most people wear, I enjoy the new outfits my wife gets for our family every Easter.

The dinners team works so hard here. We so appreciate them. And they do a fantastic job with the Easter breakfast that many in this church have enjoyed for years now. It's also great to see the sanctuary so full in the 8 o'clock service and have to move over to the gym for the contemporary services because we have so many people coming on this special day.

There's just a little extra buzz in the air. And if you were to ask random people, what's the greatest day in history? I bet you'd hear answers like, the greatest day was when the Nazis were defeated and the world was free from Hitler's tyranny.

[ 2 : 56 ] Or, when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Or, and I'm a little biased here, but when Dr. James Naismith invented basketball for the purpose of telling people about Jesus.

Most people don't know that. But as important as those days all were, the greatest day in history is no doubt what we're celebrating today. And listen, there's not even a close second.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead and how that empty tomb offers us life to the full. And in the words of the famous hymn writer, Charles Wesley, Christ the Lord is risen today.

Sons of men and angels say, Raise your joys and triumphs high. Sing ye heavens and earth reply. So as we continue looking at the greatest day, My prayer is that this can be so much more than pretty dresses, good biscuits and gravy, and crowded sanctuaries.

My prayer is that our hearts can find true hope in Christ as we worship the only one who was awesome enough to overcome death and offer us life that never ends.

[ 4 : 13 ] Heavenly Father, right now, as we prepare our hearts to jump into your word, we just pray that you will help us to truly grasp and understand, not just in our brains, but in our hearts as well, the message of Easter and what it means every single day as we walk in this life that we have to the very full.

Father, thank you for your words. Speak to our hearts. We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Now, if you got your Bible with you, or if you have it on your phone, go ahead and start to head towards Matthew chapter 28.

Matthew 28. If you're new to the Bible, it's about three quarters-ish through your Bible. First New Testament book. And in this series, we've been focusing on passages in Matthew, escaping the chaos of our world, learning all about the heart behind the kingdom of God.

And as we come here to the last chapter in this gospel, things are quiet after a pretty intense and chaotic previous couple chapters. This is where Jesus was wrongfully accused and arrested. He underwent an illegal and sham trial. He was mocked and spat upon and beaten close to death, forced to carry his cross to a hill called Golgotha. There, the savior of the world without sin was nailed to that cross.

[ 5 : 41 ] He was hoisted up and he suffered, taking the sin and wrath that we deserve, and he took it upon his shoulders. That same day, he breathed his last.

They placed him in Joseph's tomb with a giant stone rolled in front, and many thought that the story was absolutely over, that Satan had won, that death was still undefeated.

It was quiet. The authorities had placed a Roman guard next to the tomb to keep Jesus' disciples out, and yet the narrative would take a turn that no one expected, making this the greatest day.

So let's start here in Matthew 28. Matthew 28, verse 1. And here's what the Word of God says. After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

[ 6 : 45 ] His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.

He is not here. He is risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and he is going ahead of you into Galilee.

There you will see him. Now I have told you. Now can you imagine the emotions and the shock of this experience for these women?

Not only is there a violent earthquake in Jerusalem that they are experiencing, to be exact, that is the second one in three days, because the other happened, scripture tells us, when Jesus died. But as the angel first appeared to the guards, God's power and glory so surrounded him that these special force Roman soldiers, these bad, bad dudes, they shook in terror, and they became like dead men laying on the ground unconscious.

[ 7 : 54 ] As the women approached, the angel quickly spoke to them, calming their fears, sharing the good news that Jesus had indeed rose from the grave just as he told them he would.

The angel even showed them the place where his body had been, telling them to go quickly, sharing with his disciples that Jesus would go ahead of them and meet them in Galilee.

Now, I know we have some different learning styles among us that are listening today, so don't forget, you can always go to the YouVersion Bible app.

That's Y-O-U-Version Bible app. It's a free download. It is incredible. It wouldn't be free if it wasn't a ministry of a large church. And so go to that, go to the menu, go to events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, and you can see our outline that way if you would like to look at that and possibly even add some notes to the side.

But as we look at this, I want you to see how this passage kind of lays out in front of us. And here's the first thing. The greatest day calls us to live in joy.

[ 9 : 02 ] It calls us to live a life of joy. And as you get that filled in, go ahead now and look with me at the very next verse in Matthew 28, verse 8.

It says, So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and they ran to tell his disciples. Imagine the adrenaline rush as these women, and if you look at all four accounts, there were more than just the two women that would have gone to the tomb, okay?

But imagine the adrenaline rush as they encountered this angel surrounded by the glory of God. And now in obedience, with their hearts probably still beaten out of their chest, they're hurrying back to tell the disciples.

And while there's still got to be this, did this really just happen? Is this a really happening type of moment, this type of fear that had gripped them, it's quickly being replaced with joy.

As Luke tells us that the angel had jogged their memory of Jesus' words about his resurrection from the dead. And because he conquered death, because he is alive, these ladies can't help but have that joy of their salvation flowing out of them.

[10:17] That reminds me of a quick story of a dad and a five-year-old son who were driving by a cemetery. The son looked over, and he noticed a large pile of dirt next to a freshly dug grave.

That's when the little boy said, Look, Dad, one got out. Talk about the perfect teaching moment, right? Yeah, son. One did get out 2,000 years ago.

And because he is risen, we can live our lives in his joy. Church, I know today's Easter. It's an exciting day of worship, time with family, time with church family.

And once again, my brother is going down at the Easter egg hunt this afternoon. But I also realize it's easy to wear a mask when you go to church on Easter Sunday.

And can I just be 100% real with you for a moment? I mean, I get so sick of preachers acting like they have it all together when we don't. Listen, I needed the Lord to preach this message to me before I could share it with you.

[11:17] Because listen, I can get in a pit sometimes myself, just like you. And it's easy to let life and busyness and responsibilities bog you down.

To have thoughts of bitterness and envy and jealousy and hatred that flow through these minds when we allow Satan to get the best of us. It's easy to stray away from an intimate walk with Christ, trading it in for a religious experience, wondering all that time, where's my joy?

Where's my hope? So easy to shackle ourselves with the things of this world. And if we're honest, we've all been imprisoned by shame, doubt, fears, insecurities, and even disobedience.

And yet I need us to hear this quote by a man who had been in Christian counseling for 30, 40 years, something like that. His name is Craig D. Loonsborough.

And here's what he said. The greatest jailbreak in all of history occurred on Easter morning.

Therefore, we must remember that whatever our prisons might be, however impenetrable they might appear, your jailbreak is just a prayer away.

[12:33] So like the women who walked to the tomb full of despair and then left it filled with joy knowing he is risen, we too can bring whatever weighs us down today, knowing that his presence changes everything.

See, anything that's got us shackled doesn't compare to the majesty and the power of the Lord. So realize our jailbreak is one of surrender and prayer in the name of Jesus.

And I love how David put this in Psalm 16:11. He said, You, God, make known to me the path of life. You fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

So joy is only found in the presence abiding in your Savior who died for you and rose again to offer you this joy and this life.

The greatest day calls us to live in joy in his presence. And then second, the greatest day calls us to embrace Jesus in worship. To embrace him in worship.

[13:44] Now, picking back up where we left off here in Matthew 28, verse 9. Give you just a second to turn there. Matthew 28, verse 9. God's word says, Suddenly, Jesus met them.

Greetings, he said. They came to him. clapped his feet and worshipped him. What a rich picture this is.

These ladies who know by the angel's presence that Jesus is indeed risen. And yet, there's something even more powerful when they encounter him alive for themselves, causing them to run to him, to cling to his feet in worship, embracing their Savior, knowing that he is the only one who deserves their adoration.

You know, it reminds me of a story about an African man who was born and raised as a Muslim his entire life until he encountered the risen Savior.

He forsook Islam. He became a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. And one of his friends asked him very sincerely, why have you become a Christian?

[14:57] I mean, they were just so boggled by this. And he said, it's like this. Suppose you were going down a road and suddenly the road forked in two directions and you didn't know which way to take.

There at the fork were two men. One was dead and the other alive. Who would you ask which way to go? See, in Acts chapters 3 and 4, you see the story of a man who had been crippled since birth and he is begging for money at the temple gate.

Peter looked him in the eye and said, I don't have any silver or gold to give you but what I have I give in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth get up and walk.

And this man who had never taken a step in his life he stood up with strong legs and he strolled.

Now as you can imagine that opened a golden doorway before Peter and John to preach the good news to crowds of people who witnessed this about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The word says the religious leaders in the temple were greatly disturbed when they heard of that healing when they heard them teaching so they seized these two men Peter and John they cast them into jail and the next day they stood before the high priest and the most powerful religious leaders and they were asked this question by what power and name did you heal this man?

[16:24] And I want to read to you just a couple verses of Peter's response in Acts 4 11 and 12 as he was led by the Holy Spirit. He said Jesus is the stone you builders rejected which has become the cornerstone salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

and like the story of an African Christian that we just talked about there's a lot of people who've claimed a myriad of different things over the years but listen Jesus is the only one who stands at the fork alive who is the way the truth and the life and our response just like the ladies who embraced him not too far from the empty tomb our response must be more than just Sunday church attendance although that can be the absolute blessing in your life it must be more than I just throw some money or put my tithe in the plate and I serve at the local food kitchen although we want to be faithful with our time our talents our treasure the first and most important response to Jesus' death and resurrection the first and most important response is worship worship in spirit and in truth and that starts with a heart of surrender to his lordship lord take this stubborn pride take it and make me a new creation forgiven and covered by your blood living a life of joy and worship and while every part of our worship services from prayer to singing to praises to being doers of the word to communion to offering every part can be worship as I surrender and adore the one who died for me who rose again to give me life everlasting but we also know that embracing

Jesus in worship is everything that I am from my intentions and my motives to my thought life to my actions to how I treat those I love the most and the least to what I do and the privacy of my home everything in fact we learn this in Romans 12 verse 1 that says therefore I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy that means because God has shown you mercy and saved your soul what do we do?

he says to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God this is your true and proper worship see the greatest day calls me to live in joy embrace him in true worship and last to look forward in hope so let's look at our last verse for today as the ladies are clinging to him in worship Matthew 28 10 then Jesus said to them do not be afraid go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee there they will see me now you might think what does this have to do with looking forward in hope?

see while these ladies have had their despair turned to joy the disciples are still cooped up heartbroken and frightened for their lives and although these stubborn men aren't going to believe what the ladies tell them their testimony followed by Jesus appearing will lead them to Galilee where they will be commissioned for kingdom ministry looking forward to a life eternal with the risen Savior see Max Lucado tells the story about a missionary in Brazil who discovered a tribe of indigenous people Indians in a remote part of the jungle and they lived near a large river and the tribe needed medical attention as a disease was basically ravaging the population I mean their people were dying and a hospital just wasn't that awful far away maybe just a couple miles they just had to cross the river to head that direction but they wouldn't do it see they believed in their tribe that the river was inhabited by evil spirits to them entering its water meant certain death the missionary explained how he had crossed the river just fine but that wasn't enough to them so he took them to the bank he put his hand in the river and they still wouldn't go in he walked into the water up to his waist and splashed it on his face but they were still afraid finally last ditch effort he

dove into the water swam beneath the surface until he emerged on the other side and then he raised a triumphant fist in the air see he had entered the water and he escaped and finally they broke into cheers and they followed him across getting the medical attention they needed church our faith rises and falls on whether the resurrection of Jesus is true whether he came out alive on the other side and as 1 Corinthians 15 puts it starting in verse 17 it 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 believed in Christ are lost and if our hope in Christ is only for this life we are to be pitied more than anyone in the world and then look at verse 20 this changes everything but in fact

[ 21 : 54 ] I love that word fact Christ has been raised from the dead he is the first of a great harvest of all who have died and because his resurrection is more than just a religious tall tale that people buy into as a crutch to get them through life because there's evidence because there's resurrection power because millions and millions of lives have been transformed from prostitutes to murderers to drunkards to sex offenders to addicts to workaholics to atheists to agnostics to sinners of every flavor because of Jesus' death on the cross for our sins because of his resurrection from the grave to give life everlasting you and I can be forgiven we can be transformed by grace looking forward in his hope whether the stock market is going well or not whether you like this president or you don't whether life is hunky-dory or feels like chaos we can look forward to the days in front of us and the eternal life that awaits us and we can smile because we belong to Jesus that my friends is the hope that our hearts long for and the words of a Christian author named

Cheryl Ford when Jesus rose from the dead he didn't cheat death he beat it fair and square and today I want to leave you with one of my favorite passages so do me a favor I want us to read this together 1st Corinthians 15 55 through 57 I'll give you just a second to get there if you can get to it quickly I want you to say it with me as I say this 1st Corinthians 15 and we're going to start here in verse 55 this is an awesome verse say it with me where oh death is your victory where oh death is your sting the sting of death is sin the power of sin is in the law but thanks be to God that he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ amen there is joy there is worship and there is hope in the name of Jesus because friends he didn't just die on that cross he rose again three days later to offer you life on this earth and life to the full pray with me heavenly father we are so very grateful for these words of hope these words of life that you have spoken over us today thank you for this reminder of the life giving power and the resurrection of Jesus sometimes it's so easy to get bogged down by life by frustrations by hurts by all kinds of things that happen to us it's easy to get numb it's easy to get broken and yet father only in you only in the power of Jesus

Christ can we be healed can we be mended and can we be made whole because he didn't just die but he rose again to offer us life so father we just give you permission right now on this Easter Sunday to speak life and truth into our hearts to stir what we just heard within our souls and may we whether for the first time or for the 10,711th time may we truly come running to you to follow you with everything that we are thank you that Jesus is alive that he is risen and because he rose from the grave we will as well and we will be with him for all eternity if our faith is in Jesus Christ we worship you we adore you the name above all other names the name of Jesus we pray amen well I want to give you this invitation on the most important day for

Christians on the day of Easter I want to give you this invitation if you've been listening to this and you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior you've never truly made that whole hearted sincere all of me commitment to repent not just to feel bad about your sins but to turn away from them and follow Jesus with everything you are if you've never made that decision doing what he says being baptized into him then today can be the greatest day of your life as you surrender to him so here's what I would love for you to do please reach out to us let us walk alongside you just like so many have done for me my name is Ray from First Christian maybe you just got some faith questions maybe you got questions about the church get a hold of us here's a couple ways 812-663-8488 that's 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com that's ray at fccgreensburg.com hey we're so grateful that you have listened to this Easter message today and we hope that you have a great week God bless