

Story Time

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 March 2026

Preacher: Ray Sweet

[0 : 00] Thank you so much for tuning in today. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! If you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can always go to FCCgreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

I want to tell you about something really exciting. I want to invite you to come and join us for this. This Resurrection Sunday, this Easter, April the 5th, we will not be at our normal campus at 425 North Broadway Street.

We will be worshipping all together in one service at North Decatur High School. That will be at 9.30 a.m. and everyone is welcome to come North Decatur High School in the main gym at 9.30 a.m. on Easter Sunday.

We'd love to see you. Now, I'm excited to jump into the Word of God this morning and let that Word get into this heart and start to transform us more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, the message today is called Storytime. We're in a series called Good News, number 9, so week number 9 of our series. And you can turn to the book of Luke, chapter 20.

[1 : 12] Have you ever been around a really good storyteller? I mean, someone who just keeps you captivated, laughing, maybe crying, or both as you're on the edge of your seat, just completely engrossed in that verbal portrait being painted by the linguistic artist?

I'm not sure if you know this, but you can get a Ph.D., a doctorate in storytelling. It's that complex. I've even known pastors who've taken these classes to better communicate the good news about Jesus.

There really is power in a good storytime. And one crucial piece of an impactful story is the ability of the speaker to bring the audience into it.

Like one of my favorites where this little girl named Jenny has this cheap, plastic, pearl-looking necklace she's bought from Walmart with 12 of her own dollars.

And her loving daddy, knowing how much they meant to her, seeing how ragged they were getting, even leaving a green ring around her neck, wanted to give her something even greater.

[2 : 20] So he bought a real pearl necklace that, trust me, wasn't \$12. And each night, he'd ask his little girl at bedtime, Jenny, do you love me?

And each time, she'd say, of course I do. You're the best daddy in the world. Okay then, sweetie. You need to trust me enough to give me your pearls. Oh no, daddy.

You can have my baby doll I just got for my birthday. She's lovely. Or you can have any other toy in my room. Please, daddy. Just not my pearls. They're my favorite. It's okay, sweetheart.

Daddy loves you. And he'd kiss her on the head and walk out. Well, one night, he came in to put her to bed, and she was crying with a clenched fist around her back.

Jenny, what's wrong? Without saying a word, she held up her trembling hand, placing the cheap pearls in daddy's. And with the biggest smile, he reached around and pulled out a fancy jewelry box, revealing a real pearl necklace, even putting it around her neck.

[3 : 24] And guys, it just goes to show that our heavenly father has the greatest blessings for us when we often settle for the cheap imitations of this world.

And you know what? Jesus was the master storyteller, as we're gonna see one of many examples today. But listen, if you're new to listening here, we're in the ninth week of our series called Good News.

We've been using the Greek word for gospel, for good news, which is euangelion. And we've been studying and growing our way through the gospel of Luke. So go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 20.

In our last message, we entered the pivotal final week of Jesus's life, talking about his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, even asking the soul-searching question, what will you crown as your king? Because we all crown something. But the euangelion of Jesus tells us when we crown him as our king, it changes everything. It transforms our lives now as we walk in the joy of his salvation.

[4 : 34] And it gives us hope for all eternity in his presence, even though we can't fully grasp how amazing it will someday be when his face I shall see.

Now, before we jump into the word this morning, let me kind of set the stage for our passage. Traditionally, this would have been the Tuesday of Jesus's last week before going to the cross, three days until his crucifixion.

And Jesus makes it clear. He's not backing down from the religious leaders and their corruption. They also are making it clear to his face and even more behind the scenes that they want him gone. And the passage right before the parable that we're going to look at today is hilarious to me. It shows Jesus' sense of humor, one, and then second, that he wasn't going to back down at all. And he's teaching here the good news. And the chief priests and the teachers of the law, they come up to him and they ask, by what authority are you doing these things? And he says, and listen, this is my own paraphrase, but he says, hold on.

[5 : 39] First, you answer a question for me. Was John the Baptist's baptism from heaven or from men? And these sharp Jewish teachers put their heads together and they come back with a brilliant answer, as you would expect from scholars.

They say, we don't know. And I love his response. Fine, if you don't know, then I won't tell you by what authority I teach and do these miracles.

Listen, I grew up in the Reggie Miller Pacers era. I had Philip Rivers twice now as my Colts quarterback. I like some good trash talk.

And Jesus wasn't afraid to stand up to this legalistic, the rules apply to thee and not to me type of leaders. They were phony. They had perverted this sacred faith.

And that leads us right into Luke chapter 20. Let's start here in verse nine. The word of God says that Jesus went on to tell the people this parable.

[6 : 41] So parable was simply a fictional story with a powerful spiritual reality. Here's what Jesus said. A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers, and went away for a long time.

At harvest time, he sent a servant to the tenants so that they would give him some of the fruit of their vineyard. So just like farmers do today, they may own a bunch of land and they may let someone else farm that land.

And those people have to give them money. Well, in Jesus's day, the same thing happened, but you would give a percentage of the fruit of the vineyard, you would give that to the owner.

That's kind of how things worked. But the tenants, it says, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. So they were stealing. They refused to do the contract they had signed, and they beat the guy that the owner sent, and they send him away.

It says in verse 11, he sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

[7 : 51] Then the owner of the vineyard said, what shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love. Perhaps they will respect him. But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over.

This is the heir, they said. Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours. Now, just so you know in that culture, if an owner was negligent, if they just didn't even come around for three years, then whoever was working the field, whoever had been renting that field, got to keep it.

They got to own it. And so here they are trying to kill anybody who comes close to keep the owner away so it can become theirs. Verse 15, So they threw him out, talking about the son, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. When the people heard this, they said, God forbid. Okay, so it's not hard if you have a few years of Bible knowledge under your belt to figure out the simple meaning of this parable as Jesus is only a few days away from his death on the cross.

That phrase, God forbid, or as some other translations say, may it never be, shows that they had begun to have clarity on what Jesus was sharing with them.

[9 : 14] It was starting to click in their minds. Did they understand it like we do today? Well, I don't think so. But they understood that he was pronouncing judgment on those who had rejected him as

the son of God.

Verse 19 says, the religious leaders recognized this was spoken against them and were looking for a way to arrest him immediately. He hit a nerve here.

So, let's kind of wrap our minds around this parable. The vineyard owner is clearly God the Father who's full of patience and mercy toward the rebellious.

The vineyard represents Israel. The evil vine growers who kept beating people are the religious leaders who eventually kill the Son of God.

The three slaves in the story represent the prophets throughout the history of Israel who came on behalf of the Father. In fact, early church fathers verify that the prophet Isaiah was said to have been sawed in half by a wooden saw by order of King Manasseh.

[10:19] Jeremiah was clearly mistreated in Scripture and is said to have been stoned to death by his own people. Ezekiel faced hatred and hostility. Amos had to flee for his life.

Zechariah was rejected. Micah was struck in the face. Listen, we could keep going. But all throughout the history of Israel, God would send these prophets on his behalf to help the nation stay on the straight and narrow.

He would do these incredible miracles making himself known to them through these prophets, protecting them, leading them, feeding them, and still they wandered away in worship to worldly things.

They grumbled and complained, refusing to listen to the truth. That even includes those privileged to lead the nation spiritually. Huh. I wonder if we ever do the same thing, right?

But here's the reality. They just didn't want to hear about their rebellious ways just like we often don't. So they persecuted the very prophets that God sent to them.

[11:25] And then here comes the son in this story. And what do they do to him? They kill him.

And that requires the father, after so much patience and mercy, while also being a father of perfect justice, who's absolutely heartbroken over his son, he comes with force and takes them out reclaiming what is his.

They've given him no other choice. And Jesus was clearly referring to himself and what he would do on that Friday, dying on the cross for the sins of the world, for you and me, and tying into last week from Luke 19 and even the prophetic message in this parable in AD 70, Rome actually destroys Jerusalem, including the temple, leaving no stone left upon another as Jesus said would happen.

So here's the heart of this parable. The father, loving and gracious, full of compassion and yet perfect in his justice and righteousness, all throughout time has been calling us to himself, desiring an intimate relationship with his children who are made in his image.

And what's happened? We've rejected the one who created us in our mother's womb, giving us life and purpose. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, Romans 3 says.

And even some who claim to be his children have often rejected him by their blatant and wicked actions against him. Yet, he continued to show patience and mercy, sending messengers to speak on his behalf.

[13:04] They too were mistreated, sometimes killed by the very ones who claimed to love God the most. And even when the son was sent with signs, miracles and wonders showing that he was God in the flesh, their hearts were so hardened that they could not recognize him.

In fact, they accused him of all kinds of evil while they were breaking their own religious rules to plot against him, arrest him, falsely accuse him, beat him and illegally send him to the cross on a hill called Golgotha.

He was innocent. He was sinless. There on that hill, he was crucified, nailed to a cross, suffering one of the most agonizing deaths, doing it all for you and for me, crying out, Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.

So, if you're a note taker today, you can always go to the Church Center app. That is an app that we use and you can kind of sign in on behalf of First Christian Church.

You can get connected there. But here's the first thing I want you to fill in on this outline. While God is full of mercy and grace, he's also just, perfectly just.

[14:19] One of the hardest things is to preside over a funeral of a person when you're not sure where they stood with Jesus. And I never try to play God as you just don't know what could have happened even in those final moments of their life.

because sincere faith in Christ, even at the end, can save what we deem as maybe the worst of sinners. But often at the graveside, I will say this statement.

We trust our loved one to the perfect judge who can do no wrong. I like the anonymous quote that says, there are three words that came together at Calvary, at the cross.

Justice, mercy, and grace. Justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. And grace is getting what we don't deserve. And church, aren't you grateful as a child of God, if you are a child of God, that you and I won't get what we deserve?

Because our sin and God's perfect justice demand payment. Separation from God for all eternity. And yet, Romans 5.8 says this, but God demonstrates His own love for us in this.

[15:33] While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He satisfied the Father's perfect justice by taking the sins of the world upon His own shoulders, giving His innocent, sinless life for our guilty ones.

You know, there are so many false views of God, often even in the church, that are all based on man-made ideas. But you and I haven't earned the right to determine what's true on our own.

And I'm always hesitant when I talk to someone about what they believe. And all I hear over and over is, well, I think this, I think that, I think this.

Well, no offense to you at all, but you and I don't have the authority. We're just a mist here today and gone tomorrow, the Bible says. Let the eternal God, three in one, who's awesome enough to create everything out of nothing, let Him decide truth.

He's worthy of that task and we are not. And good news, He has spoken truth. The one who's the same yesterday, today, and forever used human vessels to breathe His Word into existence, preserving it throughout time so that we could know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

[16:54] Now, let me take you back to a cluttered lab in 1928 where a Scottish scientist named Alexander Fleming was working with bacteria.

We're talking messy, dangerous work. He left on vacation one day and he just so happened to leave some Petri dishes out. When he returned, he noticed something odd.

A mold had grown on those dishes but around the mold, the bacteria had died. That mold was penicillin, the world's first antibiotic.

Think about that. Something that could heal infections and stop death in its tracks was discovered completely by accident. And when finally produced and distributed to people, it didn't matter who the patient was, rich or poor, kind or cruel, moral or not, penicillin healed without asking for credentials.

And isn't God's amazing grace like that too? You don't earn it. You and I definitely don't deserve it. And yet, when your soul is infected by sin and you're heading toward death, grace is the miracle that destroys the infection.

[18:08] You don't have to be worthy. You just have to receive it. Now, I'll admit for the 10% that have a bad reaction to penicillin. This is where the illustration breaks down. But listen, no one's allergic to grace.

So, instead of running to penicillin, how about drinking of the living water? And I love this story that we see in the Gospel of John, chapter 4, where Jesus is traveling through an area that most Jewish rabbis just didn't travel through.

They'd take the long route instead of going through Samaria because of their hatred for what they often considered half-breeds, the Samaritans, which, by the way, is racism.

It's an awful thing. And yet, our Savior didn't do what the rest of the Jewish leaders were doing. He went right through Samaria because he wanted to encounter the lady from that day forward who would be known as the woman at the well.

She was rough. Her lifestyle didn't match godly standards or even come close. In fact, she is drawing water from the well in the heat of the day probably so that she could avoid the nasty stares and unkind words from the other ladies.

[19:21] See, she had been married five times and now lived with a man she wasn't married to. Clearly not following God's design for marriage and, like sin does, it had led her down a destructive path.

Lost and beaten down by life and yet, Jesus teaches her the difference between water from a well that can physically hydrate your body which is, by the way, very important and then he taught her the difference between that and the living water that can fill you up to overflowing that satisfies your

soul as you discover true life which is the most important thing.

So, here's how Jesus said it in John chapter 4 starting in verse 13. He says, everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.

Indeed, the water I give will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life. And my favorite part of this story is this lady after receiving the living water of Jesus she went back to her town and started pointing everyone to Jesus and they're like, uh, we know this lady we know where she's been and all the juicy details about her but there is something kind of different about her now she seems like something has changed so we're going to go hear this Jesus guy for ourselves and listen, they too came to drink of the living water as they went out and heard him and they truly believed as well.

So, we have a just God who must punish sin because he's holy. He must punish sin eternally because he is the righteous judge who can do no wrong and yet he's also full of mercy and grace chasing after us lost sinners not forcing us but giving us the greatest privilege of this life to know him as Lord and Savior to drink of that grace daily to have those sins covered by the blood of Jesus for all eternity and yet these religious leaders didn't want to hear that because they were sadly mistaken thinking that they could somehow earn their way to heaven and isn't it amazing how many people profess Christ who still think their good works are what are going to get them to heaven and I'm not saying you shouldn't have good works but those are evidence that you're already going to heaven that you have faith in Christ and that you are a child of God and that's always going to produce fruit but that fruit is not what gets you to heaven and where these religious leaders thought they were standing up for truth they were actually standing against it so let me encourage us to do one more thing today make Jesus the cornerstone of your life you know it's so easy to come into a worship service surrounded by a wonderful support system of other believers who want the same thing as you it's easy to get caught up in worship which you should he is so worthy of our praise if we can jump up and down over a football or a basketball game which by the way

[22 : 38] I do I should have no problem getting excited about the one who has saved my soul and yet it's also easy to walk out the doors and not build your life on the rock of Jesus Christ to talk a big game when you're in church and throw out the amens but when I'm outside those doors I'm a whole different person it's easy to talk like the world where every other word when I'm at work is beep-a-dee-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep to do relationships and living arrangements like the world does it when the Lord has laid out a godly blueprint because he loves you this much and wants to protect your heart to treat marriage like the world that if you do for me I'll do for you the second this stops benefiting me then I guess we've quote-unquote fallen out of love that's garbage guys that's missing the point that's supposed to be two people selflessly loving one another like Jesus loved the church maybe I have one set of ethics in teaching my kids but another when it comes to my business

I talk about Jesus being my priority in life but I don't always make him number one where I worship with the body of Christ I'll choose everything else in the world over worship and then I don't even sit daily before him in prayer and discovering his truth and his word and yet I claim he's number one ouch that stepped on my toes too and yet there's nothing like walking in the joy of your salvation when Jesus is the cornerstone that your life is built upon now will you do that perfectly absolutely not but we can do that completely sincerely letting the Holy Spirit guide every part of our lives we can by his grace and in his power walk faithfully now look at what Jesus says to the crowd who just heard his master storytelling it says in verse 17 and 18 of Luke 20 Jesus looked directly at them and asked then what is the meaning of that which is written the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces anyone on whom it falls will be crushed now as John MacArthur a well-known Bible scholar who recently passed away as he said the stone rejected by the Jewish leaders in the nation became the most important stone in the eternal kingdom of God supporting the whole structure and symmetry of God's glorious kingdom kingdom of salvation see

Jesus is taking them back to the Hebrew scriptures from Psalm 18 and Daniel chapter 2 they would have recognized how important it was to first when you are building a home you got to put the cornerstone in first that by it everything else could then be put in place and everything else would be level everything else would be square he's making it clear that he's the cornerstone that we are to build our lives upon that the things of this world leave you off kilter and empty as he's given this strong warning to the religious leaders and to us in the crowd don't stumble over the cornerstone in

unbelief or rejection and then also don't be crushed by it in judgment instead right now while you have breath in your lungs build your life upon the rock of Jesus Christ and not only will you know the salvation of the Lord but you can also walk in his peace daily as he strengthens and lead you forward for his glory you know what

I love a good story time and the best ones were always from Jesus because they teach us a powerful spiritual reality so here's the good news for today we have a God of mercy and grace who's also perfectly just at the same time and we are invited to build our lives on him the chief cornerstone amen amen and amen let's pray together father thank you so much for the amazing truth that we see in your word and while it's not always easy it doesn't always make us feel completely warm and toasty and sometimes it steps all over our shoes but Jesus I'm thankful that you love us enough you love us enough to speak truth that can set us free that can prepare us for eternity with you and save us from what our sins truly deserve so thank you

Jesus for your amazing love for your amazing grace and may we as your church walk like your word says worthy in a manner that is worthy of the calling that we have received as a child of God thank you Jesus you are good you are holy and we pray all of this in your precious and your holy name the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God's people said amen and amen hey thank you so much for joining us today we're so glad that you did once again just like I started off the message I want to invite you to Easter Sunday at FCC but here's the thing we're not meeting at our normal location on 425 North Broadway where you're going to see a sign for First Christian Church we are actually going off campus we've probably outgrown our facilities for Easter Sunday and so we're going to North Decatur High School we're going to have one service at 930 a.m everyone is invited we would love for you to join us in the main gym there at North

[28 : 31] Decatur High School also if you have any questions about the message today about just giving your life to Jesus about faith about our church we would love to come alongside you and just answer those for you help you with those so here's how you can start that conversation you can call us First Christian Church Greensburg Indiana 812-663-8488 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com hey God bless you and thank you so much for joining us today have a great week