

No More

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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, we'd like to invite you to join us at FCC.

! You can learn a little more about us by going to FCCgreensburg.com or by checking out the FCCgreensburg Facebook page. But hey, today is a big day. It is Easter Sunday, and we are excited to just get into the Word, but most of all, let the Word of God get into these hearts and truly transform us from the inside out.

And the message today comes from a series called Good News. We're in the 12th and final week. We'll be in Luke chapter 24, if you want to turn there. And the title of this message is called No More.

Now, it was a beautiful Easter Sunday as a lady, probably in her 55 to 60-ish range. She was getting ready for church. But to her surprise, her husband was still in bed.

So she went in and cheerfully said, Wake up, sleepyhead! It's a big day! It's Easter Sunday! You better get ready! But he just pulled the covers over his head and just kind of groaned at her.

[1 : 18] And she said, No, come on, wake up! We're going to be running late! You've got to get ready! And he said, I'm not going to church today! And she said, What? You're not going to church! You always go!

And he said, Well, two reasons why I'm done. He said, Number one, those people don't like me. And number two, I don't like them. On top of that, the music is awful.

The sermons are boring. And last week, somebody sat in my seat. Well, at this point, her spiritual maturity wasn't having any of this nonsense. So she just laid it out for him.

She said, Well, I have two reasons that you're going to get out of that bed in the next 10 seconds. Number one, it's Resurrection Sunday. He is risen. And number two, you're the pastor and you're preaching.

So, hey, one thing that we're saying on Sunday morning. So here's the cool thing. You may not be aware, but we are not having our church services at our normal location at 425 North Broadway Street.

[2 : 21] We're actually meeting in one service out at North Decatur High School. And we're so pumped to worship together in one service in the main gym there at the high school.

But one thing we're saying to everyone coming is, Hey, whether you were drug here today, whether you stumbled in a little sleepy, or you're just pumped about being here, we're glad you are because Jesus is so worthy of our praise.

And here's the cool thing. We are still First Christian Church, whether we worship in the normal building on Broadway Street, or whether we're at North Decatur. And you and I are the body of Christ wherever we go.

We are the church. And I love how Billy Graham defined this wonderful day when he said, The resurrection of Christ changed the midnight of bereavement into a sunrise of reunion.

It changed the midnight of disappointment into a sunrise of joy. It changed the midnight of fear to a sunrise of peace. And if this is your first time with us, or maybe you just haven't been listening for a while, we started a series in January called Good News, as we have just been walking through the life-changing message of Jesus.

[3 : 37] We've been looking at his life, death, burial, and resurrection for 12 weeks now, all in the Gospel of Luke. So grab your Bible. You can also go to the Bible app and head to Luke chapter 24.

If you are a note taker, you can always go to the Church Center app under First Christian Church, and you can take notes that way. And if you need to connect with us in the office, we can help you get anything you need to make that happen.

But I want to make this radical claim right off the top here, that I believe with everything inside of me, because this fact has changed my life. Are you ready for this?

The resurrection of Jesus is the most significant event in human history. More significant than the mysterious pyramids. More significant than the Roman Empire, the invention of the printing press, the American Revolution, the world wars and the fall of Nazism.

More significant than a man on the moon, or for UIU fans winning a national championship in football. See, on that Friday, after torture like I can't even begin to understand, Jesus willingly gave his innocent life on the cross.

[4 : 55] Then for a part of three days, Friday afternoon, all day Saturday, into Sunday morning, that's what the Jewish culture would call three days, because it touched on three different days.

But things went eerily quiet. But, and it's a big but, everything changed when the grave could hold him no longer. And in the words of this anonymous 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 on resurrection day.

And church, that's why we can emphatically say, no more. So, grab those outlines, and let's start with, no more barriers.

See, over the last five weeks, we have been walking through some of the events of Jesus' final week. We talked about his triumphal entry, his prophecy on the fall of Jerusalem, because they rejected him.

[6 : 01] We talked about the agony, and the betrayal, and the denial, and the suffering that he took going to the cross. And here we are, early that Sunday morning, in Luke chapter 24, starting in verse 1.

So, if you got your Bible, go ahead and read this with me, or look at this with me. And here's what it says. The Word of God. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared, and went to the tomb.

Now, I got to stop right there, okay? So, two men had already prepared his body, put it in a tomb, it was sealed with the stone, but I love the fact that the women were like, eh, the men did it, we better go do a better job here, okay?

I mean, they probably were right, by the way, but this was also a way that they were showing just their honor and their respect for Jesus. Verse 2. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men, in clothes that gleamed like lightning, stood beside them. What are they talking about there? Angels, right?

[7 : 14] In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, he has risen.

Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee, the Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified, and on the third day be raised again?

Then they remembered his words. Okay, so I love the fact that it was no accident that women were the first ones to learn Jesus was alive, but also they were the first to see their resurrected Lord.

In that first century culture, women were viewed as inferior. They were viewed as less than, and yet Jesus makes them an absolute priority as their love, their courage, and their commitment to him was really impressive.

And while the biblical roles of men and women is a discussion for another day, there's no denying just the value of women to Jesus and to his church.

[8 : 21] And listen, that's not changed in 2,000 years as FCC would fall to pieces without our faithful ladies. But did you realize that there were barriers to these women actually getting to Jesus's body?

Two massive barriers. Mark 16 tells us that they didn't know how they would roll that large stone away from the entrance because it was put there not to be moved.

And then second, most scholars don't even think the women were aware that Roman soldiers had been posted at the tomb to keep anyone from stealing Jesus's body, and they weren't there going to let those ladies go inside.

But here's the best part. God removed the barriers, sending his messenger to take care of both of them. See, Matthew chapter 28, let's actually start here in verse 2, puts it like this.

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 at it.

[9 : 29] Okay, so that's miracle number one. The stone has been moved. Now watch this. 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.

That's miracle number two. And you might say, well, there you go, ladies. The barriers have been removed. But you're not here to prepare his body. Your purpose is to proclaim that Jesus is alive. No stone, no soldiers, big tough military dudes can thwart God's perfect plans. I love how the apostle Paul, a man who had been beaten so many times, thrown into prison, lied about, maligned and cursed, snake bit, shipwrecked, all because he loved Jesus.

This man who knew what it was to be in need and had all these barriers stand in the way of him sharing the hope of Jesus with others, he says this in Philippians 4.13, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength, who strengthens me.

And though these ladies had what appeared to be almost impossible barriers to Jesus, they served a savior who wanted to come face to face with them. And Matthew 28 tells us that Jesus appeared to these women on their way to tell the disciples the good news.

[10 : 57] And listen, he was dead no more. He's alive. So let me ask the hard questions. What barriers are keeping you from knowing and following Jesus?

What obstacles stand in the way of us living a life that glorifies him in everything? I'm talking lives of purity and holiness and my motives and my words and my actions all in line with truth.

What barriers are keeping me from living out his calling over my life? Am I content just doing the Sunday church thing and leaving Jesus locked up in the sanctuary until next Sunday?

Am I good just coming a couple times a year when God has so much more for me that I'm missing?

Am I okay with pretending that my marriage isn't falling apart when we've honestly just been roommates for years now?

Am I tired of running to that unhealthy addiction to try to fill my soul when only Jesus can? Or will I allow the Savior who has the power to overcome death, to obliterate every barrier so I can walk in his power, his calling, his purity, his peace every day?

[12 : 10] Are any of those questions that maybe you need to ask? And I like how Romans 8.35 asks this question. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? And then Paul answers his own question by the power of the Holy Spirit starting in verse 37.

He says, No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him, Jesus, who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And church, our souls and faces can smile today on Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday and proclaim that because of the finished work of Christ on the cross, because his tomb is still empty, because he is risen, no more barriers.

Jesus, I surrender them to your Lordship as you have all of me. And when I'm tempted to make excuses to set those barriers back up, even to go back and put those shackles on me again that you've already ripped off, Lord, forgive me and whisper that reminder that I was made for freedom in Christ.

[13 : 44] Help me to see that you've already defeated death and that I can walk in life. And I know I'm throwing a lot of scripture at you today, but I just want you to see that these aren't my words, these aren't my thoughts, these are the words of life.

And John 10.10 starts out with what I would call Satan's mission statement. It says, the thief, Satan, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

That's his purpose. So let me ask you, how many of us, how many of us know what it feels like to have Satan trying to steal, kill, and destroy anything good in our lives?

Yeah, me too. Okay? But listen, Jesus and Satan are not equal. It's not like, okay, it's an equal battle, they're neck and neck. Uh-uh. Jesus is God, he's up here, and Satan is way, way down here as a created part.

Okay? And the all-powerful, all-knowing, grace-giving Savior of the world who conquered death says to us today, okay, the thief, Satan, he comes to steal, kill, and destroy.

[14:54] But listen, when you're in me, you can overcome all of that. Jesus says, I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. So no more barriers.

The power of God is enough. Let him be God in your life. Now second, no more doubt. Anybody besides me struggle at times with fear, with insecurity, with doubt?

Is that not Satan stealing your peace in Christ, killing your God-ordained purpose, destroying your witness to a lost world? But when we walk in the power of our risen Lord, fear is easily replaced with godly confidence.

Insecurity is met with truth as I'm a child of the King. And doubt is replaced with certainty as he is faithful to take care of me as I live for him.

So let's pick back up here where we left off in Luke chapter 24, starting in verse 9. It says, when they came back from the tomb, so talking about the ladies, and by the way, you kind of got to put all four Gospels like next to each other to get the full picture of what Easter morning would have looked like because each Gospel kind of focuses in on what it sees as important, but each one adds more details to the story.

[16:16] So not only did the ladies encounter these angels, but on their way back to tell the disciples about it, they met with Jesus as well. They encountered him and saw him for themselves.

Okay? So it says, when they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven, remember Judas is gone now, and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, by the way, she ran ahead of the other ladies, saw the tomb was moved, and ran back.

She didn't see the angels or Jesus at first. She ran back, told the other disciples about it, and then she came back later. Okay? She came back later and saw angels and Jesus.

So it was Mary Magdalene and then Joanna, the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles, but they did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

Now, I'm not excusing their doubt here. Okay? I think it's wrong, but I can understand their humanness and why it was hard to believe. Their worlds have been turned upside down.

[17:21] They had to be in shock still trying to figure out where we go from here. Was all we witnessed with our own eyes even true? Are we the next ones to be targeted?

On top of that, they're wrestling with their own guilt over abandoning Jesus. Peter denying him three times, then locking eyes with him. Another apostle even has the historical nickname of Doubting Thomas because he wouldn't believe the ladies and then he wouldn't believe the other apostles until he saw Jesus for himself and touched his nail-scarred hands.

In fact, if we go to the Gospel of John chapter 20, starting in verse 27, we read, Then Jesus said to Thomas, Put your finger here.

See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it to my side. Stop doubting and believe. And Thomas said to him, My Lord and my God. And then Jesus told him, Because you have seen me, you have believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Guys, that's us. And the evidence of God's greatness is all around. From his beautiful creation that he spoke into existence in six days, resting on the seventh, the splashes of pinks and yellows and oranges across the evening sky, even the miracle of a newborn baby that grows in the mother's womb with a one-of-a-kind DNA created with a purpose.

[18:47] From miracles we've witnessed with our own eyes to life change we can't even explain, strength when I didn't have it, hope when I needed it, and grace overflowing.

There's a reason that life without Jesus leads to emptiness, hopelessness, defeat, anger, selfishness, despair. Because listen, you were never designed to live life without Jesus.

And because we can boldly proclaim that Jesus is risen, we can live with no more doubt. And when it rears its ugly head because you're human just like me, we proclaim, not today, Satan, my Jesus is risen, and in him I believe.

Amen? All right, let's look at one more declaration here this morning. No more retreat. And I have to give a shameless plug right now because this idea of no more retreat or even this idea of moving forward in the power of Christ, it's exactly what we're going to be talking about the next four Sundays as we look at a Holy Spirit-led three-year strategic plan that we are launching here at FCC that will run through 2028.

Now, you don't want to miss this, so I strongly suggest that you be here for all four weeks, especially next Sunday, April 12th, as we're going to set the table for the whole series.
[20 : 14] And I'm telling you, the Lord wants to do some big things in and through this body of believers. Okay, shameless plug is over. All right, go to Luke 24, verse 12.

And here's what the Word of God says. Peter, however, got up, so this is after he didn't believe the women, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves and he went away wondering to himself what had happened.

Now, the Gospel of John gives us a few more details as John also ran to the tomb and he beat Peter there, but he didn't enter.

Peter, in his typical fashion, went charging right in when he got there and they saw the grave clothes lying there, not like they had been ripped off as if the body had been stolen, instead laying there in perfect order.

Okay, and I'll never forget in our very first ministry, we lived in a church house that's called a church parsonage. It was in the middle of the country, so in the middle of nowhere.

[21 : 19] And one day I left for an hour, maybe two tops to run to the bank, run some errands. And when I came back, the house had been, the glass had been broken out of the back door and opened and the house had been robbed.

And I bet that they were pretty disappointed because we were newlyweds from blue collar families. We didn't have much. I think the claim was for like \$1,200 or something.

But as it dawned on me what I was walking into that, wow, somebody really robbed us. I noticed that, you know, a lot of the drawers and clothes and different stuff had kind of been ransacked a little bit.

It kind of been thrown out of the drawers and it was disheveled. And listen, they were thieves. They were just getting in and getting out as fast as possible trying not to get caught here. They didn't care about leaving it in order.

Well, the same would have been true if someone would have stolen Jesus' body. They probably had taken the clothes with him. They would have just taken them or just if they took them off threw him to the side.

[22 : 23] But when Jesus rose from the grave he left them in order, left them nicely just the way they would have been on him because he was alive. And the Gospel of John tells us that the Apostle John saw this and truly believed.

And yet Peter was a little more skeptical. He was still confused but also was in awe. What could this mean? And do you know what the most powerful evidence of the resurrection of Jesus is?

I mean, we can go through all the historical evidence of why it couldn't have happened the way that all the skeptics claim it did. But you know what the most powerful evidence is? Changed lives.

Listen, we are still being radically transformed by a guy named Jesus who walked this earth two millennia ago. Why? Because he's God and that's resurrection power.

Or as Romans 8.11 says, And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

[23 : 31] And what happened with these disciples including Simon Peter? What happened to them? Excuse me. Jesus appeared to them and he gave them a promise that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And it's so cool that these timid disciples, scared for their lives, end up walking into the streets of Jerusalem for Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, which is celebrated 50 days after the Passover, bringing Jews from all over the world together.

Huh. And in the power of Christ, they boldly proclaim that he is risen with 3,000 being baptized that day as their names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life and as they took the gospel back home all over the world.

You think God did that on purpose? I think so. And all but one of the apostles would go on to give their life sharing the good news of Jesus.

Guys, that's not just strong-willed humans there. That's the power of God at work in us. And it's funny. I was just talking to a guy in our church a couple weeks ago who also walked the North Decatur Halls as a student just like I did.

[24 : 58] We went to school together. And he made the comment that I've heard many times when someone I went to school with finds out that now I'm a pastor, even a Christian. And he said, I never would have thought from the race suite I knew that you'd be preaching someday.

And I said, well, that's two of us. And it was usually for two different reasons. Either they knew some of the stuff that I was involved in or they just saw how shy and backwards I was.

All glory to God as I joined with Paul in Galatians 2.20 saying I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me.

The life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Church, no more barriers, no more doubt, no more retreat.

Instead, resurrection power. We're going forward in his power. So, why do believers often live like Jesus is still on the cross?

[26 : 02] why do we sometimes run after the world more than we pursue Christ when he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world?

I don't know either but I'm so grateful for his grace that not only saves me but sustains me day after day after day. See, here's the thing.

In the words of A.W. Tozer, God is looking for people through whom he can do the impossible. What a pity that we plan only the things we can do by ourselves.

And you know what? I'm guilty of that but I don't want to be because of the grace that he has lavished on me, on you. I want to walk in his resurrection power doing things for his glory that I could never do in my own strength and my own abilities.

I want to be all in. I want to be a sold out disciple of Jesus. I don't want to be held back by legalism and man-made traditions like the Pharisees were. I also don't want to live like the world with a watered-down theology like the Sadducees acting more like the world.

[27 : 08] I want all of Jesus. I want all of his word and I want to fully walk in the purpose that he created me for. So, here's the question.

What barriers, what doubt, what retreating is keeping me from coming all in to Jesus? Well, here's the good news. Today is a perfect day to say, no more.

No more fear paralyzing my purpose. No more doubt. No more spiritual laziness. No more raising hands to Jesus on Sunday and then serving the little G God of this world on Friday.

No more lies. No more deceit. No more pride. No more playing church. No more woe is me. No more me-centered living.

No more being offended by everyone and everything. No more. Death has been defeated. The tomb is empty. And because he is risen, we too can walk in life.

[28 : 10] So, church, I need to hear it. Okay? And I know I won't hear it through the radio, but on the count of three, let's make this proclamation out loud. Okay?

Here's what we're going to say. No more barriers. No more doubt. No more retreat. Jesus is risen. Say it with me. No more barriers. No more doubt.

No more retreat. Jesus is risen. Amen. Let's pray together. Father, we are so thankful for these words of life, these words of hope that you have given us.

May we truly walk in the resurrected power of Jesus. That is our prayer today. And we pray it all in the name above all names, the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen and amen.

Hey, real quick, if you have any questions about your faith, about the church, about giving your life to Jesus, my name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.

[29 : 11] You can reach out to us at 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at FCC Greensburg dot com.

Hey, thank you for tuning in this Easter Sunday and may God bless you richly. He is risen indeed.