

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *“Take heart, I have Overcome the World”*

SERIES: *Stand Alone - Easter*

SCRIPTURES: *John 16*

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**Credit to Scott Scruggs; Mary Poplin; CS Lewis; John Ortberg*

Well good morning and Happy Easter, it so great to worship with you. Want to say welcome to all of you in this room, and many gathered on-line, at home, tuning in to the live stream.

If you have a Bible turn with me to **John 16:33**.

And let me just kind of set the scene for us...It is the week leading up to Easter weekend. On Palm Sunday Jesus enters Jerusalem with crowds and celebration. But by the middle of the week the mood in town is changing. Influenced by a number of different factors. The religious leaders in Jerusalem, threatened by Jesus, are looking to get rid of him. And the uproar in town, has the Roman authorities on edge as well. They don't like "disturbances in the empire."

So on Thursday of that week, Jesus meets with his Disciples in the **“upper room.”** And in John's Gospel the upper room scene takes up several chapters...starting in Chapter 13 and through Chapter 17. One of the reasons this scene unfolds over several chapters is that Jesus is preparing his Disciples for life after Him.

Remember this rag-tag group that Jesus assembled has been following him for 3 years. They have left their occupations, families, homes to follow Jesus and in just a few hours really, that's all gonna change. They are going to go to the Garden of

Gethsemane and Jesus will be arrested, beaten, tried and then hanged. His time with them is coming to an end. And the fate of the Jesus movement, will be placed into the hands of his disciples.

And what a motley crew Jesus has selected for this task. Think about the group seated in the upper room that night...the team that Jesus has assembled for this most significant work.

A few fisherman, a tax collector, a denier, a thief, a doubter...

It's just a good reminder that the work of discipleship and the church is not just for theologians and pastors and worship leaders, paid staff members...at least it wasn't at this most crucial moment in history. God invites all of us to participate with willing hearts in his most significant work. We'll come back to this idea later.

While in this upper room, Jesus shares a final meal with his Disciples (last supper). This is the meal where Jesus washes his disciple's feet, the very first communion service ever takes place and...Judas, gets up and leaves during the meal...

That's the scene. And as Jesus comes to the close of this conversation with his disciples...Jesus says these words in...

John 16:33 - ³³ "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

I. In this world you will have trouble...

Don't you just love how blunt Jesus is? He doesn't try to hide it or spin the truth or beat around the bush. He just tells it like it is. Guys, it's gonna get hard. Trouble is real. Trouble happens. In this world you can expect trouble.

So when I was preparing this message. I was hoping maybe this verse isn't that blunt. Maybe it doesn't really mean you should expect trouble...maybe I can find a way to theologically explain away the reality of trouble. So I did the church pastor thing and looked up the word **trouble** in Greek. We do this a lot here at Five Forks don't we? It's a really awesome Greek word **thlipsis**. Please say that with me...

And turns out, do you know what trouble means in greek? That's right...it means trouble. Jesus meant what he said.

Trouble is real...trouble happens.

GK Chesterton – **“Jesus promised his disciples three things – that they would be completely fearless, absurdly happy, and in constant trouble.”**

CS Lewis wrote, **“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pain. It is his megaphone to a deaf world...I didn't go to religion to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of Port would do that. If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity.”**

Trouble happens. And in some ways I should have expected that because the truth is, our life experience has taught us...we should expect trouble.

Back when Landon was little...Jenny and I lived with my parents for about 2 years. And my parents live in a farmhouse and have a woodstove. There is no warmth like the warmth of a woodstove. It's incredible on cold winter nights. But woodstoves get hot. They are solid cast iron. And so when Landon was little we were always so careful around the woodstove.

One evening, we got a little too lax...weren't paying attention. And all of sudden Landon screamed. The poor little guy had lost a toy under the stove and when we weren't paying attention, he leaned his hand on it to reach down for his toy. **(PIC OF LANDON)**. I have never felt so inept or helpless as a parent. How could I have been so careless? I just wanted the pain to go away for little Landon. I just wanted to take that burn and put it on myself.

I learned that day, more than ever before the truth of Jesus words...in this world you will have trouble. Little hands touch burning hot woodstoves and get burnt. Little boys, my little boy, will cry and hurt. Pain is real. People suffer.

Much of the pain we experience has to do with these physical bodies that we are given. They are often frail, temperamental, imperfect, blemished. And no matter how fit, will one day wear out. They do not last forever do they? We start to notice, it's with hair that starts to change its color or slowly disappear. Wrinkles in our cheeks. Callouses in our hands. Heart disease. Blockages. Drug addiction. Body image.

Its malnutrition and children starving because they don't have enough to eat. It's nations that lack clean drinking water. It's cancer. It's covid.

You're familiar with this trouble aren't you? You've experienced it or...or sometimes you are watching someone you love experience it. Their physical body isn't doing what you want it to do. You just want to fix their physical pain, you'd even be willing to take it upon yourself.

Jesus understood the very real physical nature of our trouble. He healed the lame and the blind and those with leprosy. And he just wanted fix that physical pain that people he loved were enduring. He told God he was he even willing to take it upon himself. And so we are told that on a Friday morning about 2,000 years ago...

John 19:1-3, 5-6, 16-18, - Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. ² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. ³ They came up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands...

Roman crucifixion were a grueling physical battle and often gruesome. The lashes, the ripping of the skin, the thorns. The struggle for breath itself. For Rome it was physical torture to show people, this is what happens when you mess with Rome.

Jesus was fully aware of the physical trouble this world often presents.

But it's not just trouble with these physical bodies, is it? Some of the worst pain we experience in life is...in our relationships with others.

A marriage falls apart. A parent walks out. Children neglected by their parents. Child and spousal abuse run rampant. Loneliness. Young girls sold every day into sex trade. Refugees wonder aimlessly looking for a place of safety and rest.

Jesus was also fully aware of relational brokenness. At that last meal with his followers...

John 13:21 – Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.”

One of his closest friends, Judas betrayed him.

When they arrested him in the garden...the rest abandoned him, scattered and fled.

Matthew 26:56 - Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

That same night, Peter denied even knowing him.

John 18:17 - ¹⁷ “You aren’t one of this man’s disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter. He replied, “I am not.”

All of those who were closest to him walked away when he needed them most. You have felt this pain. Pain of relationships fractured, broken, falling apart.

In this world you will have trouble...

And the final end of trouble is **death**.

We humans simply do not have an answer for this one. In the end, death always wins or seems to. And it is painful and excruciating.

There was a book that came out a number of years ago called The Shack and describes a man’s despair over the kidnapping and death of his young daughter. The father, Mack had taken the family camping and during the weekend his daughter was kidnapped and evidence of her brutal death were found in a shack miles away. Mack visited this shack and writes these gripping words...

As his eyes adjusted in the dimness, he began to make out the details in the room by the afternoon light filtering in through the broken windows. Stepping into the main room, he recognized the old chairs and table. Mack couldn’t help himself as his eyes were drawn to the one place he could not bear to look. Even after a few years, the faded bloodstain was still clearly visible in the wood near the fireplace where they had found Missy’s dress. I’m so sorry, honey. Tears began to well up in his eyes.

And finally his heart exploded like a flash flood, releasing his pent-up anger and letting it rush down the rocky canyons of his emotions. Turning his eyes heavenward, he began screaming his anguished questions. “Why? Why did you let this happen? Why did you bring me here? Of all the places to meet you – why here? Wasn’t it enough to kill my baby? Do you have to toy with me too?”

Despairing and defeated, Mack slumped to the floor next to the blood stain. He touched it carefully. This was all that was left of his Missy. As he lay next to the stain, his fingers tenderly traced the discolored edges and he softly whispered, “Missy, I’m so sorry. I’m sorry I couldn’t protect you. I’m sorry I couldn’t find you.”

Such is the finality and despair of death.

And can you think...Oh, how God, must have felt on that day 2,000 years ago, when his only son, Jesus was put to death. When the blood stain of his only son, was left on a wooden cross.

So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him...³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

And how God must have cried out...“I’m so sorry I couldn’t protect you.”

You have felt the stinging power of death.

In this world you will have trouble...

Trouble has a way of overpowering life, doesn't it? It can be all consuming. It's terrifying. It's scary. It's overwhelming. It's cold, lonely, bitter, painful.

In fact this Greek word, **thlipsis** carries this sense of being weighted down. Heaviness. The world bearing down on you. Trouble crushes us. (Scott Scruggs)

Sometimes trouble is so strong, so powerful we begin to believe that trouble wins in life.

At Easter, Jesus acknowledges and courageously admits to the reality of trouble in this world. We do not have to deny, ignore, and suppress the reality of trouble in our lives.

And in fact, the Easter story does more than just acknowledge trouble. At Easter the Creator himself, willingly experiences the desperate and painful reality of trouble. Flogged, tortured, humiliated, betrayed and deserted was Jesus of Nazareth.

Isaiah 53:3-6 - He was...a man of suffering, and familiar with pain...pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

In this world you will have trouble and there is no one who understands trouble more than our God.

And, if you are not a follower of Jesus that's the end of the story. Trouble wins. Death ultimately wins. God died. That's the end. We should stop the sermon here.

Yogi Berra once said, "It's never over until it's over." If trouble wins and Jesus is dead, then it is over.

The Apostle Paul wrote... **1 Corinthians 15 - ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins...we are of all people most to be pitied.**

But you see that leads us to the second thing Jesus said to his disciples in the room that night at their last supper (John 16:33)...

“In this world, you will have trouble...But take heart, I have overcome the world.”

II. Take Heart I have overcome the world.

See according to the Easter story trouble doesn't win.

Here's how Matthew describes it...

Matthew 28 - After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

After his crucifixion, Jesus body was placed in a tomb. There was a massive stone placed in front of the tomb. To keep animals from eating the body and to keep thieves from stealing the body. And there were Roman guards placed at the entrance of that tomb. Why?

Just to make sure Jesus' followers didn't steal it and begin making up stories that he had come back to life. And on Easter morning these two women, two Mary's went to put spices/perfumes on Jesus body. So John says...

² 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. ³ His

appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

And yes, I know how unbelievable this sounds. I know this kind of thing doesn't happen. It didn't back then either. In fact, New Testament scholar, N.T. Wright explains that, ***“There were many messianic movements in the first century. In every case, the would-be Messiah got crucified by Rome as Jesus did. In not one single case do we hear the slightest mention of the disappointed followers claiming their hero had been raised from the dead. They knew better.”***

Jesus died, we saw it, and everyone fled. That's it, it's over. That's how it always worked.

Except this time. This was the time, the place, the moment in history that God chose to do His most significant act. This time these two women are invited into the tomb where Jesus' body had been. It is the place of final death. It's the ultimate representation of trouble and pain and heart-ache and brokenness.

And there standing on the home field of trouble is the central line of our faith.

The most important sentence ever uttered...the sentence that we are hanging our lives on... **“He is not here; he has risen...”**

The Angel doesn't say, *"He'll live on in our hearts. We'll try to keep his spirit alive. We'll keep sharing his message."* Instead at this place of death, the Angel says...**"He is not here; he has risen..."**

There's a great scene from the movie Chronicles of Narnia.

Aslan is a Lion (**PIC**), who represents Jesus, the Messiah figure, in the story. He hands his life over to the wicked witch (**PIC**), who represents evil – sin - trouble.

And she kills Aslan. She marches off to conquer the world. She thought it was the end of the story for Aslan. But, what she failed to recognize is that there was a greater power, a bigger story at work, than the one she could see or comprehend or understand. Two young ladies, followers of Aslan are present during this most significant scene...

Check this out...

0:00 – 2:23

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldONnOsHOOQ>

Even death itself will be undone. This is referred to as

A. The Resurrection.

This event changes everything about life, about pain and trouble and death and how the world ultimately works. Easter is the truth, the reality, that there is a greater power, a bigger story than the one we are able fully see or comprehend or wrap our minds around.

"Take heart...I have overcome the world!"

Jesus says, trouble doesn't get to win. It seems to. It's has it's moments. But it doesn't get to win.

No matter what's going on in life...divorce, betrayal, denial, cancer, covid, debt, money problems, health problems, bad jobs, no jobs, bad dates, no dates, bad hair, no hair, and republicans and democrats, and masks and no masks...even death itself get's swallowed up...because He is not here, he is risen we are securely in God's hands.

What do we find God “doing about” this business of sin and evil? God did not abolish the fact of evil; He transformed it. He did not stop the crucifixion; He rose from the dead.” (Dorothy Sayers – Poplin 242)

The people in the first century based their faith on this, the resurrection. That makes Jesus different than anyone ever.

This morning on Easter morning I want to encourage you to make the most important commitment you'll ever make...

B. Make your life about knowing, loving and following Jesus.

Here's how one Pastor says it, **“If someone can predict their own death and resurrection and then pull it off...you should give your life to that person!”**
(Andy Stanley)

Jesus said...**I have told you these things so that in me, you may have peace.**

In the end, intelligence and brain power will not give you the peace and security in life you are so desperately seeking. Good looks and health don't. Wealth doesn't. Technology doesn't. Political parties and Presidents and powerful nations are not the

ultimate source of life. Even Pastors and churches and even this book, the Bible...can't give you the peace and security you really need. Only Jesus can do that.

Jesus was the only one ever who died and came back to life. That makes him the Savior.

Walk in to the tomb. Look around. See for yourself. Study the evidence. Don't take it lightly. Ask questions. Use your mind/brain.

But I believe if you do, you will discover...He is not here, he is risen...And if that's true give your life to Jesus.

“Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” (CS Lewis – God of the Dock)

And if you have done that. You have the greatest news the world has ever received.

Just like Mary and Mary...

C. Get to work.

That's what the church is supposed to be about. Folks the church, in so many ways, often get's off track. And we start to get focused and caught on all kinds of secondary issues. But the church was founded that day 2,000 years ago when the tomb was empty and our job is to share that message.

Think about it, for a few hours those two women were the church (John Ortberg). Isn't that amazing? There was no one else who knew the Good News. They were the first missionaries, deacons, preachers, nursery workers, greeters, worship

leaders...they were the church and they had the best News ever. So they ran out of that tomb and became the first gospel preachers ever.

They, ran to tell the disciples.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were so astounded they had to write about it...and all of those who ran in fear, fled and abandon Jesus returned. And a movement began. From those two women the church has grown into millions and hundreds of millions, even billions of people. And cathedrals, and denominations, and building project, theology degrees, and Bible classes and books and television ministries in our world today.

The best explanation for why those two have turned into the billions, is that that group of people back then, starting with those two women, believed something unbelievable happened that changed everything... **“He is not here; he has risen...”**

That’s why you’re here today. Because that Easter, the cross didn’t win, trouble didn’t win, the tomb didn’t win. Jesus did. And the effect of Jesus resurrection, his victory, the reverberations are still being felt today.

As the church, it is our responsibility to now invite others to hear and know and understand that Good News.

Jesus said, **“Now go and make disciples of all nations...”**

Your job isn’t to simply come and fill a seat on Sunday. Or to help fill an hour on Sunday morning and get out of here. You have been given the news that changes everything and it is up to you jump in and take that news to the world. It means get involved. Start serving. Join the efforts, the cause.

Mother Theresa used to say, **“When you give your life to God you become a pencil in God’s hands...belonging to Jesus and doing his work.”** (Poplin 29)

Doing that may look different for all of us. It may mean preaching or teaching. It might mean serving in the food pantry. It might signing up for the children’s ministry or the greeting team. It might mean praying for the sick. Taking a meal to someone in the church. Helping a single parent family. It might mean stepping out of your comfort zone here at church and introducing yourself to someone you don’t know.

But folks this is all hands on deck.

“He is not here, he is risen.”

Benediction:

John 11 - ²⁵ Jesus said...“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

At Easter we recognize and boldly acknowledge the pain and trouble and hurt in our lives. It’s real. But we stand together, we sing together a motley group of broken, imperfect, often-doubting, sometimes betraying our God and boldly declare Jesus is Lord. And all year long we take heart, we hang on to the peace we have with Jesus. It’s so powerful in our lives, that we feel it’s reverberation each moment of each day. So that we take that Good News to everyone.