

Intro: For everyone who appreciates a good story, you know there is nothing more important than how a story ends. It doesn't matter how the introduction hooks you in, how riveting the characters may be, or how many twists and turns surface throughout the tale, if in the end, the ending fails to bring it all together. In 24 chapters, Luke has woven together an account that took us on a masterful journey through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and we have finally arrived at the end of the story.

The events of the last week of Jesus' life must have had a dizzying effect on all who witnessed them. Triumphant entry. Teaching in the temple. Last meal with his disciples. Betrayal. Arrest. Crucifixion. Tomb. *Empty* Tomb! Reports saying he could be alive! Believe me, I know we've had a lot of drama in Boston lately with the Tsaernav arraignment, Whitey Bulger's trial and the Aaron Hernandez being charged with murder, but the buzz around Jerusalem would have been much greater after the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

During this swirl of events, on Sunday, the same day the women and Peter find the empty tomb, Luke tells us of two followers reflecting on all of these things as they walked home to Emmaus. This is one of my favorite stories in the Bible for the way it is narrated with great drama and irony but more so for the content it holds. *Read 13-35.* The first thing I want us to do this morning is . . .

I. Understand all Scripture points to the redeeming work of Christ (24:13-46).

At some levels, it's not hard to imagine the kind of exchange happening here. They experienced a week they would be talking about for weeks to come. As they were walking what would have been a distance from Boston to Woburn, we see them filled with sorrow, disappointment, and confusion. But while they were discussing all of these things, a third person who appears to be a stranger, walks up beside them and asks: "What are you talking about?" To which Cleopas replies: "Where have you been? . . . Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know what happened?" He is shocked by this man's ignorance, not knowing, of course, that it is Jesus himself!

Jesus begs for an explanation, saying, "What things?" Their reply in verses 19-24 reveals the key elements of the gospel story. If you are new to Christianity, here is a great summary of the life of Christ. In verse 19, we see . . .

His life and ministry (19) "Jesus was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people."

- Jesus performed many powerful miracles: healed the centurion's servant in chapter 7, raised Jairus' daughter in chapter 8, and fed 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish in chapter 9.
- We have seen some of the most famous teaching of Jesus in the gospel of Luke: "love your enemies" "be rich toward God," the Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son (which reveals more about our Prodigal God). But here's the thing: he not only taught, but he fulfilled all of his teaching perfectly.
- Trans: Does that matter for us? Yes, because Jesus had to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

His death (20-21)

- Luke's understanding of Jesus' death comes to light. Yes, at a human level, the Jewish leadership and Roman authorities crucified Jesus. But, on a greater scale, his death was the fulfillment of a divine plan whereby God would offer salvation to the world!
- I see crosses all over Medford. Crosses on necklaces, cross tattoos, crosses hanging from rearview mirrors, but so many people are clueless to what the cross really means? This is, btw, a great question to ask people: what does the cross mean to you? Here's what the cross means in six words: By his death, I receive life. Jesus died in our place, taking on our sin and the punishment and wrath we deserve, so that through faith in him we can be forgiven and freed to experience fullness of life now and eternal life with him forever. That is what the cross is all about.
- Cleopas even hints at the resurrection in verses 21-24, which serves as the proof that all of his teaching and all of his miracles and his substitutionary death was powerful & true.

His Resurrection (21-24)

- Surprisingly, we still see great disappointment in their response. “We hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel.” Resurrection seemed too amazing, too miraculous to be true.
- Jesus replies in verse 25 with a rebuke: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And then (Luke tells us in v. 27) beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he showed them how all the Scriptures point to his life, suffering, and resurrection.

Don't miss this because it has massive implication for how we read & interpret the Bible. Jesus says, from the beginning of the OT, to the end, it all points to me. The OT properly understood is Christian Scripture. All of the themes, all of the plotlines, all of the shadows find their resolution and their substance in him. As Paul says in 2 Cor. 1:20, “all of the promises of God find their “Yes” in him.” Jesus explained to them how:

- “He is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is imputed to us.
- He is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us.
- He is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him into slavery and now uses his new power to save them.
- He is the true and better Moses who mediates a new covenant and who leads his people on a better exodus to the Promised Land.
- Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people's victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.
- Jesus is the true Passover Lamb, the true Shepherd, the true lamb, the true light, the true bread, the true temple, the Prophet of all prophets, the Great High Priest, the King of kings.
- The Bible's really not about you – it's about him.”

Can you imagine receiving a Bible lesson like this from Jesus? They said their hearts burned within them as he unfolded the Word. So let me ask you: Does your heart burn when you hear the gospel? Does the Bible evoke joy and excitement? The words of Christ should fill us with passion and vitality.

Luke tells us that they ran back to Jerusalem to find that Jesus has also appeared to Peter. It's all coming together; the fireworks are going off! And as they are talking and rejoicing with some still doubting, Jesus enters the room. Look at *verses 36-46*.

- Jesus assures his followers that they are not encountering a spirit, and consequently, certainly not hallucinating, for “a spirit does not have flesh & bones.” Touch my hands and feet.
- It's not surprising that the crucifixion *and* resurrection became the centerpiece of the early church's proclamation of the gospel. Acts 1, Acts 2, Acts 3, Acts 4, Acts 5. Resurrection every time.

Trans: Tragedy has turned to triumph. Redemption is truly found in Christ. That is why we are going to see the call in verses 47-48 to . . .

II. Take God's redemption to the world as your greatest mission in life (24:47-48).

There are many noble missions in life. What would say is your greatest mission? Are you after the good life, possibly known as the American Dream? Get a good job that earns a good paycheck. Have some good friends and a good family. Buy a house.... Perhaps you are devoted to a great cause: promoting literacy, discovering ways to help the poor, helping victims of abuse... There are so many great pursuits and great causes in life and each should be celebrated, but here's the newsflash (wc): *Jesus invites all who follow him to join the greatest mission under the sun.*

Look at vv. 47-48. “and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:47-48) These words form the final instructions of Jesus to his followers. They are to gladly offer their lives as his *witnesses* in the world.

If Jesus really rose from the dead and if our eternal destinies ride on how we respond to him, then surely this mission should be the greatest privilege and responsibility of our lives. Let's look at a few components of the mission of Christ.

1) The mission of Christ goes forth in his name. It means that the word goes forth in his authority. It's not our resources or ingenuity that changes people or our city. It's the authority of Christ. We see this in Acts 3. Peter & John heal a man who had been unable to walk from birth, and it says the people were so astounded they ran to them and were filled with amazement. So Peter takes opportunity to say: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?" It is by the name of Jesus that this man has been healed.

Listen, I understand it can be challenging to share our faith, even though it should be the natural reflex of a growing Christian. But here's the good news: we can have extreme confidence because the authority of Christ is big enough for the mission of Christ. **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."** (Matthew 28:18-20)

Trans: We proclaim the message in his name, but what is the goal? That people might respond favorably to this life changing news. A favorable response must include repentance...

2) The mission of Christ calls for repentance. Repentance involves a change of mind that leads to a change of life. What changes? Basically everything! How we view God, ourselves, our need before God, and how God meets our need. And this leads to a complete change in the direction of our lives. We once pursued our own way; now we live for God. Once we trusted in our own good deeds to get to God; now we trust in Christ to restore our relationship with God. True repentance and faith results in the grace of God granting . . .

3) The mission of Christ grants forgiveness. If every one of your sins represented a brick stacked one on top of the other, how high and long and thick would that wall be? For all who receive Christ, God takes out the wrecking ball of his love and he obliterates it to where nothing, not even your greatest sin and guilt, keep you from him. Have you received the forgiveness that is found in Christ? If not, admit your need for him, ask for his forgiveness and receive Christ as your Savior and Lord.

4) This mission of Christ must go to all nations!

- One of the things I love about Medford is how people from all over the world have made it their home. We saw this at Soccer Nights again this year. We met people from Iraq, Lebanon, Philippines, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Venezuela, Ireland, Portugal, Liberia, Rwanda and the list goes on.
- Some people charge Christianity with being exclusive, but in reality, it is extremely inclusive. The God of the Bible is the God of all nations.
- When the end of the world comes, the last book of the Bible says people from every nation, tribe, people and language will dwell with God forever. (Revelation 7:9-10)
- This is why we support missionaries abroad through prayer and this is why we commission our own people to go on short-term trips and to consider spending their lives abroad that all the peoples of the world might know the salvation of Christ. *Elaina just returned from Cambodia. Jon Vickers is serving in the Philippines this summer. Amy Calfas is in India, Jess Laporte is in Haiti and many others are spreading the gospel in different regions of the States.*
- The Book of Acts comprises Luke's sequel where he tells how the gospel spreads to the world.

Trans: Verse. 49 tells us how we must go about the mission.

III. Go fulfill the mission in the power of God's Spirit (24:49-53).

- There is nothing we lack because the Spirit of God lives within us. Jesus gives his empowering presence to everyone who him. Ephesians 1:13 explains this so well: **“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,” (Ephesians 1:13)**
- And when God gives us his promised Spirit, he clothes with his power. We’re not talking a summer tank top here, but fully suited up like you’re walking out into a blizzard. Jesus has completely covered us with his power to fulfill his mission.
- I love Augustine’s prayer: “Command what you will, but give what you command.”
- God, ask me whatever you want, but if you’re going to ask, then give me the resources to get the job done. And God looks at us and says, “I have.”
- **David Platt says: “The greatest hindrance to the advancement of the gospel to the nations today may be the attempt of church of God to do the work of God apart from the Spirit of God, not the self-indulgent immorality of our culture but the self-sufficient mentality of the church.”**
- What is holding you back from joining the greatest mission on the planet? To follow Christ is to follow him wherever he leads. Is there a person you would not talk to about Jesus? Is there a place you would not go?

Trans: We exist to know God and make him known among all peoples. This is the invitation of the end of Luke’s gospel . . .

The Point: Join the mission of Christ in the power of Christ motivated by the work of Christ.

Conclusion:

We should conclude in light of how Luke concludes his gospel. Look at v.50-53. The challenge is to let this description become our reality. After Jesus ascended to heaven to rule over all things until his return, his disciples worshiped with great joy. A true encounter with the risen Christ always leads to this! Luke penned his gospel that we might see the work of Christ and worship him.

When most people read the gospel, they want to form some kind of opinion about Jesus, but I want you to consider the following insight from C.S. Lewis and allow God to show you how you need to respond today.

“What are we to make of Christ? There is no question of what we can make of Him; it is entirely a question of what He intends to make of us. You must accept or reject the story.

The things he says are very different from what any other teacher has said. Others say, ‘This is the truth about the universe. This is the way you ought to go,’ but He says, ‘I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Life.’ He says, ‘No man can reach absolute reality, except through Me. Try to retain your own life and you will be inevitably ruined. Give yourself away and you will be saved. He says, ‘If you are ashamed of Me, if, when you hear this call, you turn the other way, I also will look the other way when I come again as God without disguise. If anything whatever is keeping you from God and from me, whatever it is, throw it away. If it is your eye, pull it out. If it is your hand, cut it off. If you put yourself first you will be last. Come to Me everyone who is carrying a heavy load, I will set that right. Your sins, all of them, are wiped out, I can do that. I am Re-birth, I am Life. Eat ME, drink Me, I am your Food. And finally, do not be afraid, I have overcome the whole Universe.’ That is the issue.”

Let’s pray.