

Sunday, March 9, 2024 | Holy Week

Week 23 | Luke 24:36-53 | “Luke: Historian of Joy”

Bob preached this week while I was away on vacation.

READ: Luke 24:36-53 (ESV)

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰ And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

This morning, we’ll complete a study of Luke’s gospel that began on November 20th, 2022. Admittedly, there were times when we took a break to focus on things like Christmas, Easter, or the occasional standalone message. But for the most part, steadily going chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and sometimes even word by word, it has taken us almost *two years* to get through this excellent book. In fact, over the course of 5 series, this sermon marks the 99th message in this study.

Interestingly, when we started this journey, I pointed out that “more than anything, Luke wants his readers to be confident that the things they had been taught were, indeed, *true*...that the life of Jesus is not some imagined fiction but an indisputable historical fact.” By closely studying Luke’s writings all this time, I hope you can see how this initial claim has been validated. So much so that you might even echo the words of Archaeologist Sir William Ramsay, who said,

“Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, [but] he is possessed of the true historic sense; he fixes his mind on the idea and plan that rules in the evolution of history; and proportions the scale of his treatment to the importance of each incident. He seizes the important and critical events and shows their true nature at greater length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely much that was valueless for his purpose. In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.”¹

Like those we’ve studied before, the passage before us today illustrates Luke’s close attention to historical details. As we’ll see, our faithful narrator highlights evidence for Jesus’ *bodily* resurrection to alleviate our doubts. Specifically, he demonstrates that when the resurrected Lord appeared to his followers, it wasn’t some *immaterial apparition* but a *physical manifestation* of God’s Son.

Thus, from the start of chapter 1 to the end of chapter 24, Luke proves that the life of Jesus isn’t a fantasy, and this is *especially true* of the resurrection. To borrow my own phrasing, that the Lord rose from the dead is “an indisputable historical fact.” Such a revelation should fill our hearts with joy!

This passage is divided into ***three*** portions, with each section dealing with ***two*** elements:

i. Vs. 36-43 – Reservation & Confirmation

Vs. 36 – It is significant that the first words that ***most*** people heard from Jesus after the resurrection were about “***peace***.” We’re told that the disciples were in hiding at this time; they feared that the same fate that had befallen their master would soon fall on them (cf. Jn. 20:19). It goes without saying that the disciples would’ve been startled when a man they thought dead materialized out of thin air while they were trying to keep a low profile! Undoubtedly, they’d need some reassurance. And this is why Jesus said, “***Peace to you!***” His words were not just a greeting but a comforting reassurance that they were safe and secure in his presence.

¹ Ramsay, Sir William M., *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness Of the New Testament*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), p. 222.

But, more than that, Jesus' whole mission was characterized by peace. In Luke 2:14, when the angels first proclaimed Christ's birth, they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" When Jesus gave his farewell discourse in the Upper Room, he told the apostles, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn. 14:27). Jesus began these resurrection appearances by talking about peace (cf. Jn. 20:19, 21, 26) because such a greeting reassured his followers that they needn't be afraid.

Vs. 37 – However, Jesus' sudden appearance didn't have a soothing effect. Quite the opposite, Luke tells us, the apostles "were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit." Death by crucifixion did such a number on the body that even when Jesus stood in their midst, the disciples couldn't believe their eyes. It was easier to believe they saw the ghost of Jesus rather than Jesus Christ in the flesh and blood.

Vs. 38-39 – The Lord did not want them to misinterpret what they saw. He calls them out, saying, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" The disciples should not be anxious, and neither should they be skeptical. What their eyes were telling was true: Jesus is alive! And to prove it, he tells them to look at his "hands" and "feet." This is a request to notice where he was pierced by nails during the crucifixion. As Jesus said, such markings would show "that it is I myself." Those piercings confirmed Christ's identity. But not only did the Lord want them to look at him, but he also invited them to "Touch me, and see." He explains, "For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." This wasn't some immaterial apparition but the physical manifestation of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 40-43—Luke tells us that Jesus then "showed them his hands and his feet." Supposedly, the disciples also reached out and touched him, as the Lord had instructed. Yet, despite seeing and touching the Lord for themselves, "they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling." What a mix of emotions! Disbelief is complimented by happiness, and bewilderment is mixed in.

Jesus' appearance and physical inspection weren't enough to sway the disciples, so the Lord gave them one final proof: food. He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" So, the apostle gave Jesus "a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them." Presumably, this was enough to assuage their concerns.

This section can be summarized by four verbs: look, touch, think, and watch. Jesus instructed the apostles to look at his "hands/feet" and "touch" him. Then, he encouraged them to think about the implications of what they saw and felt. Lastly, he invited them to watch as he ate before them. All four actions are testaments to Jesus' bodily resurrection.

So, what's the takeaway? The Christian faith is not **blind** faith; it is **evidence-based** faith.

READ: 1 John 1:1-4 (ESV)

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we **looked** upon and have **touched** with our hands, concerning the word of life— ² the life was made manifest, and we have **seen** it, and testify to it and **proclaim** to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— ³ that which we have **seen** and **heard** we **proclaim** also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

Sure, Christians today don't have the same experiences as the first believers. We weren't invited to look, touch, think, and watch before we believed in Jesus Christ. However, we do have the written testimony of those first believers. And by believing in their word, we receive the same salvation they received. Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing. And it is not **blind** faith but an **evidence-based** faith, a belief rooted in the eyewitness testimony of those who did look, touch, think, and watch.

ii. Vs. 44-49 – Exposition & Commission

Vs. 44 – After Jesus convinced his disciples he was who he claimed to be, he pointed them to the Scriptures. He said, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” The divisions “Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” are **synecdoches**. A synecdoche is a figure of speech where a part represents the whole, or vice versa (e.g., “set of wheels” = car; “daily bread” = life's necessities; “coke” = any carbonated drink; etc.). For Jesus to say that he fulfilled “everything written” about himself in the “Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” means that he fulfilled all the messianic passages in the OT. Last week, Bob did a fantastic job explaining that over **70 prophecies** were fulfilled through Jesus' life. Passages like Gen. 3:15, Deut. 18:15, Psalm 110:1, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6; 53, Jer. 23:5, Zech. 12:10, and so on, all point to Jesus Christ of Nazareth. For more on this, read *Reading Backwards* by Richard B Hays. Suffice it to say, those with eyes to see cannot help but see Jesus all over the OT.

Vs. 45—Then Luke tells us that Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” This isn't my main point, but it needs to be said that scriptural **illumination** is evidence of divine **intervention**. Understanding God's Word is God's Work.

This has **two** applications:

First, it is encouraging because it is undeniable proof that the Almighty exists. Jesus is, literally, the Word Incarnate (cf. Jn. 1:14); he is God's speech in physical form (cf. Col. 1:16). We do not serve a mute God but a talking God, the sort of deity that desires to reveal himself to us and who wants us to know him. What a God!

Second, if there are rich blessings when we acknowledge God's word, there are dire consequences when we ignore God's word. All of us are given a choice of whether, like David, we become people after God's own heart (cf. 1 Sam. 13:14) or, like Pharaoh in Exodus, we'll become people who harden their hearts to God's prompting (cf. Ex. 8:15). God calls to all, but he's call is not without limit. Eventually, should a person keep ignoring him, *he will stop calling*. If this scares you, it means that today, not tomorrow, is the day of your repentance (cf. Pro. 27:1; 2 Cor. 6:2; Ja. 4:14).

Vs. 46-48 – After demonstrating that the OT showed that “the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,” Jesus said that the consequence of his death and resurrection is that “repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” Beginning with the Jews and moving to the four corners of the non-Jewish world, everyone needs to hear about how there is now salvation through Jesus Christ. And the only way that such a message gets out is if messengers are sent out. So, the Lord looks at his disciples and commissions them for the gospel, saying, “You are witnesses of these things.”

The word translated as “witnesses” is the Greek term **μάρτυς** (*mártys*), from which we get “martyr.” “Martyr” is synonymous with religious persecution. Christian martyrs would be killed, not for some immoral act, but because they witnessed the truth of the gospel. Interestingly, in Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, *mártys* is a key term in the first half of the book. In Acts 1:8, the apostles replaced Judas with Mathias, a man who had “witnessed” Jesus' life from his baptism to his resurrection and ascension. In 2:32, while Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost, he said that he and his fellow disciples were “witnesses” to Jesus' resurrection. In chapter 10, Peter preaches at the home of a Roman Centurion named Cornelius, saying, “You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem” (Act. 10:34-43). Everywhere you see believers in Acts, they testify about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Vs. 49 – But they'd need something else before becoming witnesses. Jesus says, “Behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.” The phrase “the promise of my Father” refers to the Holy Spirit. But back then, the Holy Spirit didn't indwell believers until the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2). After this, a person's conversion would correspond with the filling of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 10:44-48). But, at present, Pentecost was still nearly two months away. This is why, rather than use the past tense, “I have sent,” the Lord uses the future tense, “I am sending.” Jesus is telling them what is coming. And in the meantime, they weren't to skip town. Instead, Jesus says, “But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Though they were at present clothed with fear, soon, they would be “clothed with power from on high.”

So, what's the takeaway? The Promise of the Father bestows power from on high to proclaim the gospel.

READ: John 16:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Through the witness of believers, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of three things: “sin,” “righteousness,” and “judgement.”

Firstly, though every sin makes us guilty before God, truly, the only “sin” that sends anyone to hell is a failure to “believe” in Jesus Christ. The “unforgiveable sin” is referred to as “blasphemy” against the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 12:31-32). But, make no mistake, this sin is nothing more complex than a persistent resistance to the Holy Spirit's call to repent. The only sin that God cannot forgive is the one that we refuse to repent. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin to repent of their unbelief.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit works to convince a person that their so-called “righteousness” is about as good as a soiled diaper when compared to God's righteousness (cf. Isa. 64:6).

If we play the comparison game with each other, we're bound to find someone whose sin is more severe than our own (e.g., Hitler). But if we play the comparison game with God, we're bound to say, as Paul said, that no one is righteous, no not one (cf. Rom. 3:10). The conviction that we cannot earn salvation through good works is one of the Holy Spirit primary objectives. Realizing that humanity is inherently evil and not good is

something that only God the Spirit can do. And if he's working on you right now, do not resist him. Repent of your innate unrighteousness and accept the gift of Christ's righteousness.

Lastly, the Spirit works towards convincing the world that they stand, not as a liberated people but as a *condemned* people. Unbelievers are under judgment "because the ruler of this world is judged." Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (Jn. 3:16-18).

The witness of the believers consists of proclaiming the gospel. As the gospel is proclaimed, the "Promise of the Father," aka the Holy Spirit, convicts the world of "sin," "righteousness," and "judgment."

iii. Vs. 50-53 – Benediction & Ascension

Vs. 50 – Luke says that after these things, likely many weeks later, Jesus *led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them.* Believers live under God's benediction rather than the Lord's condemnation. We do not have a cursed life but a blessed one. And though the life we may live is filled with trials and tribulation (cf. Jn. 16:33), in Jesus, we have an abundant life (cf. Jn. 10:10). The Lord said, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (Jn. 15:10-12). The joys of this life are fleeting, flawed, and finite. The joys of the next life are timeless, flawless, and infinite.

Vs. 51 – Luke describes Jesus' ascension in the simplest terms. He says, "While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven." To understand the implications and importance of the ascension, come back next week when we start a new series working through the Book of Acts. Suffice it to say that the ascension signifies that Jesus' salvific work was completed and accepted. Furthermore, Jesus' ascension was the prerequisite for sending the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus ascended to the Father, he was enabled to send the Spirit to us.

Vs. 52-53 – Afterwards, our narrator says that all of Jesus' followers "worshiped [Jesus] and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God." Interestingly, the theme of Luke's gospel is joy. Here, at the end, there is joy. But, lest we

forget, joy also pops up at the beginning of Luke's account. The angel told Zechariah that he and his wife Elizabeth would bear a son in their old age, and this would bring them "[joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth](#)" (Lu. 1:14). When Mary was pregnant with Jesus Christ, she visits Elizabeth. We're told that the baby in Elizabeth leaped for "[joy](#)" inside the womb (Lu. 1:44). After Jesus' birth, angels visited some local shepherds and told them, "[Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy](#) [emphasis added] that will be for all the people" (Lu. 2:10).

But not only does joy show up at the beginning and end of the Gospel of Luke, it shows up throughout the middle of his account. In Luke 6:23, Jesus tells believers to "[rejoice in that day, and leap for joy](#)" when we're persecuted. In Luke 8:13, the "[good soil](#)" is characterized as the sort of person who receives the word of God "[with joy](#)." After Jesus sent out his disciples, we're told in Lu. 10:17, they "[returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!'](#)" But then Jesus says, "[Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven](#)" (vs. 20). After the Lord excised a demon from a woman, Luke tells us "[all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him](#)" (13:17). When Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep and coin, he punctuated each lesson with the same takeaway: there is heavenly "[joy](#)" over one sinner that repents (cf. Lu. 15:7, 10). And, in the story of the prodigal son that follows, the father tells the older brother, "[It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found](#)" (15:32). After Zacchaeus climbed down from the sycamore tree and we're told the tax collector received Jesus Christ "[joyfully](#)" (19:6). And, lastly, during the triumphal entry Luke tells us "[the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen](#)" (19:37).

So, what's the takeaway? Jesus Christ is the [joy](#) in a [joyless](#) world.

READ: Philippians 4:4 (ESV)

[Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice.](#)

Paul does not admonish us to rejoice in our talents, riches, achievements, or anything else; he says to "[rejoice in the Lord](#)." Likewise, at the end of his book, Luke, the Historian of Joy, invites believers everywhere to rejoice alongside our gospel forebears. There is but one thing that ought to bring us the most joy, satisfaction, and happiness: to know the Lord. Everything else is but trash by comparison (cf. Phil 3:8).

Video Description:

Holy Week | Week 23 | “Luke: Historian of Joy” (Luke 24:36-53)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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Thus, from the start of chapter 1 to the end of chapter 24, Luke proves that the life of Jesus isn't a fantasy, and this is *especially true* of the resurrection. To borrow my own phrasing, that the Lord rose from the dead is “an indisputable historical fact.” Such a revelation should fill our hearts with joy!

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