

INTRODUCTION

Most biographies of great men end with their death and burial—but not Jesus! He is alive. Though we have come to the end of this book, the title of this message is, "It's Not the End—It's Just the Beginning!" because Jesus isn't finished. He will ascend to heaven and send the Holy Spirit to give birth to the church.

Last week we finished in Luke 24:12 with the empty tomb of Jesus. Starting in verse 13 we read the account of Jesus appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. I shared from that passage on Easter Sunday; we'll begin with verse 36. Today, we'll read four sections of these final verses as we introduce four tremendous truths about Jesus.

Luke 24:36- 43: While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking that they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

1. JESUS OFFERS YOU PEACE WHEN YOU'RE TROUBLED

The disciples were frightened when Jesus appeared to them. Rembrandt painted a picture of Jesus appearing to the disciples on that night. You can see the fear and wonder in the body language and expressions of the disciples. They thought they were looking at a ghost, so Jesus invited them to investigate and touch His wounds. Here's a good Bible trivia question for you: What are the only man-made things in heaven? The wounds of Jesus, the nail prints in His hands and feet. They were still there when Jesus was resurrected and according to Zechariah, they'll still be there when Jesus returns because the people living in Jerusalem will ask the question: "What are these wounds in your hands?" (Zechariah 13:6)

The disciples were terrified when He appeared. The first thing Jesus said to the disciples was "Peace be unto you." In the Greek it's just two words, literally, "Peace ya'll." Then He asked them a question, "Why are you troubled?" The word "troubled" literally means to be "stirred up" with distress. Jesus is asking you the same question today: What is troubling you? What is it in your life right now that is causing you to be "stirred up" with distress? What are you losing sleep over?

The disciples thought they had seen a ghost. In commenting on this passage one writer observed: "I saw a bumper sticker the other day that said: 'We are born naked, wet, and hungry. Then things get worse'" Life IS tough, Jesus never denied that. In fact He told us we'd face plenty of trouble but that's okay, because He can give us peace in the midst of a troubling world. Jesus said, "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." (John 16:33)

The disciples were afraid because they thought they had seen a ghost! Someone wrote: "What's happening today is even more frightening than ghostly sightings—attacks on our soil, threats of more terrorism, an escalating Mideast crisis, a lingering war in Iraq. Add to that the daily stress of modern society with job layoffs, tough marriages, taxes, bills, rebellious kids, hot water heaters that decide to burst on a Friday night when plumbers charge time-and-a-half. All this is enough to drive a person to Blue Bell ice cream." There is something better than ice cream. Jesus *is* the sweetest name I know—but He's fat free.

Would you like to have the peace only Jesus can give? You must do the same two things the disciples did that night:

1. Peace comes when you examine Jesus!

Jesus invited the disciples to "check Him out." The Christian faith is not just some blind leap of faith into the darkness; it has always invited honest investigation and study. Jesus told the disciples to *look* and see. Instead of focusing on their fears, Jesus told them to focus on Him. They were still in danger of being arrested and executed. In fact, almost all of them eventually died by execution. But Jesus said, "I can give you peace IN THE MIDST of your fears.

If you spend your time focusing on your difficult, unpleasant circumstances, you'll be constantly "stirred up" and troubled. But if you will focus your gaze on Jesus, you can find His peace. There is great advice in song: Turn your eyes upon Jesus/Look full in His wonderful face/And the things of earth will grow strangely dim/In the light of His glory and grace. Next we see

2. Peace continues when you experience Jesus!

Jesus not only said, "Look at Me." He reassured them He was real. "Touch me," he said. "Go ahead and handle me, for a ghost does not have flesh and bone." (He didn't say "flesh and blood.") He further proved His reality by snacking on a piece of fish! (Ghosts don't eat fish, by the way—they eat Ghost Toasties and evaporated milk.) We may not know too much about our resurrected bodies, but since we'll be like Jesus, it's a pretty safe bet to say we will be eating in heaven!

Jesus invited them to touch Him because there is something reassuring about touch when you are afraid and troubled. One little boy was in his bed frightened by a midnight thunderstorm. He called out for his dad to come in there to his room because he was afraid. The sleepy dad walked into the room and hugged his son and said, "Son, you don't have to be afraid. Why'd you call me? Don't you know that God is with you?" The little boy replied, "Yessir, I know that God's here—I just needed somebody with skin on."

Wouldn't it be great if you could actually reach out and touch Jesus? Don't you think that would give you peace? The physical presence of Jesus is no longer here. He ascended back into heaven, but He hasn't left us without the comforting assurance of a physical touch. He provides that through the people who are here in His body, the church. Today, we are the arms of Christ, the hands of Christ, the feet of Christ. When we reach out and shake someone's hand, or give them a friendly hug it's the touch of Christ. That's why watching church on television will never be substitute for actually being there—there's no personal touch. As we become an increasingly high-tech culture, the church must become a high touch gathering where we pass out hugs and

handshakes. Maybe you need the love a local body of Christ for you to experience the life of Christ that leads to peace.

The second tremendous truth about Jesus is found in Luke 24:44-46: He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day."

II. JESUS CAN OPEN YOUR MIND TO THE SCRIPTURES

Are you ever confused when you read the Bible? It's easy to be confused when you read something. Here's an actual statement printed in the Lewiston, Idaho *Tribune*: "The crossword puzzle which should have appeared in today's *Tribune* appeared instead in yesterday's, together with the answer to the puzzle that should have been printed yesterday. Therefore, the puzzle that should have appeared yesterday is in today's *Tribune*, together with the answer to Wednesday's puzzle. The puzzle for today and the answer to the one that should have been printed yesterday are reprinted."

That's pretty confusing! When some people read the Bible, they are just as confused. Jesus opened the minds of the disciples to the scriptures by telling them He fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies: the Messiah *had* to suffer and die in order to be raised from the dead.

The religious experts studied the Old Testament religiously—but they were missing the point because they didn't understand Jesus was fulfilling it. In John 5:39 Jesus told them, "Study diligently the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me." (John 5:39)

The Bible shouldn't be confusing to you. It becomes much simpler to understand when you possess the key to unlocking it. The most important **scripture key** is: **ALL THE BIBLE IS ABOUT JESUS**. You can find Jesus on every page of the Bible. The Old Testament says, "Someone is coming." The New Testament says, "Someone has come." The Epistles and Revelation say, "Someone is coming again." If you read the Bible and you don't find Jesus, you'd better read it again.

Do have a hunger to read God's Word? Do you want Jesus to open your minds to the scriptures? Sadly, most Christians spend more time watching television than they do reading the Bible. I came across an interesting poem not long ago:

"On the table side by side; A Holy Bible and the TV Guide, One is well worn but cherished with pride, (Not the Bible, but the TV Guide). One is used daily to help folks decide, No! It isn't the Bible; it's the TV Guide. As pages are turned, what shall they see? Oh, what does it matter, turn on the TV. So they open the book in which they confide (No, not the Bible, it's the TV Guide). The Word of God is seldom read, Maybe a verse before they fall into bed. Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be, Not from reading the Bible, but from watching TV. So, then back to the table, side by side, It's the Holy Bible

and the TV Guide. No time for prayer, no time for the Word; The plan for salvation seldom is heard. Forgiveness of sin so full and so free Is found in the Bible, not on TV!!"

If you don't open the Word on a regular basis, He won't open your mind to the scriptures. Study them diligently, and you'll find Jesus there.

Let's move ahead to the third tremendous truth about Jesus found in Luke 24:47-49: "And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

III. JESUS PROVIDES POWER TO BE HIS GLOBAL WITNESS

Jesus told the disciples they had a big job ahead of them—preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations. Remember, this was a rag-tag group of ignorant and uneducated men. Luke finished writing his gospel account in a few verses, but he later wrote the book of Acts. When you combine Luke with Acts, you find that Dr. Luke, a Gentile, was responsible for more words in the New Testament than John, or Paul.

In the first chapter of Acts you find Luke repeats some of his details in Luke 24. He writes of Jesus appearing after the resurrection and giving the disciples definite proofs He was alive and he again gives them the command to wait in Jerusalem until they get the power. The key to this power is the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:5 Jesus said, "John (the Baptist) baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with (literally "in") the Holy Spirit." Just as John submerged people into water, Jesus promised the disciples would be immersed, totally submerged into the life of God through the Holy Spirit. A couple of weeks ago, I spoke about the last words of Jesus on the cross but His *actual* last words are found in Acts 1:8. He said, "You will receive power (*dunamis*) when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH." The word for power is the one from which we get our English word "dynamite." Indeed, ten days later on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were praying and they heard the sound like a mighty rushing wind, flickers of flame appeared above their heads, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and started speaking in other tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. Peter stood up and preached and 3,000 were baptized that day. Within three centuries Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire and today the gospel is being preached in every nation. How did these few disciples turn the world upside down (or right side up) for Jesus? They had the dynamite power of the Holy Spirit.

The promise of power Jesus gave to the disciples is a promise to us as well. You and I must be filled with the Holy Spirit. There are at least two reasons why you must be filled with the Holy Spirit:

1. God's Word commands it!

Ephesians 5:18 says, "Don't be drunk with wine which leads to excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit." When a person is drunk they are under the influence of the alcohol in their bloodstream, and that person will talk differently and do things they might never do when they

are sober. When a Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit, we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit and He controls our speech and our actions. The filling of the Holy Spirit is not some add-on option like a moon roof in a new car—it is an absolute essential in the Christian life. Have you ever been filled with the Holy Spirit? You say, "Can it happen and you not know it?" That's like saying you can get married and not know it! Not just on Pentecost, but several times in Acts, Luke writes of disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit. They didn't always speak in tongues, but they always spoke about Jesus. The way you can tell that you're filled with the Holy Spirit is that you'll be witnessing for Jesus. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of a person's heart, the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34) In the country we used to say, "What's down in the well will come up in the bucket."

2. God's work demands it!

You can't witness without the power of the Holy Spirit. You can't forgive people who have hurt you without the power of the Holy Spirit. You can't be the kind of wife or husband you should be without the power of the Holy Spirit.

The reason we have so many powerless, defeated Christians in our churches is that people are trying to live the Christian life in the strength of their own flesh—and it always leads to frustration and defeat.

Jesus has given us our target audience—the entire globe. John 3:16 doesn't say, "For God so loved the people in Jerusalem, or the people in Israel, or the people in America..." It says, "For God so loved the WORLD!" The only way we can take the good news to the ends of the earth is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

My friend, you need to visit Calvary to have your sins forgiven through the death of Christ. You need to visit the empty tomb so you can affirm Jesus is the risen Lord. But you also need to have a Pentecostal experience in which you receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

Like the beautiful old hymn says, "Lord, as of old at Pentecost; thou didst thy power display; With cleansing purifying flame; descend on us today. Lord, send the old time power; the Pentecostal power; thy floodgates of blessing; on us throw open wide; Lord, send the old time power; the Pentecostal power; that sinners be converted; and thy name glorified." (words by Charles Gabriel)

Finally, let's look at the fourth tremendous truth about Jesus found in Luke 24:50-53: Then he led them out to the vicinity of Bethany; he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

IV. JESUS CAN REPLACE YOUR SADNESS WITH JOY

After the crucifixion and before the resurrection, the disciples were people without hope and without joy. But when Jesus appeared alive, their hope was restored. Then, Luke tells us Jesus took them to a spot on the Mount of Olives near Bethany and He slowly began to ascend into

heaven. In Acts 1 we read the disciples stood there watching Jesus go up into the sky until He was obscured by the clouds. Two angels appeared to the disciples and said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) Then Luke tells us they worshiped Him. This is the first time we are told the disciples worshiped Jesus. Jesus had said, "You shall worship only the Lord God" and that's exactly what they were doing.

Then, we're told they returned with great joy. They were continually in the temple praising God. They were filled with joy! Their grief and sadness was transformed into joy.

Is there joy in your life today? Have you lost the joy of your salvation? Are there people and circumstances in your life that have robbed you of your joy?

Jesus is able to do the same thing for you He did for those disciples. He can turn your sadness into great joy. Isaiah wrote when the Messiah came He would have a specific ministry to those who mourn. We read: "For those who mourn—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." (Isaiah 61:3)

Ashes on the head were a sign of deep mourning and grief, God can replace your ashes of pain with a crown of beauty. In the Old Testament, oil was symbol of the Holy Spirit. God wants to anoint your life the oil of gladness to cover your mourning. You may be struggling with a spirit of despair; things aren't going well, and you don't think they'll get any better. He offers you a garment to put on. It's the garment of praise.

Jack Taylor used to laugh about people who when you asked them, "How are you doing?" they'd replied, "All right under the circumstance." He would say, "What are you doing under your circumstances?" Circumstances are like a mattress. If you get under it you'll smother, but if you get on top of it, you can rest. The Joy of the Lord lifts you above your circumstances.

As a golfer, I had always hoped to get a hole-in-one, and just a few days ago, I scored my first ace. My tee shot landed about an inch to the right and the ball dove into the cup. I screamed and threw my hat; then I hit my knees on the tee box to thank the Lord. I was elated! But on the very next hole, a par 5, I hit two balls in the water and scored an 8! Suddenly, the elation of a hole-in-one was replaced with the discouragement of that triple bogey! As I thought about it, I realized that my hole in one made me "happy" and it had nothing to do with "joy." Joy is not happiness. Happiness comes and goes. Your happiness is dependent on happenings. When things are happening good (like an ace), you're happy. When they're happening bad (triple bogey), you're sad. But joy is dependent only on Jesus. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever more! Happiness is like a thermometer—it only measures elation. Joy is like a thermostat—it determines your attitude.

CONCLUSION

When you meet the living Christ, you won't have to *try* to be a witness; you'll naturally *be* a witness. A few years ago, the Los Angeles Dodgers won the World Series. Their leading pitcher, Orel Hershiser was named the MVP of the series. Just before the final inning of the World Series the television camera zeroed in on Orel Hershiser in the Dodgers dugout. He was standing alone, but he was obviously saying something. A few days after the series, he appeared as a guest on the "Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson. (for all you kids, he was the host before Jay Leno) Johnny Carson asked Orel what he was saying in the dugout before the final inning. Hershiser said, "I wasn't saying anything, I was singing."

"You were singing?" Johnny asked. "I didn't know you were a singer!"

"I'm not." Orel said.

But Johnny persisted, "What were you singing? Why don't you sing it for us tonight?"

"Nah," said Orel.

But by that time, the audience was chiming in, "sing! Sing! C'mon sing!" Finally Orel started to sing, and when it did, it got totally quiet. He sang, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." It was deathly quiet for a few seconds after he finished, then the audience started applauding loudly.

That's what happens when you know Jesus. You won't be ashamed to tell the whole world how much He means to you. That's what the disciples did, and because of that, it wasn't the end, it was just the beginning!"

OUTLINE

I. JESUS OFFERS YOU PEACE WHEN YOU'RE TROUBLED (36-43)

Jesus said, "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." *John 16:33*

1. Peace comes when you examine Jesus!
2. Peace continues when you experience Jesus!

II. JESUS CAN OPEN YOUR MIND TO THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus said, "Study diligently the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me." *John 5:39*

Scripture key: All the Bible is about Jesus

III. JESUS PROVIDES POWER TO BE HIS GLOBAL WITNESS (44-47)

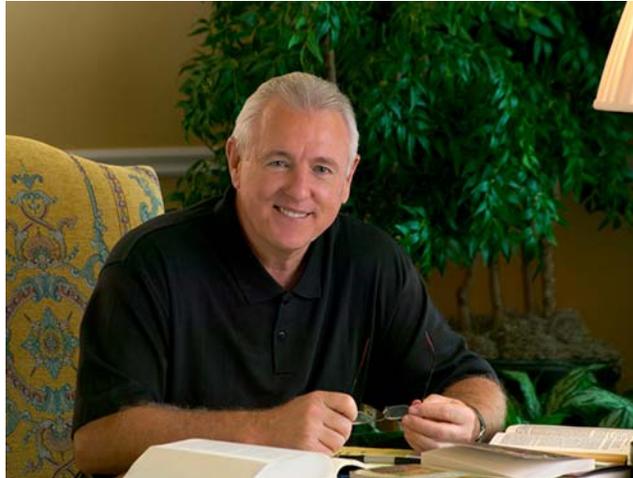
"You will receive power (*dunamis*) when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH." *Acts 1:8*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes