

# Our Missionary Message and Its Meaning

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at [ChristChurchEastBay.org](http://ChristChurchEastBay.org). Reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

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 they saw a ghost. He said to them, Why are you troubled, and why do you 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 had 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. He said to them, This is what I told you while I was still with you.

[ 1 : 09 ] 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 Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Israel.

You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. When he had 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 worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good morning, Christ Church.

It's good to see you on the second Sunday of Easter. As I think back to 13 months ago when COVID shut down the world, really, and the Bay Area went into shelter-in-place, we were scrambling like everybody else, trying to figure out how are we going to keep our kids active during this time.

[ 2 : 31 ] And so we pulled out our badminton, and we got a paddle, a beach paddle ball for our kids, and eventually we got tennis rackets, thinking, you know, we've encouraged lifetime sports, running, swimming.

Maybe we'll add tennis to the rotation, keep our kids moving, help them with their eye-hand coordination and whatnot. Well, fast forward to now, and our kids kind of love tennis, but Catherine and I have grown to love tennis during this time.

We, you know, we kind of just leave the kids home at this point and go hit the ball around. And neither of us are that great. Catherine played at summer camp growing up.

I played at the swimming pool. But we found that tennis is a great way to relieve some stress, right, to go out and just smash the ball really hard and volley back and forth and make your opponent run to and fro.

And we found that it's cheaper than therapy during this time. You know, we can kind of go work out. You got lines. You got to stay in the lines. You got to work out your conflict between the lines.

[ 3 : 35 ] And, you know, you're kind of out there like, I wish you were more supportive with my work, and I wish you were more sensitive to my feelings. And it just feels good. And we like it too because, you know, you start this game, and the score is love, love, right?

You've got love, and I've got love. You haven't touched the ball yet. What's your score? It's zero. No, you actually have love. You have love. It's a game of love. And, but what I've decided in tennis is that life is just too short to play with old tennis balls.

We were out there with our kids. Our kids would hit all the new balls over the fence in places where we couldn't go get them. And so I would get mad at them, and then they'd get upset with me.

And so we had these two people give us these giant bags of old tennis balls, and we thought, well, this is cool because we can lose as many of these as we want. But I just discovered that, you know, playing a game with a ball that doesn't bounce is just not fun.

And so we're playing now with new balls. And, but what I've been thinking about with this metaphor of the tennis ball is that some of us kind of feel like that old tennis ball right now.

[ 4 : 55 ] Anybody feel like an old tennis ball, kind of worn out? It doesn't really, doesn't really bounce. It doesn't have that springiness and that kind of resilience that you really would hope for. Some of us, if you're like me, you feel a little more like this ball.

Just kind of chewed on and slobbered all over. And like, there you are. That's your life right now. But what I'm praying for for Christ Church, as we move into this new season, is that God would make us like this.

These are America's number one best-selling tennis balls. The pin number one. And I'm praying, oh, that was good.

I'm praying that, I mean, smell that. It's so bright, so fresh, so bouncy, that through the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead, through more vaccines, through more gatherings like this, through our soul care retreats, through fellowship, through park meetups, through community group gatherings, through just pushing through the inertia of this time, that the Holy Spirit is going to make us like this.

Amen? Because if God raised Jesus from the dead, this is not impossible for Him to do for us in this post-COVID season. God is going to give us back our bounce.

[ 6 : 19 ] He's going to give us back our vibrancy and our energy. God is going to give us that oomph, that zing, that zip that we were made for. And that's my prayer for us.

And I invite you to pray that with me during this time. So Constance, there's a ball for you. Catherine, there's a ball for you. And anybody that wants to play doubles, Catherine and I are looking for some partners.

Okay. Enough about tennis. Let's talk about the resurrection. Luke 24 is our text for today.

And it's all about Easter day. It's all about Easter morning and Easter afternoon that we looked at last week. And now we're in Easter night, Easter evening. And this story means for us that the risen Christ doubts our doubts and sends us with the biblical gospel.

That's what this text means, that the risen Christ doubts our doubts and sends us with the biblical gospel. And I wanted to start with how the risen Christ doubts our doubts.

[ 7 : 23 ] Many of us are here. We're trying to make sense of the resurrection for our lives. And that's very much like the disciples on this Easter night. And all of a sudden, Jesus just appears in his presence and his power to these disciples.

And we read about that in verse 36. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you. Shalom. And we think, how thrilling.

What a blessing. But the disciples didn't think that. They're scared. Their reality is coming apart. Their reality is shattered in this moment. And it says in verse 37, they're startled.

They're frightened. They're thinking they saw a ghost. You know, Harry Potter's nearly headless Nick. You know, some sort of apparition. Some sort of spirit making a momentary visit from some distant realm.

And Jesus responds to them and he says this in verse 38. Why are you troubled? And why do doubts rise in your minds? And that word for doubts Jesus uses is dialogitme, where we get the word dialogue.

[ 8 : 31 ] And Jesus is not against thinking, questioning, deliberating, reasoning, the life of the mind, working out puzzles and riddles and enigmas with logic.

If you know anything about Judaism, anything about the teachings of Jesus, there's a link here between the head and the heart. But what is Jesus challenging among his first skeptics?

He sees them disputing an inconvenient truth that doesn't fit with their dominant paradigm. Right? They know, like we know, that dead people stay dead.

And that is an ironclad rule without exceptions. And so, here they are interpreting the data of Jesus standing before them within their worldview categories, within the plausibility structures that they know.

This is either an immaterial spirit or it's a revived corpse, like Lazarus, who temporarily came back to life but then would die again.

[ 9 : 36 ] And Jesus is patiently here helping them come to realize that he's neither this nor that. He's something new, something different, something unique altogether.

And that's why he says in verse 39, Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Why does he do this? Because he wants to say this body is continuous with my crucified body.

Here are the marks of those iron nails that fasten me to my cross. Here are the signs in my body of my victory over sin and death.

And then he says to them, Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have. Some of us are visual learners, some auditory, some kinesthetic learners.

And so, Jesus says, You can see me, you can hear me. Now, I want you to feel me and touch me and know that this is a real material body. Now, some of us might think that's cool.

[ 10 : 39 ] Some of us might think this is really creepy. But maybe all of us are asking, How is this relevant? You know, why does it matter to my life? What happens next?

I think is really kind of hilarious. I think Jesus kind of cuts through the tension with a little comedic relief. In verse 41, While they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, Do you have anything here to eat?

And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. Is Jesus hungry? No. He's giving them proofs that he's alive.

He's showing them his new bodily abilities. And we teach our kids not to stare at guests when they come over, particularly when we're around the table, right? And I'm thinking, Everybody is staring at Jesus in this moment.

Every eye is glued on him, because what Jesus is saying is, My flesh and my bones are not over there in that tomb. They're right here with you.

[ 11 : 43 ] And if that's true, then you all need a new worldview to map out this new crazy reality. And here's why that's important, because there are popular beliefs in the East Bay that go like this.

This life is all that there is, and there's nothing. It's just, you know, when you die, that's it, and so live the best life you can. Or another belief says, If there is a God, he's remote, and he's somewhere out there.

I don't really have to deal with him. Another belief says, All religions are basically alike, just be good and love people. But if Jesus rose from the dead, if Jesus is the risen Son of God, then none of those beliefs are actually true.

This life is not all there is. God is not distant. You either live and deal with him, or you live in denial that this ever happened.

If this is true, then salvation comes through no other way, but through the one person who's risen from the dead. And so, what Jesus is trying to help his disciples deal with, is that the resurrection is a paradigm-shattering, historical event, and it forces you to embrace a wholly new paradigm.

[ 13 : 10 ] And that's why Jesus engages with these first skeptics, and he's incredibly patient with them, and he works with their unbelief, right? He gives them evidence. He gives them data. He gives them time and opportunity to explore the evidence and consider the data.

But eventually, Jesus says, Hey, your doubts are real, but I'm more real. I mean, it's like doubting Thomas that Andrew mentioned. He gives Thomas the proofs that he needs, but then he says, Thomas, stop doubting and believe.

Stop putting your faith in only what you know, and start putting your faith in this new, wonderful, albeit strange, reality of the resurrection.

And it was in that moment on Easter, that the first Christians began to work out a totally new model of knowledge, a totally new understanding about the structures of reality, and the universe, and the future, and how all of that bears on our present life.

And so, if you're exploring Christianity, I want to invite you to explore the evidence, consider the data, but then I'd like to ask you to take one step beyond that, and call out to Jesus.

[ 14 : 28 ] If he's real, and if he's alive, ask him to show you that he's real, and that he's alive. Ask him to reveal these new, unprecedented powers to you, and see what he'll do.

If you're a Christian, and you believe in the resurrection, I wish we had time to talk about the profound implications for our lives, but I'll give you one. If Jesus is actually raised from the dead, if he really got up, and walked out of the tomb, and appeared to many people, and talked to hundreds of them, then everything in our lives is going to be okay.

The resurrected body of Jesus is the beginning of God's new creation. And he is the pledge, that the whole material order is going to be resurrected.

There are plenty of religions that talk about a future afterlife, and a non-material world, that will give us consolations for this world that we've lost.

But Christianity talks about bodies that are resurrected, and beyond that, a world that will be resurrected, and cleansed from evil, sin, death, and sorrow.

[15:38] And that means for us, that you don't need to live in FOMO. You do not need to live with the fear of missing out, because the resurrection means that not only are you going to be restored, the life that you've lost, you're going to be given the life that you never had, but that you always wanted.

We have the hope of a new bodily reality in a newly remade world. Jesus is the preview of those coming attractions. The disciples are staring at the prototype of incorruptible physicality.

And if that is what is going to happen to all of us here, then you can take more courageous risks. You can more confidently bind yourself in constraining commitments.

You can make sacrifices of your time, your talents, and your treasures, because you know you're going to get it all back and more. And it's this Easter faith, this resurrection faith, that sent the first disciples out, and they turned the world upside down, because they believed that this was true.

So be careful with the resurrected Jesus, because he doubts your doubts. The risen Christ doubts your doubts. And beyond that, he sends us out with the biblical gospel.

[17:00] The risen Christ sends us out with the biblical gospel. He says in verse 44, 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. And then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures.

He talked about this last week, how Jesus was adamant to open the scriptures to the minds of his friends, his disciples.

And here he is at it again, because this is what he always does with us. And he says in verse 46, he told them, this is what is written about the Messiah.

And that, in a resurrection church, in a life, a giving, a live church, is our key phrase. Right? It is written. It is written.

[17:57] It is written. That's what Christ is always saying. And what he, his major task is to open up for us, our minds, to the open pages of the scriptures.

And he says, these three sections of the Hebrew Bible, all point to the Messiah, and therefore they all point to me. And he's telling them now about the gospel, which is first and foremost, a biblical gospel.

Jesus would spend 40 days after the resurrection with his disciples, and he would outline for them the basic truths of this biblical gospel, so that he could delegate them to go out and take that good news to the whole world.

And so what I want to show you over the next few minutes is that this biblical gospel is like a multifaceted diamond. And I want you to see some of these facets that shine in all their brilliance. Jesus first points out that, this facet of the diamond, which is the gospel event. The gospel event of the crucifixion and resurrection.

[19:00] He says in verse 46, the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.

That's our good news. It's a historical event about a Savior who took our place and died the death we should have died and bore our sin and our cursedness and our condemnation on the cross instead of us.

And then the resurrection is not the reversal of that defeat. It's rather a manifestation of that victory. That on his cross, Jesus triumphed over sin and he trampled on death and he conquered over the powers of evil.

So at the heart of Easter joy are the sufferings of Christ whose substitutionary death was vindicated and approved and approved by God for us.

The resurrection is proof that when Jesus cried out on the cross, it is finished that he once and for all paid our cosmic debt in full.

That then and there, he won redemption for us. And that's why Jesus says in verse 48, you are the witnesses of these things. We're to witness not to our experience of the life-changing power of God or the peace of God in our heart.

[ 20 : 19 ] The gospel is about bearing witness to an event before an experience. The event of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. So Jesus' gospel is about an event and then he talks about this aspect of the diamond, the gospel offer, which is the forgiveness of sins.

He says in verse 47, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. Good news is about salvation for sinners.

The central meaning of salvation is the forgiveness of our sins and there is no greater gift that could be given than the full and perfect pardon of God himself.

Forgiveness is what reconciles me to my creator God and assures me that I share in the divine, eternal, abundant life of God himself.

Forgiveness is what makes me not an outsider but now an insider. It turns me from a rebel into a son or a daughter. It brings me into the family of God and puts me in a right relationship with my heavenly father so that I'm now at home and at rest and at peace in his healing heart of love.

[ 21 : 39 ] That's the gospel offer. It's the gospel event of the crucifixion and resurrection, the gospel offer of the forgiveness of sins and then Jesus talks about the gospel demand of repentance.

Another facet of the diamond. You can't have the gospel offer of forgiveness without the gospel demand of repentance. You can't have Jesus' invitation without Jesus' challenge which is this, if we want God to turn from our sins in forgiveness then we must turn from our sins in repentance.

We can't have reconciliation with God unless we turn back from our rebellion against him. There's no possibility of peace without a decommissioning of weapons, without a laying down of our arms before God and a surrendering of our own self-seeking and self-determination.

The word Jesus uses here for repent is metanoia. You've got to change your mind. You can't be forgiven if you're clinging to the old mind and all the life of sin that flows out of that mind.

You must change your mind. You must take on the mind of Christ himself. So the gospel event, the gospel offer, the gospel demand and then Jesus goes to gospel authority and he says, I want you to go out in verse 47, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.

[ 23 : 11 ] Christianity in one word is not love, it's not peace, it's just Jesus. Christianity in one word is Christ Christ. Because his name bears and reveals his person and his work.

One of his first sermons in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter says this, he says, salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.

Perhaps you've heard the phrase, preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words.

words. But Jesus says we must use words, particularly this one word of his name which carries with it the event, the offer, and the demand that his name represents.

We've not shared the gospel if we haven't shared the name and we haven't given people an opportunity to call upon the name for when we call upon and we invoke the name of the resurrected Lord, we are calling upon him to apply to us the gospel and all of its benefits to would-be forgiven sinners.

So Jesus is giving us his diamond, the gospel event, the gospel offer, the gospel demand, the gospel authority and then he tells us the gospel audience which is to all the nations.

[ 24 : 37 ] The word is all the ethnos, all the ethnics. I want my message and my movement to go out to the whole human race, the whole human family and all of its diverse multitude of tribes, nations, peoples, and languages because I want to transcend and therefore transform all of these ethnic, cultural particularities to bring every people group into the fullness of what God originally intended them to be and to become.

Jesus, we're told, is the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the whole world and therefore he's sending out his church as a missionary to society to that world and when he does that he does not suggest that the world can get on all right with all the other religions.

He does not suggest that there's another name by which the world can be saved. Doubting Thomas became believing Thomas and what did he do?

He took the gospel to India and he got there by 52 AD about 20 years after the resurrection of Jesus. The church would take the gospel south to Africa, north to the peoples of Eurasia, west to Italy and Spain and they would go to all of these nations and say to them your understanding of God, your understanding of the world and the moral law and the way of salvation is incomplete and every time there was a gospel explosion and they turned the world upside down because they said the true God has come and therefore all of your gods must be dethroned.

They must be thrown down. We tend to focus in that story on the apostles who took the gospel to the ends of the earth and we forget all of those ordinary Christians, everyday men and women like us who didn't go to the end of the world and they just went next door to their friends, their neighbors, their coworkers and they said let me tell you about the unsearchable riches of Christ and I think I'm afraid many of us, myself included, think about doing that here in the Bay Area and we go that's impossible.

[ 26 : 57 ] No one's going to believe us. That's why Jesus ends with gospel power. He talks about the gospel event of the crucifixion and resurrection, the gospel offer of the forgiveness of sins, the gospel demand of repentance, gospel authority in his name, the gospel audience of all the nations but then he ends with gospel power, the gospel power of the Holy Spirit.

He says in verse 49, I am going to send you what my father has promised but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

These are people who have borne witness to the resurrection. They're there with the risen Christ himself but he says you are not yet fit to go out with your own meager resources and in your own human weakness you must wait to receive the essential clothing of the Holy Spirit.

When you become a Christian you receive the Holy Spirit but all of us need a fresh filling of his power if we're going to share the gospel among the people with whom we live work and play. A church that neglects the Holy Spirit will be ineffective at sharing the gospel because it's the Holy Spirit who convicts us that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

[ 28 : 19 ] It's the Holy Spirit who opens blind eyes to see that Jesus himself is that heaven sent Savior that we need. It's the Holy Spirit who draws people to Jesus enabling them to repent and believe and it's the Holy Spirit who implants life into dead souls causing the miracle of new birth from above to take place.

So this is the diamond that Jesus has given to his church the multifaceted diamond of the biblical gospel. And I want to close with just two words of application.

first of all Jesus does not focus here on caring for the poor and doing the work of justice and mercy. He does not focus on socioeconomic reform through public policy or education and building schools or healing the sick and building hospitals.

The church does all of those things rightly and instinctively as an extension of the life and the ministry of Jesus and in obedience to his command to love not only God but to love our neighbor as ourselves.

But what I want you to know Christ Church is that the great commission is the one central supreme essential non-negotiable task that Jesus has given to us his church.

[ 29 : 44 ] This has not to do with the obvious visible material needs of people because our problem as human beings is much deeper than that.

Jesus gets at the deeper invisible spiritual needs of all people namely to be reconciled with God and to be put in a right relationship with him.

From that fountainhead will flow all kind of good works for the poor and the marginalized and the sick and the uneducated. And so our primary task as pastors is to keep the church focused and faithful on the primary task that Jesus has given to us.

This is our first priority. It's the one job the resurrected Christ has given to his church is to proclaim the gospel to the nations. The one thing that we cannot do is save ourselves.

We can't save ourselves from sin. We can't save ourselves from death. We can't save ourselves from eternal loss. Only God can do that and therefore there is no hope for this world and all of her troubles unless people are first put into a right relationship with God.

[ 31 : 03 ] My second word of application and I'll end. I talk too much about tennis. I'm sorry. We'll end here. Jesus came to procure salvation but it's not much used to procure salvation without a community who's willing to proclaim it.

We are his representatives. We are his ambassadors here in Berkeley and Oakland and beyond and I want you to think about all the good news you proclaimed this last month. The good news of vaccines, the good news of Netflix, the good news of tacos and cheap airline tickets.

Amen? I want you to think about all the good news that you've witnessed to this past week. Flowers that are blooming, the NCAA final four, spring break, Christchurch, Jesus has given us better news. He's given us the best news that there is and he sent us to the Bay Area as a missionary society where the news about Jesus is so distorted and misunderstood and caricatured and just flatly unknown.

And so like that fragile little group of 120 disciples that were waiting there in the supper room on the power of the Holy Spirit, we are being sent out. We are being commissioned where God has put us in people's lives and social networks and relational circles to share this good news.

[ 32 : 30 ] We are commissioned. It's the whole reason I moved to Berkeley in the first place. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for this text and this reality. We are commissioned. as the early church was commissioned to proclaim to all of humankind among all the nations repentance and the forgiveness of sins on the basis of the name of Jesus who died and was raised to life according to the scriptures of the Old and New Testament in the power of the Holy Spirit that's been given to each one of us.

That's our job. That's our job. The risen Christ has come to doubt our doubts and he sent us out with one job and that is to proclaim the biblical gospel.

May it be so among us in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.