

Proclaiming the Resurrection

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 April 2022

Preacher: Mark Chew

[0 : 0 0] We are encouraging people to go back to using their own Bibles, whether the ones in front of them or the ones you bring or the ones on your phone, least preferred maybe.

And so we'll not be putting up the verses on the screen anymore, but rather for you to look into your Bibles and hopefully be able to see the context as well of the verses as they come up.

There should be an outline as well in your newsletters, something to follow along. Nothing too complicated, but it will help you keep tabs on where I'm at in the sermon.

Well, hopefully not too much was lost in translation last Sunday when I sort of preached to you via the recording. Nevertheless, I hope that the main point of the sermon was clear enough.

And I don't know if anyone, I hesitate to ask anyone, I want to say what the main point is. Maybe let me just say it. But the main point I was trying to get across was that through scriptures, it is through scriptures that we can have full confidence in the resurrection.

[1 : 0 9] Jesus really did rise from the dead. And we don't have to touch his hands or his feet to know. Nor do we need to see him in the flesh. The trustworthiness of God's word and the promises in it is enough.

We can have confidence of the resurrection through the scriptures. That's the main point. And Luke in his gospel demonstrates this with a consistent picture in each of the encounters that we saw in Luke chapter 24.

Each time we find the disciples reacting firstly with surprise. Then the understanding is transformed with instruction.

Instruction by having their minds opened to scripture. But then one further thing happens in each of the encounters. And that is they become witnesses.

So if you look at the top of your outline, those are the three things. Surprise, instruction, and then witness. And so for the women, they ran to the apostles to tell them to witness what they saw.

[2 : 1 8] The two in Emmaus rush back to Jerusalem, seven miles, to tell the twelve or the eleven. And in the passage that we will look at closely today, Jesus instructs the disciples to witness or that they are witnesses of these things.

Now there's something about things happening in threes, isn't it? Hat tricks. So we celebrate the bowler's hat trick in cricket. Especially Shane Warren's. How many he had, I don't know, I can't remember, but there was one famous one.

Or a striker's hat trick in soccer. Recently someone just published that Ronaldo has had 50 plus, is that right, Ryan?

Over his career. Hat tricks in a match. Now if it happens once, you know, we'll go, ah, no big deal. Twice, and we think, oh, perhaps that's coincidental.

But three times, and that must be legit, isn't it? It must be intentional. Likewise, this pattern of surprise, instruction, and witness happens three times because Luke is intentionally trying to tell us or give us a lesson from it.

[3 : 34] The witness of the witness of the women and the two at Emmaus may have done it spontaneously. But in the third encounter, Jesus normalizes the behavior and expectation of behavior.

So let's look now at verses 44 to 49 to see exactly what instruction Jesus gives to them. So verse 44, we again have the reminder, as we saw last week, that all of this is happening in precise fulfillment of the scriptures.

This is what I told you while I was still with you, Jesus said. 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. Again, 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 Jerusalem.

Now, what I want you to notice here, however, is that unlike the first two times that this occurs, Jesus now expands beyond the mere fulfillment of the events.

[4 : 48] He expands it to include an explanation of its significance. That is, Jesus didn't just say that his rising from the dead was foretold by scripture, but rather that Jesus rose from the dead for a reason.

Not just to show how powerful God is or how amazing the Son is, but rather to say that the purpose is so that there could be repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

So this, then, is the important implication of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus rose from the dead that we may have life and be restored in our relationship with God.

We no longer have sin hanging over our heads as a death sentence. But more than that, Jesus is also saying that this great news of forgiveness is to be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

This good news is not just for Israel, but for all humanity, all nations. And the one thing we mustn't miss here is that this is really one long sentence, which means that the preaching of the message of repentance and forgiveness is part of what was written beforehand in the scriptures.

[6 : 15] Do you see that? It's not just that the Messiah will rise, suffer and rise in three days that is being foretold, but rather also the repentance for the forgiveness of sins, beginning at Jerusalem, then to all the nations.

That, too, is part of what is written beforehand. God's big plan wasn't just the event of the resurrection. It also included the preaching that follows.

That is part and parcel of God's plan of salvation. Now, you may then ask, where is this found in the Old Testament, this second part? Well, there are various places, but one of them is in that passage that we saw today, the Old Testament passage that we read, Isaiah 49.

There, the servant will be glorified. And part of what he will achieve is actually spelt out in verse 6. God is saying that he's got something much bigger in mind.

Restoring Israel is too small a project for him. What is that bigger picture? Well, it's spelled out next. And so, brothers and sisters, if you believe in the resurrection, as I'm sure many of you do, because of the witness of Scripture, then you should also believe in God's mission and purpose that arises out of that resurrection.

[7 : 55] It's no good simply to come to church each Sunday, to praise God and sing the praise of Christ's resurrection, and then play no part in the proclamation of that resurrection.

Do you see what I'm saying? If you want to believe in Jesus, then part of it is to also then believe in God's plan of proclamation beyond that as well.

Now, what part can we play? Well, I think many of us already do some of this stuff, so good on you for that. But, for example, firstly, we ought to support global missions.

Organizations that we support, like CMS and Pioneers, are agencies that help the church enable the gospel to be preached to all nations. Other organizations do the same thing, but in a slightly different way.

So they don't focus so much on sending people from here to there, but rather they train local pastors and leaders so that they're better equipped to grow the church in their own country.

[9 : 03] So, for example, we support Ronald and Mary Suar in Myanmar. They work at the Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, and they train pastors as part of their work.

And they can do it effectively because they understand their own culture. They speak the same language. They understand their context much better than sending someone who's not lived in that country or grown up in that country before.

And Bible colleges in Australia, here in Melbourne and around in Asia as well, are increasingly adopting this method of training pastors, perhaps bringing them here for a season, and then sending them back home to be effective workers and preachers of the gospel.

And so even down in university with AFES and Christian Union, they intentionally reach out to foreign students, international students, and have a fellowship and sort of ministry directed at them because the aim is that hopefully when these students will become Christian, finish their studies and are trained up in the gospel and return home, they can then serve their churches better where they've gone back home to.

And so let me encourage you, if you're not already doing this, to pray and even set aside some of your giving to support work like this. This is part and parcel of preaching the gospel to the nations.

[10 : 26] But secondly, let's not forget that we here in Australia, we're also part of the nations, aren't we? We're not Jerusalem, we're part of the nations. So Jesus refers to us in that sentence in Luke, isn't it?

And preaching and proclaiming the gospel for the people here who live in Australia is very much part of Jesus' mission for us as a church.

And so I think as a church, we need to also be thinking about how we're doing that each Sunday. And certainly, as we gather each Sunday, I hope to do my part to be faithfully preaching the gospel.

And I don't presume that when people come to church that they're all Christians and therefore they know the gospel. But I want to, each week, if I can, sometimes the text allows it more than others, to be presenting the gospel and encouraging people who have not yet put their trust in Jesus to do so.

And so if you're here today and you haven't put, then that's my invitation to you, to put your trust in Jesus who is risen from the dead. If you want to know more and you need to work things out a bit more, then come talk to me, come talk to some of the leaders, and we'll be more than willing to help you to do that.

[11 : 46] But part of the way this works for me to keep preaching faithfully is also that I'm dependent on you, aren't I? To be inviting your friends and your family members to come, not just to church on Sunday, but to other events that we may have so that they get a chance to hear the gospel.

I don't know your friends, and you have the network, so you need to bring them into church or into our gathering in order for us to be doing that. And often we think that, oh, you know, they might not come or, you know, they wouldn't be interested.

But the fact of the matter is that if we don't ask, we'll never know, would we? And yes, we do face the prospect of being rejected, but that's a small thing to pay, isn't it?

To just be rejected. When the payoff might be that they might come and they might hear this fantastic news of Jesus and salvation in Him. So let me encourage you to think about that.

I know we've sort of not been able to do that because of lockdown and all that, but now that we're now gathering and, you know, restrictions are, you know, being lifted and all that, we can start again to get back into the habit, as we've always been doing prior to lockdown, of inviting people to come to church.

[13 : 01] It doesn't need to be a special occasion. If I'm doing my job and being faithful in preaching the gospel and proclaiming the gospel, and you can as well as you're talking to each other, then we don't need a special event, do we, for people to come to church.

But also, the other thing that we need to think about is not just on Sunday, but the rest of the week as well, because all of us are being sent, aren't we? As Christ's ambassadors during the week.

And I know that, you know, many of us are comfortable to pray and even support financially other people sharing the gospel, but the thought of us, ourselves doing it in our workplaces or in our neighborhood just seems rather daunting or scary for some of you.

And if you feel that way, then let me say that I have the same, I have sympathy for you because I do feel the same way as well, believe it or not. Sharing the gospel is not easy and I have the same feelings of inadequacy.

And besides, here in Australia, the environment is getting more and more challenging because more and more people are, actually many of them who have rejected the gospel, not so much those people who have never heard the gospel, are finding it, becoming a bit more hostile to Christians being able to preach the gospel.

[14 : 29] So it is getting more challenging. But before we quickly, too quickly shrug it off as being too hard, I want us to look again at the examples of the disciples to see what is the thing that drove them to witness in the first place.

So as I said, the women and Cleopas did it spontaneously. But even if you look at verse 50, after Jesus had left them in Bethany, the disciples returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy, didn't they?

And what they did was continually praise God in the temple. So if you imagine, this is a motley crew of, I don't know, maybe 50 or 100 disciples. They were in the temple.

This is the Jewish temple. And there they were, praising God for what had happened, what they had witnessed in the resurrection of Jesus. I don't know, but it probably wasn't easy.

They probably stood out, didn't they, like a sore thumb. But I think what this shows was that their witness was not something that was forced upon them. Even though Jesus said, do this, this is something that they were motivated to do.

[15 : 32] Why? Because of the overwhelming joy that they experienced in discovering that Jesus is alive. And then when their minds were open to Scripture, and they understood exactly what the implications were, they were all the more willing to do so.

What has happened for them is that they've been gripped by this life-changing reality of Christ's resurrection. And they realized the far-reaching implications for themselves and also for the world.

You see, for generations, Israel have had that hope and dream of God sending a Messiah to save them. They had carried that hope in their hearts for a long time. And now, with their minds open to Scripture and seeing what's happened, it finally dawns on them that this is finally coming to pass.

This is the moment. Jesus was the Messiah, their Lord and Savior, the one they've been waiting for all time. And so, no wonder this amazing revelation spurs them on to witness.

They can't help but share it with others. Now, I hope that you have that same revelation and therefore that same motivation to drive you because you realize just how amazing Jesus being alive is for you and for the world.

[16:56] Yes, having the skills and the training to share the gospel, you know, we think it matters. But actually, what's more important, what's more essential is to have this inner motivation because of what God has done in your lives.

Now, MasterChef 2022 is finally on. Jess, you've been waiting for this, no doubt. So, the illustrations and analogies from that show will start coming thick and fast over the coming weeks.

So, I thought I'll start this week. But, you know, as I've been watching this opening week, it is clear, isn't it, that the contestants serve as an inspiration to a lot of others to become cooks and chefs.

It may not inspire you, but certainly it's inspired a lot of people. Now, why is that? Is it just their skill and creativity? Well, maybe. But I think at the core, rather, the thing that is infectious is their love for cooking, isn't it?

It spurs their creativity. It spurs their desire to want to improve. It's that love, isn't it, that inspires others to follow after them.

[18:04] And if you think about it, it's the same with a lot of other things, like music or sport or any interest that you have. It's people that have a passion for that particular thing that are best able to convince others to take it up.

I had a spare moment in the afternoon to watch Gardening Australia. And imagine if you had presenters on Gardening Australia who are not interested in gardening. I mean, would that work?

No. I mean, even me that has no interest in gardening got interested by just watching the program. It's that infectious, isn't it? And that's the same for the Christian faith, isn't it?

If we ourselves are convinced of the Christian faith, we're deeply impacted by the gospel, then that is the thing that is spurring us on to tell others, isn't it?

We may not think we've got the gift or the skill, but it's actually our convictions that are more important. That is more important by far because that's what God's going to use to move others to change and persuade them rather than any sort of fancy skill or gift that we have.

[19:16] So the thing is, we just need to be open for the Lord to use us. And I believe that when we are, we don't have to wait too long before God shows us what the next steps might be.

It's not going to be some grand plan or whatever. A lot of times, it's just very small and simple steps that we can take in and where we're already at in our relationships that we already have. God will open our eyes to the opportunities that exist.

I think I've shared this many years ago, but for me, it was just, I don't do that anymore, but just going to the hairdresser and the barber. All right? I don't pay 20 bucks now for that because it's not a waste of money.

But it used to be I had more hair. And so there I was. You know, I didn't want to be there. I was waiting. There was awkward silence as she was cutting my hair. And so she felt she needed to start talking to me.

And so there we go. And before you know it, we just wandered onto a conversation about Jesus and God. So, you know, a lot of times we place a lot of undue expectations on ourselves and we feel pressured to succeed, that we've got to have people.

[20 : 23] But all of that is sort of incidental, is it? God will sort of open the doors and provide that we're willing to, for the Lord to use us. And yes, willing to sometimes be rejected and to make, to be look a bit awkward and foolish.

But if we're willing for that, God will show us each and every step how we can, those opportunities will arise. And I believe God will use us because Jesus then next promises the disciples here in verse 49 that we wouldn't be left to fend for ourselves.

Just as he does in that corresponding passage in Acts chapter 1 verse 11, Jesus promised his disciples the power of the Holy Spirit. So here in verse 49, he told his disciples, I'm going to send you what my Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

That power is the power of the Spirit. And we have that same promise. So we're not asked to bear witness to Jesus out of our own strength, but rather God himself empowers us by his Spirit.

And this ought to be a great comfort and encouragement to us because our effectiveness will be underpinned by God. We don't need to worry about how good we are.

[21 : 38] Or how successful our words are at persuading others. God himself will take what we say and either change the hearts of people or not. That's not our responsibility.

God's sovereign work is to change people's hearts. And so that is his prerogative. We just need to be faithful. Now, I know I've just said that, you know, skills and gifts and all, it's not the big thing, but it doesn't imply then that training and practice is of no value.

It is. The Spirit uses God's Word. And so the more we are soaked in God's Word and the more we're equipped to use God's Word, then the more effective we'll be. And I've shared recently that, you know, we've had to scale back a lot of outreach activities and training over the last two years because of COVID.

But now that things are returning back to where they were, then hopefully we'll be able to kickstart some of this stuff. So some of the people in this congregation have come up to me to say that they're eager to do that.

And so they've formed a little small group to plan some training and then some outreach activities that can go with that. So my hope is that we'll be able to think through what's appropriate for us now.

[22 : 57] And then afterwards, my prayer is that you guys will join in because we need to do this as a church. It's not just one or two gifted people going out and doing it by the way.

This is something that God has given to us as a church. And some of us will be gifted at this, others at that. But together, if we work together, that is what the Lord wants us to do, to be witnesses for Him.

And so to start with, we will plan some training, even down to the very basics of understanding what the Gospel is, what the Bible says about evangelism, how to share your testimony, how to read the Bible with someone who's not a Christian, and then maybe something more challenging as well, understanding other worldviews and religions.

We haven't quite worked it out. But over the coming months, hopefully we'll be able to roll out some of this stuff and then when it does, I do pray and hope that you give time and effort to come along and be part of this.

It's great that we grow as a church by other Christians joining our church, but our great love is to see people who are outside the kingdom, isn't it, become Christians as well.

[24 : 05] That is a major difference, isn't it? Someone coming from another church is saved to saved, but someone coming outside the kingdom, into the kingdom, is someone who will find eternal life for the very first time in their lives.

And that, to me, is exciting. And I want us to be part of that. But in the meantime, if you can't wait, there are books you could read. I'm a bit rusty now, so talk to some of your leaders about what the latest Fandango books are.

They've probably got better titles than me, but I happened to look on my shelf and there was one good one that I was reading through as I was going through college. It's actually about, you know, more than 30 years old, actually, so probably older than many of you.

But it's by John Chapman. Know and tell the gospel. It's a very basic starter, but a really good one. So if you want to borrow it from me, just come and grab it after church. But by way of conclusion, I think the main thing, as I come back to it again, is that we need to have this willingness to be used by God.

We've been so changed by it that we want to be part of it, don't we? And then if we are, then the next thing then is just to be prayerful and to start or restart in some small way by asking the Lord to guide us as to what we should do.

[25 : 21] Now, I've used this analogy before, but I'm going to use it again because I think it's appropriate. When Jesus rose from the dead more than 2,000 years ago now, or maybe just slightly less, a seismic event occurred, the effects of which are still reverberating across history.

Something fundamental, you know, caused a seismic shift in the whole of human history occurred when Jesus rose from the dead. And the ripple effects of it we are still experiencing today and will continue to experience until the end of the world.

It's like dropping a huge rock into a still lake or pond. And then you see the ripples go out. That's what I think is happening.

The rock was the event of Jesus rising from the dead. And the ripple effect is to see the witness of the gospel go out through time and place and history and for people like us to hear it and become Christians.

Just imagine this. 2,000 years ago, the epicenter was Jerusalem. The rock dropped and now it's reached to the very ends of the earth, hasn't it?

[26 : 43] It's come all the way here, 2,000 years later, to Melbourne, which is probably as far from Jerusalem as you can get in one sense. And you and I are sitting here and we know that Jesus rose from the dead.

Just think about that. Now, how did that happen? It happened because somebody told you about Jesus, right? And that somebody heard about Jesus from somebody else, from somebody else, from somebody else.

It's that chain of ripple effects that goes all the way back to the 12 apostles, to the women, to the two Adamas who saw and then passed it on. We are the beneficiaries, aren't we, of that ripple effect.

And God's not going to stop that work. Doesn't matter whether it's COVID, change of governments, whatever. That effect, that ripple effect, is not going to stop. But, think for a moment if there was an obstacle in that lake.

Maybe another huge rock. Can you imagine when the ripple goes to that rock? What happens? I think scientifically this is what happens. The ripples continue beyond that rock, isn't it?

[27 : 49] But then behind the rock, there's no more ripple, is there? It stops with the rock, isn't it? And so, we have that same choice, don't we? Are we going to be part of that ripple effect?

Or are we going to be that rock, that obstacle? It comes to us, we say thank you, and then nothing happens beyond that. That is the question for us, isn't it?

God will continue to do his work. As it is said, it is written, forgiveness of sins will be preached to the ends of the world, beginning in Jerusalem.

The question for us is, will we be part of that or not? Let's pray. Father, thank you that because Jesus is alive, we too have the eternal, the hope of eternal life that comes from being forgiven and restored in relationship with you.

Warm our hearts so that it catches fire to the passion of the gospel and wanting to see it proclaimed to all nations and to all people. Give us a heart to see those we love come to know Jesus.

[28 : 59] In your mercy, turn their hearts so that they may respond by faith in repentance when they hear the good news of Jesus. In his precious name we pray. Amen.