

The King has Risen

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[0 : 00] I want to start with a question and if you could please keep Luke chapter 24 open. Here's a question to chat with the person next to you about, can you keep a secret? Over to you.

I wonder what you said. Can you keep a secret? Everyone thinks they can, you know. I saw lots of, but if we were to ask the people around you, people close to you, how good your abilities are, what do you think they would say?

I saw lots of husbands elbowing their wives, lots of wives rolling their eyes at their husbands. Let's test this out. Would you keep it a secret if you won Tatts Lotto?

Depends how much, doesn't it? Anything more than five bucks, no one's getting in here. Would you keep it a secret if you found out something scandalous about someone you knew? Would you keep it a secret if you found the cure for a disease?

I guess the logical rule is this. Harmful things keep it a secret. Things that could damage our reputation keep it a secret. But helpful things tell people.

[1 : 22] That's the rule. It's an important question because in our passage today, we'll meet a bunch of people who break the rule when it comes to secrets. These people meet the risen Jesus alive again that first Easter morning, alive again after being publicly executed by the state just on Friday.

It was personally dangerous to be associated with Jesus. The climate against him is still very hot. But instead of keeping it a secret, as the rule suggests, they break the rule and they tell people. It's important for us too because 2,000 years later, the climate against Christianity is still pretty hot. Ask any of those Chinese Christians we sent back to the mainland what Christianity is like for them. Talking about Jesus in Melbourne, quoting the Bible publicly, especially on social media, lands you in hot water. The rule says harmful things keep it a secret.

But by the end of this passage, we'll see why and how we can break the secret or break the rule too. Why and how we can break the rule.

[2 : 36] Luke is going to show us three episodes, three groups of people who meet the risen Jesus. There's the women at the tomb. There's the two men on the Emmaus Road. And then there's the disciples meeting Jesus in that room.

On the screen, thanks, Gwyneth. On the screen, you can see that each episode is a repeating cycle. And it's also on your handout. Your handout's got more information.

And you can see that each episode is the same repeating cycle of confusion, revelation, certainty, and then proclamation. And just before we go any further, I hope that structure there shows you that the Bible is not a series of rumors and whispers.

But it's structured and ordered with a purpose. Luke's purpose is the next slide, please, Gwyneth. Next one. That's Luke's purpose.

Luke gathers eyewitness accounts, not rumors, about publicly known things that other people have also undertaken to draw an account of. Luke wants to write an orderly account.

[3 : 44] So at the bottom, the reader may know the certainty of Jesus' life. Luke's gospel is very purposeful. He wants certainty. Thank you, Gwyneth.

And you can see on your handout, Luke's logic in each episode is this. People are confused about Jesus' death and resurrection. They get some revelation.

That revelation leads them to certainty. Certainty enough that they wouldn't keep it a secret but break the rule and tell others. And so please keep your handouts with you.

Please keep your Bibles open at Luke 24. Let's look at episode 1, the women at the tomb, verse 1 to 12. I'll start reading from verse 1. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

These women are the same women from verse 55 and 56, the top of the page. The same women who saw the tomb and saw how Jesus' body was laid in it. The next day, clearly, they have got the right tomb.

[4 : 48] They prepared spices. They're going to anoint Jesus' body. Clearly, they're expecting his dead body. But instead, they meet some angels. Now, unlike the movies, angels are not sort of overweight babies with wings.

Angels in the Bible are terrifying creatures. And the women were afraid. The angel says in verse 5, Why do you look for the living amongst the dead?

He is not here. He is risen. The women were confused. Let's look at Revelation. Verse 6.

Remember how he told you? While he was still with you in Galilee.

The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again. Then they remembered his words. That's Revelation.

Certainty. In Luke's Gospel, three times in his own words, Jesus predicted his death. Now, you don't have to be God to predict your own death.

[5 : 49] I'm going to do it right now. So, I predict that if I go to certain parts of Syria wearing my, you know, my clergy dog collar and stuff, I predict that I will be killed. I predict that if I go to Melbourne Airport with an old ticking clock and some wires hanging out of my jacket, I will be shot.

I predict that if I eat cheesecake, I will die. Horrible stuff, cheesecake. It's cheese and a cake. It should not be put together. Very sinful. I'm only joking.

I'm only joking. But the point is, you don't have to be God to predict your own death. It's quite easy to do. But you do to predict your own resurrection.

I dare anyone to stake their reputation to start a religion based off your own resurrection. That three days later, you will rise again.

That's exactly what Jesus did. In all the Gospels, he predicts his death and his resurrection. In his own words, Jesus claimed to be the son of man. That's God's ruling king.

[6 : 52] The women have found an empty tomb. The evidence is that Jesus' rule extends even over death. He is the son of man. Historians will tell you that in the first century, a woman's testimony was not admissible in court.

That means if you're going to start a religion about a resurrection, the last, you would never use women as eyewitnesses back then. Unless, of course, it happened that way.

Luke names the women in verse 10. For seemingly no reason. Historians will tell you that's Luke naming his eyewitness sources. Luke wants you to have certainty.

This certainty led the women to tell the remaining disciples that Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

That's what we say. This was news too good to keep a secret.

That is proclamation. Proclamation. Let's look at the second episode. In this episode, we meet two men. They're on the road to Emmaus.

[7 : 58] They were followers of Jesus. They've just had an awful weekend. They're very sad because the Jesus they followed had just been killed. This is confusion.

But then he shows up. And we're told in verse 16 that their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, what are you discussing together as you walk along?

They were confused by his question. Verse 18. Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days? They were confused about the women's testimony.

That's verses 22 and 24. But more than anything, they are confused about how the Jesus they followed could suffer and die.

Verse 21. We had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel. They are confused. And so, Revelation comes.

[8 : 54] Verse 25. He said to them, how foolish you are. And how slow to believe. All that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. I'm always telling people how important Bible studies are.

But imagine this week when you go to your Bible study group, if Jesus showed up to actually lead the study. What kind of study would that be? Pretty amazing stuff. Jesus said these men were foolish and slow to believe.

They were foolish to be sad as if Jesus' death was his end. They were slow to believe. Verse 26. That the Messiah had to suffer.

Verse 7 says, the Son of Man must be delivered over the hands of sinners and crucified. Verse 46 says, the Messiah will suffer.

[9 : 53] Jesus' death was necessary. It was a must. It had to happen. These men were foolish to be sad that somehow God's plans had gone wrong.

You see, this was the only way to rescue God's people. Jesus' death for our sin. His innocence for our guilt. He was pierced for our transgressions, we say, from Isaiah.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. That's what we heard on Good Friday. If they read Moses and the prophets, they would know the only payment for sin is death.

Moses says, the blood of a spotless lamb will do the trick. That's Jesus from the Old Testament. His blood for ours. His resurrection means his payment works.

Death cannot keep his prey. We just sung that in the song. These men were foolish to be sad as if God's plans had gone wrong.

[11 : 01] As if the God of the Old Testament wasn't able to raise Jesus from the dead. They were slow to believe. They were confused. And so, Revelation, verse 27.

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. That's Revelation. Verse 31. After Jesus broke the bread, then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

It's a really strange thing, isn't it? That they followed Jesus for years. They walked seven miles to Emmaus with him. They ate dinner with him. But they still didn't recognize his face. That's a very odd thing, isn't it?

It's strange they can only see him once he breaks the bread. But I think that happens for us. That is for our benefit here in this room.

You see, unless you're 2,000 years old, which I don't think anyone is, no one here in this room has seen Jesus face to face. Does that mean we can be less certain that he is alive?

[12 : 03] The answer is no. The answer is no. Because as soon as these men recognized Jesus, end of verse 31, it says he disappeared from their sight.

It wasn't knowing his face that did the trick. What they really needed was their scriptures, just as we do today. Luke says that Bible revelation is more important than facial recognition.

Bible revelation, more important than facial recognition. To prove this, look at verse 32. These men asked each other, were not our hearts burning within us while he talked?

While we got his words on the road with us? While he opened the scriptures to us? Not when we saw his face, per se. But when he spoke to us, when the Bible was open to us.

Not facial recognition, but Bible revelation that causes your hearts to burn. That is great news for us here in this room.

[13 : 10] Because as long as you have Moses and the prophets, that's the Old Testament, you have everything they had. Yeah, they got to speak with Jesus face to face.

They had conversations with him. But revelation from the scriptures is what they really needed. In fact, our scriptures, what we call the scriptures, includes their testimony.

We call it the New Testament, don't we? It means this, that Jesus doesn't need to show up at home or in your kitchen or at work for people to be certain.

Luke says you can meet him every day face to face when the word is open. It's Bible revelation that leads to certainty.

In fact, they were so certain. Verse 33, they got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. They went back on foot at night, seven miles at once. That's a very dangerous journey at nighttime.

[14 : 11] Risking personal safety, going to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven with those around them, assembled together and saying, it is true. The Lord is risen.

That is proclamation. Let's look at the final episode, episode three. Jesus with his disciples in Jerusalem. Verse 36. 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? Why do doubts rise in your mind? You see, they think they're seeing a ghost. That's confusion.

And so here comes some help for that. Verse 39 to 43. Three pieces of evidence. I call them the three ghost tests. Have you ever seen a ghost?

No one will believe you. It's like when you say, I can really keep a secret. No one believes you. If you ever see a ghost, this is what you should do. First thing, the first test, try touching the ghost.

[15:13] Jesus says, verse 39. 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 that I have.

That's the first test. Second test. He invites them to check out his hands and his feet. Where they put the nails in when he was crucified. I'm not just any human body.

I'm the same body that you saw on Friday. Killed. Here's the third test. This is the best one. This is the eating test. So next time you're walking to the toilet at 3am, as we all do, and you see a ghost, you know, you see a ghost.

I want you to do this. I want you to ask the ghost to eat a tin of tuna. Some fish. Now, if they eat the fish and it disappears and, you know, sort of doesn't fall out from them.

It's not a ghost. It's your husband. Go back to bed. But if it is a ghost, call your local priest. Although not me, because I'll be hiding under the bed.

[16:17] Jesus passes these tests. He says, see, I'm physically alive after being physically dead. But just like these two men, the two men on the road to Emmaus, it's not until the Bible is open that they know for sure.

Here's Revelation, verse 45. 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. Verse 48. You are witnesses of these things. How can they make sense of the things they have touched and seen and things they have witnessed?

The only explanation is that Jesus must be the Messiah, God's ruling king. That's Revelation. That leads them to worshipping Jesus in verse 52. It leads them to blessing God in verse 53. That is certainty.

[17:18] Now, we need to finish with proclamation. But you'll notice that we've run out of Bible or run out of Luke's gospel. And I think that's Luke's purpose. To deliberately leave proclamation sort of hanging in the wind.

To leave the story open-ended. You see, Luke is inviting anyone who's certain about Jesus' resurrection to add to the story.

To tell others. Jesus commands this in verse 46. Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.

And that repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached. Will be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. That's just what these first disciples did.

That's just what they preached in the book of Acts, which we're going to see later this year. They preached sins forgiven. A permanent relationship with God. A clean slate for anyone who repents.

[18:22] As they preached this gospel, it changed the ancient world. It changed the religious structures and cultures around them. It would go on to change the government and the Roman Empire.

Just as it has changed the lives of the millions and millions of Christians down through the ages. Who are certain that Jesus is not dead but alive.

Luke invites all people certain of the resurrection to take their part. To complete the story. To tell our family and friends so their lives can be changed just as ours are.

We don't need to be able to see Jesus. He doesn't have to show up in your kitchen for you to have certainty. Remember it's Bible revelation, not facial recognition. Every week you and your loved ones can come here to Holy Trinity.

Where the scriptures are faithfully revealed. Why not invite the people you love to join us? We'll always put out more seats. That would be a good start. I realise that not everyone.

[19:30] I realise that some people have a very limited ability to invite or to tell others about Jesus. That's okay. I think praying for others to do the proclaiming.

Supporting our mission partners. That's what mission partners do. They tell people about Jesus overseas. Praying for the ministry of the scriptures here at Holy Trinity.

They're both amazing ways to take your part in the story. But for everyone else who is able to invite, who's able to tell. If you don't know what to say.

Or perhaps for a social or family or personal reasons. You'd rather keep Jesus a secret. Can I urge you to go back through Luke's cycle here?

The logic is that our confusions and fears are cured by more revelation. More Bible. Join a Bible group. Commit to coming every single week.

[20 : 30] Why not do that? Commit to listening intently in the sermon as lots of you do every week. Almost every program in this church has Bible content in it somewhere.

Read any part of the Bible you're comfortable with. Jesus says all the scriptures are about him anyway. You'll find him. But handle the Bible with care. It can make your heart burn within you.

Revelation cures confusion. It leads to certainty. Certainty that makes you brave against social fears. Certainty that makes us bold against politically correct cultures of Melbourne.

Certainty means you're prepared to break the rule about secrets. Because you can't help but tell people what Jesus has done in your life. This is what we see in Acts.

The book of Acts. It was illegal to talk about Jesus. Almost every single disciple was persecuted, arrested and killed for their faith. The rule is harmful things.

[21 : 37] Keep it a secret. Things that can damage our reputation. Keep it a secret. But these first disciples were so certain. That the God who raised Jesus could raise them to that they broke the rule and told everyone they could.

Confusion is cured by Bible revelation, which leads to certainty. Which leads to proclamation. If you're struggling what to tell people about Jesus, go back to the confusion starting point.

Work your way through Luke's logic. The more certain we are that Jesus is alive, the more likely we will be to proclaim him. The more likely we will be to suffer for it.

But the more likely your family and friends, your loved ones, will have sins forgiven. Eternal life. Just as we do in Jesus' name.

So I pray that we would do that. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we declare that you are not dead, but you are alive.

[22 : 46] You are alive. You can make us alive again. Please help us to tell people this news that we are certain of. That they can have sins forgiven.

A clean slate with God. Eternal life with you. Just as we do. Please help us in this culture. We are so afraid. Things seem so against us.

Please make us certain by your word. We need your help. In Jesus' name. Amen.