

A Risen Christ Prepares His Church

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[0 : 00] What we're just saying about a man of sorrows and all that Jesus did as that man of sorrows to produce a people for himself.

! And what purpose or mission does that drive them to accomplish?

Well, that's where we're kind of working our way through the book of Acts, just getting started. And we're going to get an up-close look at what the man of sorrows produces.

What does his death and resurrection accomplish for a people? And what mission does he put them on? What changes in their life? What fundamentally is different about them?

And one of the ways we want to try to do that through the next several weeks, we started last week, and we're going to continue this week and the next couple of weeks, is not just put the word in front of you, but sometimes I benefit from practical life examples.

[1 : 18] And we'd like to put some practical life examples in front of you. Last week, we saw the story of the Manuelers, a family in our church. Andy is a deacon in our church.

Angela, of course, is his wife and they're children. And they shared with us a little bit of the beginning of that journey. And we're going to see this continuing journey over the next several weeks.

And today, we're going to see how a praying family becomes a family who builds relationships. So let's see that this morning, and we'll pick it up from there.

As a family, our mission is to know him and make him known. After much deliberation and prayer, we decided to homeschool our children through fourth grade and then send them to public school. One reason was to give us opportunities to build relationships and point people to Christ. Whatever schooling method is chosen, the key piece is staying highly involved. When we stay involved in our kids' schooling, even at a public school, lots of opportunities arise to build relationships.

[2 : 24] As I attend my children's sports practices and games, I've been able to build relationships with parents and even several of the players. We've often been able to build relationships with some of the teachers, even through asking questions about assignments that we're not comfortable with and asking for alternate assignments.

We've gotten good feedback that they appreciate that, and we have been able to share why these things are important to us. So I can't be a room mom. I need to find other ways to connect.

It was a difficult season for connecting with teachers and parents because God decided it was also time to give us two more gifts of Nathan and Joanna. But I have been able to meet teachers at open house, band concerts, and other school events.

I have met some other parents at sports games, concerts, and events that parents are invited to, such as parents' night and classroom debate competitions. We had quickly developed a good relationship with one of Caleb's teachers, and she allowed him to bring his new baby brother to class shortly after Nathan was born.

That was a special connection moment, and now that teacher has her own newborn son. Two years ago, the Lord allowed me the opportunity to fill a need and accompany high school band students who perform instrumental solos.

[3 : 35] This has been a special connection point for me as I now have accompanied some of the same students two years in a row, and will get a third chance this school year. When I first went to a public school in fifth grade, I slowly started to get to know the kids in my class and was able to keep relationships with them all the way through high school.

This gave me relationships and friendships that I was able to build into over the years. I also attempted to host a Bible study with a few friends, invited many of them to youth events and Sunday services, and was once even called different by a friend and took it as a compliment, since I

am called to be in the world but not of it.

I also was in two bands and played on a soccer team, so that gave me opportunities to connect with a wider demographic. While I don't have connection with many of my school friends anymore, I can pray that God is continuing to grow and work with the seeds that I was able to plant throughout those years.

I've played four different sports, been in two bands, two choirs, and a couple more extracurricular activities throughout my public school career. And through those, I've been able to meet and get to know a lot of kids that I've been able to make connections with, and a few deep friendships.

And in everything that I'm doing, I'm striving to be different for Jesus. And many have recognized the unique friendliness to kindness and joy that points to Jesus and has allowed for conversations to start.

[4 : 54] Even though we're not in public school yet to make new friends and point them to Jesus, we've been able to play sports and make friends to that. So why do we put these in front of you?

Well, we put these videos in front of you not to say, well, this is how you should do it. This is the way it goes. This is the formula that works. But to give you some examples, these are just a few examples of how God has done that in the lives of the Manwellers, how God has used their receptive hearts to work in the flow of the community that he has put them into, and to try to maximize those relationships in order to have gospel opportunities.

This is what God wants all of us to be involved in. And the other one of the goals of putting this in front of you is to show how easy it can be. You don't have to have the gift of evangelism.

You don't have to be gifted in terms of apologetics. You just have to be a person who is willing to be available, praying for opportunities, building relationships, and seeking for God to open up doors so that you can walk through them and have a gospel witness.

So I trust that as we work through these, that you see this as an example out of many that God can use to stimulate your hearts and to lead you to very good things.

[6 : 17] I love this book of Acts for a lot of reasons. Maybe one of the biggest reasons why I appreciate the book of Acts is because it is a story about how Jesus takes a group of nobodies, a group of misfits, and he's able to use them in a way that changes the world.

As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul, in his ministry, the indictment against him is, hey, these are the guys that are turning the world upside down. Well, how did God do that?

And that's why we're moving through this book of Acts to see how does God use a dysfunctional people? How does God use a group of misfits to turn the world upside down?

Do you realize that God will build his church? As a matter of fact, we find that in the Scripture where Jesus says, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

God is in the church building business. And the incredible part about all of this is that God wants to use you, and he wants to use me to accomplish this objective.

[7 : 37] And we're going to look and begin to look in the Word of God today to see how God will do that. How will God do that for you? How will God do that for me?

How will God use us to turn the world upside down? Because God is building his church. It is an unstoppable church. It is an unrivaled, unrivaled work that God is doing through his Spirit and through his people.

He wants to use you. He wants to use me. So we're going to see how God will turn this world upside down using a group of misfits as we turn in our Bibles to Acts chapter 1.

Begin this journey with me. Acts chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. I'm going to read the first three verses, and we're going to begin to see this mission strategy of how Christ, the risen Lord, is preparing a people for himself, preparing a church for himself.

And here we are in this series, Becoming the Church. Well, what does the church look like, and how does the church become? Well, the church will become, and we'll see this morning, the church becomes, as the church will follow, the directives of the church builder, Jesus Christ himself.

[8 : 55] If you're using the Pew Bible, you can find it on page 909, and follow along with me as I read Acts chapter 1, verses 1 to 3. It says, In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day when he was taken up after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days, and speaking about the kingdom of God.

We're going to see four different characteristics, four different qualities of these individuals who God will use to build this church. And the first is this, recognizing that you have a trustworthy witness. You have a trustworthy witness. I love how Luke puts this here in verse 3, speaking about this life and ministry of Christ.

And notice this word here, this phrase in verse 3, and Jesus presented him alive, excuse me, he presented himself to them after his sufferings by many proofs.

[10:11] By many proofs. As we begin this series, I'm blown away by the mercy of God to set before us proofs, evidences, things that you can substantiate, ways in which you can bolster your confidence and know that what you believe about Jesus and about his life and about his teaching has backing.

You can substantiate it. It's been given to us in a way that has been validated and demonstrates its integrity. Right here at the start, there are these three verses.

We get a sense of the wonder of God's amazing grace. You have a gracious God. A gracious God. He's given you a trustworthy witness.

And maybe it's not abundantly obvious because of how much we've taken this witness for granted. But God has given his witness to us through his word.

Notice this in verse 1. It says, In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all the things that Jesus began to do and to, what church?

[11:29] To teach. You see, we have a God who has revealed himself. He's revealed himself through his son whom he sent as the very word of God.

The word of God became flesh. He dwelt among us. He did not have to. He did not have to come. He did not have to dwell with us. Broken humanity. Who does that? What deity do you know that wants to mix it up with corruption?

And God sent his son Jesus to come in human flesh, to robe himself in limitation, in humanity, and to speak, and to teach, and to reveal.

The word of God came to us. We just need to pause for a moment and marvel at the grace of God in this trustworthy witness.

[12:32] God did not just present himself in words. He could have just sent a message, which he did through the prophets, but he sent himself.

God came in the flesh to speak and to do and to love and to show compassion and to demonstrate example and to put up with very wayward and foolish disciples.

How many times does Jesus confront the disciples by confronting their, oh foolish ones and slow in heart to believe. That's not just the disciples, by the way.

That's you and me. The fact is that Jesus, he didn't just come into time and space and speak words to people in a first century, but by God's grace, he communicated those words and those words are captured for us.

Those words of Jesus captured for you and for me. Gracious words. Life-giving words. Words that you can read. You don't have to hear about.

[13:42] Not just this verbal testimony. Oh, there was some God in the first century who happened to say some things. No, we have those words captured. They're for you. You can read them.

You can enjoy them. You can test them for yourself. The gracious word of God, the testimony that he's given, the witness that's confirmed.

You can have it. It's in your possession. We have access to it. And so, we enjoy this trustworthy, accessible word.

And notice what Luke says here in verse 1. It says, In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all the things that Jesus began to do and to teach. And so, what we're reading in the book of Acts is just volume 2 of a two-volume set.

And so, if we want to just briefly go back to volume 1, the gospel of Luke, we can see something about the credibility of this witness. I would just invite you to just turn back for a moment to Luke chapter 1.

[14:49] Luke 1, 1 to 4. And I just want to spend a couple of moments here to help you understand the significance of this trustworthy word. It says, Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you.

most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught. I want to draw attention to the trustworthiness of this word.

Notice how he puts that in verse 4. I want you to understand that the things that you may have certainty concerning the things you've been taught. The purpose for this writing is certainty.

It's a trustworthy word. That God cares about you being able to evaluate and examine this word for yourself to evaluate its trustworthiness, to see its credibility.

What a gracious God you have. Gracious God. And he's come and he's allowed this orderly account to be written. And so he compiles this narrative, this life story of Jesus.

[16:17] And this account that we've been given helps us to understand it's not just some fictitious story that's been written down, but the fact that he uses this word account helps us to understand that whatever Luke is writing is captured in history.

It's verifiable. It's anchored. It's subject to scrutiny. Notice all the times, just briefly here, where Luke is not afraid for you to fact check his work.

Luke chapter 1, verse 5. In the days of Herod, king of Judah. Luke 1, 26. In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth.

Luke chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor over Syria. And we could go on. Luke is not afraid of fact checking. Luke is not afraid for you to go to the source and to see whether or not what he's writing is credible and verifiable.

[17:29] Because Luke and our Savior cares about bolstering and supporting your faith. He wants to lead you to faith.

He wants you to lead you to confidence. He wants you to know that you have a trustworthy witness. What a gracious God. So we have not just an accurate, well-ordered account, but we have these eyewitnesses.

Eyewitnesses that we find throughout the testimony of Scripture. We don't have time this morning to talk about them all, but at least a couple of them are Matthew and Mark who Luke and the Apostle Paul and others spent time with.

And Matthew was one of the twelve apostles. He was there through the whole duration of Jesus' life and ministry. Mark, who had been learning from the Apostle Peter, was capturing this story from Peter's perspective.

and you have this witness, these eyewitnesses. Mary, who treasured and pondered all of these things in her heart. She's certainly one of these witnesses.

[18:40] We find her in Acts chapter 1. She's there with the 120 believers and her testimony is certainly part of this narrative that's being recorded for us.

God cares about witnesses. He cares about credibility. Why did God do it this way? Well, God did it this way because He wanted you to have a trustworthy witness so that you could believe it.

It wasn't just to know it. It wasn't just to affirm it. It was to believe it. It was to read it for yourself and treasure it for yourself so that you could fundamentally believe the words that God has given to you. God is after faith. He's after your heart. He's after your allegiance. He wants your devotion. He wants you not just to believe.

He wants that belief to lead to action. He wants it to lead to confident, bold testimony. You have a trustworthy Savior, a trustworthy witness.

[19:53] You can believe it. Second, we have a risen Savior. We see that in verse 3. It says, He was presented or He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days.

Now, the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I want you and I think you already understand, this is fundamental for your faith.

You cannot be a believer, you cannot be a follower of Jesus Christ unless you not only know about the resurrection, but you believe it in your heart. Romans 10, 9 and 10 says this, because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. If you're going to have a relationship with Jesus, if you're going to be part of this group of believers who's going to change the world someday, this is fundamental to your life.

This is fundamental to your association with Him. your faith is contingent upon believing the right things and believing especially in this risen Lord.

[21 : 21] He is alive. And so what does God graciously do for us? He not only raises Jesus from the dead, but He gives this undeniable confirmation of His resurrection.

We have these proofs that God graciously gives to the disciples and then subsequently every single one of us to confirm the reality of that work.

He does this in order to move a people or to make a people for Himself. He wants your heart. He wants your allegiance.

He wants you to believe and worship Him. and that believing is not ambiguous. That believing is very specific.

You have to believe the right things about Jesus. And so God gives this proof, this confirmation, this unmistakable testimony of Himself, this period of time between the resurrection and between His ascension.

[22 : 25] And we find here 40 days. 40 days of this interaction. It wasn't continuous time with Jesus but this interactive time where Jesus seems to be coming in and out of the vicinity where these disciples are.

And initially we see these resurrection appearances there in Jerusalem that Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He appears to the women who were also there in that area. He appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke chapter 24. He appears to Simon Peter individually in Luke 24, 34.

He appears to gathered disciples without Thomas being present. And then He appears to the 11 with Thomas present. He appears then to 500.

He appears to Paul who says this untimely follower of His, Jesus unmistakably appeared for the whole point of bolstering faith in resurrection.

[23 : 32] You see the disciples and the women that they will initially make their way out of Jerusalem and Christ will command them to go to Galilee. And you're like why Galilee of all places?

What's in Galilee? Why wouldn't they have just stayed in Jerusalem? And while we don't really have the full answer to that there is this time that's transpiring and so God allows them to go back to Galilee which was kind of their home turf as it were.

This was kind of where the mission was all born. And Jesus through this time this interactive time He's helping to establish a group of individuals a group of disciples who are going to be committed to Him in every way.

It was in Galilee that Jesus would meet them. He meets them by the Sea of Galilee as they're fishing. You remember the story? They're out fishing and they've been fishing all night and they haven't caught a thing.

And then all of a sudden someone shouts hey cast your nets on the other side. In this massive hall. This towards the end of Jesus' ministry to them during this ascension or this resurrection period of 40 days and they'd had a previous witness that Jesus did very early on in the ministry where the exact same thing happened.

[24 : 59] And Jesus confirming once again I've called you to be disciples of mine. I've called you to be fishers of men. And now it's time to do it. And Jesus has mentioned to them He's mentioned them on the mountain that He was there and yet even in His appearance in His speaking to them there was some doubt that was happening in their hearts.

Through all of this period of time these 40 days so many things that Christ was reinforcing for this group of misfit disciples it helped them understand this uncontested proof that Jesus was in fact resurrected from the grave.

It also helped to transform this devastated group of disciples into eyewitnesses. We see this account throughout the book of Acts where in Acts 1 verse 8 we're going to get to there in a week or two what does Jesus say to these disciples and you will be witnesses in Jerusalem in Judea in Samaria his goal was to turn them into those who would witness the very things that he had done. Of course Jesus is interested in helping to restore broken disciples. He does that there in Galilee as he's beating with Peter by the sea of Galilee.

Peter who had denied Jesus on three occasions now Jesus asks this question Peter do you love me? Peter says Lord I love you. He says again Peter do you love me?

[26 : 41] And Peter's beginning to wonder did you not hear my first reply? Yes I love you. And then one more time Peter do you love me? Lord you know I love you. Just reaffirming and reestablishing in this process of restoring Peter back to functionality.

Back to a place of usefulness. God desires to do that for us. You know you have a risen Savior. You have a risen Savior.

Are you living like it? Do you see the life of your Savior? Is that life resident in you? I'm reminded of the hymn that some of you may know.

It says I serve a risen Savior. He's in the world today. I know that he's living whatever men may say. I see his hand of mercy.

I hear his voice of cheer. And just the time I need him he's always near. He lives. He lives. Christ Jesus lives today.

[27 : 44] He walks with me. He talks with me. A long life's narrow way. He lives. He lives. Salvation to impart. You ask me how I know he lives.

He lives within my heart. Is the living Savior resident in your heart today? Are you walking with him? Talking with him? Is it clear in your expressions of life that you are living for the living Savior? Third, you have a kingdom message.

You have a kingdom message. message. Notice! Jesus speaking after essentially all the programmatic things that are essential to usher in this kingdom life has happened.

And here is Jesus and we see now this emergence of a church that will be taking place at the beginning of Acts chapter 1 and we ask ourselves the question, wait a second, I thought we were having a program with the Jews.

[29 : 24] What happened here? What is this new body, this new group of individuals? What's the deal with this church? Has God changed his mind? And the answer is no, he hasn't changed his mind.

There's still a kingdom message. It's been reinforced. The use of the kingdom in the gospels is prolific. 57 times the gospel of Matthew uses the word kingdom.

21 times in Mark, 46 times in Luke. It's obvious that we don't have time to address all the breadth of the use of the kingdom of God that is talked about through the gospels.

And you might wonder, has God changed his mind? And the answer is no, because in 40 days of his ministry to the disciples after the resurrection, what is he talking about?

He's still talking about the kingdom. Why? Because that program hasn't changed. That message has not changed. Just a couple of examples.

[30 : 31] Luke 4 42, and when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place, speaking of Jesus, and the people sought him and came to him and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the others, to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose, and he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

This was the heart and soul of Jesus' ministry, to teach and preach about the kingdom. Well, what does that kingdom message entail?

What is that kingdom message about? Well, it's a message about how Jesus is the authority, Jesus is sovereign, Jesus is in charge. It's a message that we all need, and how did that come about?

Well, it came about because of the work that Jesus accomplished on the cross, his death, his resurrection, in claiming victory over sin once and for all. He put sin to death.

He allowed us to enjoy the benefits of forgiveness and life with him through his son, Jesus Christ.

And so the bondage that Adam and Eve welcomed us into because of their sin, because of them rejecting the authority of God by saying, no, we're going to become gods of our own, making, we're going to do what we want to do, we're going to step outside the bounds of what we've been told to do in terms of this delegated authority that had been handed to them, let us make man in our own image.

[32 : 08] That's what God built into the design that God had made humanity was to exercise this dominion. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the creeping things that creep on the earth.

That's what we were designed to do, but what Adam and Eve decide instead is we're going to push against this one directive, don't eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, on the day you eat of it you will surely die, and they say, no, we're going to be like gods and we're going to do this anyway.

And so Jesus came to fundamentally change that. He came to reestablish His authority, reestablish what that righteous delegated authority looks like, that Jesus submitted to the Father, not my will but yours be done, He becomes this second Adam so that now we as a humanity can enjoy the benefits of being in this new Adam through faith and forgiveness of sins.

I love how Abraham Kuyper so famously puts this, he says, there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ who is sovereign over all does not cry, mine. Christ is king. we preach His message. Have you submitted your life to the kingship of Christ? [33 : 48] You see, because we have a kingdom message, we have the joy of proclaiming that message. What a privilege.

And finally, finally we have a promised power. we have a promised power, we see that in verses 4 and 5. It says, and while staying with them, He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father, which He said, you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

We're going to be developing this strain of thought for the next several weeks. There's a lot to understand, but the joy of this message that the disciples are receiving is that they're not going to be working to carry out this unstoppable mission on their own power.

Not their power, God's power, promised power, Holy Spirit power. And so what do they need to do? Well, they need to go and wait. Wait for God to allow them to enjoy the benefits of that power. power. And how does benefits of that power happen? Well, it happens one way. It happens as you wait and pray. You're praying for God to produce power in your life through His Holy Spirit.

[35 : 17] And those who have bent the knee to Jesus Christ, bowed the knee in faith to Him, asking for forgiveness of sin, and believing in the resurrection, His death, His resurrection, there is a promised power.

The Holy Spirit is guaranteed for those who believe. What's really interesting is we have access to all this power. And yet, the Apostle Paul wants, he wants the church especially to understand how little they access the power that God has given to them.

How many times have you heard yourself say, or heard others say, I just can't help myself. I've said it. You feel in bondage to your sin?

You feel like you just can't get out of the rut? You feel like all the things that are happening around you are inescapable? You feel bound by certain patterns in your life?

You haven't accessed the power of the Spirit to set yourself free and enjoy the benefits of a life with God that is full of power?

[36 : 35] Look at how the Apostle Paul prays in Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 3. And I'll close with this before we move to our time of communion. This is amazing.

What a promise. Paul says, for this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being.

Now just pause for a moment. Paul is praying for the church because they have power available but they're not using it.

They're not enjoying it. They're not experiencing it. And my guess is that everyone in this room has struggled with that at some point or the other and may be struggling with that even now.

You feel powerless. Well God has granted power through his spirit that we can enjoy. And not just any kind of power. Strengthened with power. This is dynamite kind of power.

[37 : 38] This is unstoppable power. And it goes on. So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with the fullness of God.

Now that's power. Power to be absolutely transformed from the inside out from all of the stuff in your life that you're embarrassed about ashamed about and rightly so.

But the power of the spirit wants to come and to resolve that in you. He wants to fundamentally transform us. And here's what happens when we pray that prayer.

Ephesians chapter 3 this is the next few verses verse 20 says now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.

I'm going to read that again because my guess is we don't believe this. To him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us.

[38 : 52] Holy Spirit power working in your life to accomplish purposes. To him be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Holy Spirit power you and I both have access to. It happens as we submit to God's program and pray for him to do his work.

Oh may God help us to enjoy the benefits of his power. Let me pray. Lord thank you for your program. This unstoppable program.

This very simple program as it relates to understanding at least how it's supposed to work. Oh Father I pray that you'd forgive us.

Not only for getting in the way of your pattern your design for how things are supposed to happen but Lord I dare say we not just get in the way but we absolutely oppose your plan because we want something different.

[40 : 05] So humble us Lord forgive us may we enjoy the benefits of your program and may we see a world that is absolutely blown away by the wonder of our God.

Thank you for this time now of communion just the reminder that it is for us of how this is possible. It's possible through Jesus through his death his resurrection we praise you in Jesus name amen. Amen.