

# Being Emptied to be Filled

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us now turn to the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 24, and we may read at verse 33.

The Gospel according to Luke, chapter 24, reading from verse 33. And there rose up the same out, that is, the two who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

And returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

But they were terrified, and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

[ 1 : 16 ] Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me, and see. For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not, for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.

[ 2 : 32 ] And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

And ye are witnesses of these things. Amen, and may God bless to us that reading from his truth.

Let us again sing to his praise from Psalm 138. Psalm 138.

Thee will I praise with all my heart. I will sing praise to thee before the gods, and worship will toward thy sanctuary.

I'll praise thy name, even for thy truth and kindness of thy love. For thou thy word has magnified all thy great name above.

[ 3 : 31 ] Thou didst me answer in the day when I to thee did cry. And thou, my fainting soul with strength, didst strengthen inwardly.

All kings upon the earth that are shall give thee praise, O Lord, when as they from thy mouth shall hear thy true and faithful word.

Let us sing these verses. Thee will I praise with all my heart. Thee will I praise with all my heart.

I will sing praise to thee before the gods, and worship will toward thy sanctuary.

I will praise thy name, even for thy truth and kindness of thy love.

[ 4 : 48 ] For thou thy word hast magnified all thy great name above.

Thou didst me answer in the day when I to thee did cry.

And thou, my fainting soul with strength, didst strengthen inwardly.

All kings upon the earth that are shall give thee praise, O Lord, when as they from thy mouth shall hear thy true and faithful word.

Let us now turn to the passage that we read. Gospel according to Luke in chapter 24.

[ 6 : 12 ] And we may read again. At verse 36. Jesus himself stood among them.

Here are a small group of believers gathered together. And they had much to discuss.

Incidentally, I believe that every group of believers have much to discuss. You cannot be touched by the life-changing power of divine grace and experience the enlightening teaching of the Holy Spirit without having much to discuss.

This small group had experienced the darkness of deep despondency, seeing their beloved Lord crucified to death.

His burial had left them traumatized. But now they were receiving reports that he was alive. And that was difficult to take in.

[ 7 : 52 ] It's very difficult for us just to put ourselves in their situation. They had seen the Lord on the cross. They had seen his death.

They had seen his body taken down. They had seen him placed in the grave. And now they were getting reports that he was alive.

Some were unable to accept the reports because they were still grieving the death of Jesus, as Luke reminds us earlier in the chapter in recording the experience of Cleopas and his traveling companion.

You remember Luke tells us how they were so sad. And in this little group there were those who were beginning to hope that circumstances were not so bleak after all, as if glimmers of light were beginning to percolate into their darkness.

And I suppose in some ways they were on an emotional roller coaster. Their emotional life was being swept from deep depths of gloom to new heights of joy.

[ 9 : 26 ] And the common topic of conversation was the rising of their Lord. The Lord, verse 34, has risen indeed.

And that became a byword and a greeting for Easter for many years. And then Luke gives this snippet of information.

He hath appeared to Simon. Now, that's a meeting that is shrouded in secrecy. It's not a meeting of which we have any report of any kind, apart from the fact that it took place.

It was known and believed in the early church because there is reference to it. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he appeared to Cephas.

And yet, there is no report of what took place at that meeting. I'm trying to guess what took place at the meeting would be mere conjecture on my part.

[ 10 : 45 ] But I cannot help but think that it was a meeting that was of tremendous help to the disconsolate disciple Peter.

Remember, he had come out of the hall of the high priest when the cock crowed. And he had wept bitterly as he reflected on his acts of denial.

And I think it would be safe to assume that this meeting, this private meeting, would have meant much to Peter.

That the Lord hadn't cast him off. that he hadn't thrown him to one side. That he hadn't dealt with him as he deserved because of his denance.

And you remember, later on, by the Sea of Galilee, there is the public restoration of Peter.

[ 11 : 56 ] But this, I believe, is the private restoration of Peter. And perhaps you are here today and you too can testify to private meetings with your Lord through the truth which have been of tremendous encouragement to you.

Meetings that helped you to rise from the depths of darkness and despondency. Perhaps you were teetering on the very edge of the pit of despair.

And the Lord addressed you out of his truth in a way that gave you uplift and illumination and brought you out of the darkness in which you were.

Lord. And that meeting was private. It wasn't disclosed to anybody else. It was between yourself and your Lord.

Or perhaps you felt able to speak about it later on. Perhaps at other times you didn't. You kept it to yourself.

[ 13 : 17 ] Well, that meeting took place and if you have experience of such a meeting it made you appreciate even more the love, the compassion and the forgiveness so freely and graciously bestowed on you by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, Luke goes on to tell us how this small group were joined by Cleopas possibly his wife his traveling companion they had retraced their steps to Jerusalem and they came to add their personal testimony to the expanding evidence and support of the claims that Jesus had risen from the dead.

So I'd like just to set four thoughts before you from our text. First of all the presence of Jesus Jesus himself stood in the midst of them.

Secondly the preeminence of the word. Thirdly the purpose of the word and fourthly the power that is required.

First the presence of Jesus. We are told that this group gathered together on Sunday evening. They were experiencing or exchanging their experiences in relation to Christ and how often have some of you done that very thing.

[ 14 : 58 ] You have gathered together in homes for fellowship and you have exchanged experiences whether about your conversion or as you have been or are being matured in the faith.

Some of those who were gathered in this group had seen the evidence but others hadn't seen the evidence. And Luke tells us that while they were engaged in this exchange Jesus himself stood among them.

and I think that's very wonderful. They were talking about Jesus. They were discussing their experiences of Jesus and Jesus himself stood among them.

At one level it is fulfillment of his own promise to the disciples given in the upper womb. You remember John's Gospel and you will see me.

And as the disciples pondered what he meant he went on to say truly truly I say to you you will weep and lament but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn into joy.

[ 16 : 20 ] And he went on to use the illustration of the birth of a child. And then he said to them so also you have sorrow now but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you.

And so now when he stands there his presence is there they see him and their sorrow and yes even their terror is turned to joy.

Their troubles and their doubts with regard to the death and burial of the Lord and his resurrection are removed. Here is one as their great high priest he had gone into the holy place with his own blood.

He had paid the price demanded by a just law. The offering was accepted by a holy and a righteous God and now as the returning high priest he greets them with the benediction shalom.

Peace be unto you. Shalom. It could be shortened for the Aaronic benediction. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord give you peace.

[ 17 : 36 ] He is their peace and he preaches peace to them. They were presented with the visible evidence of the resurrection. Jesus simply appeared in the room.

He had risen indeed. And yet it's as if Luke wants you to understand that there was still an element of uncertainty. So to prove that he wasn't some kind of apparition or figment of imagination in John's gospel we read he showed them his hands and his side.

In this passage it is recorded that Jesus said handle me and see for a spirit does not flesh and bones as he see me have.

In other words he is assuring them that it is indeed he it is I myself he showed them the piercings that marked him and you might say it was a silent but a very powerful and convincing argument and to further assure them of his identity he ate in their presence.

So when he appears in this locked room he has a physical body obviously not exactly like girls the same yet different.

[ 19 : 11 ] He was simply there in spite of the locked doors. Now you can tie yourself in knots trying to work out how he came in didn't enter through a window or through the roof or send for the church officer to change the lock he was simply there and from that I think we can make this deduction in your life and in mine Jesus can go where no one else can go he can go where no minister can go he can go where no doctor can go he can go where no teacher or youth leader can go he can go where no friend can go he can reach you and reach into your life anywhere and at any time there is no place where you are and no depths which constitute as a person which Jesus can't penetrate Jesus' resurrection from the dead equips him to do what no one else can do there is no one else like him in all of the universe he is alive he is the one and only

God man Jesus can reach into your life however broken you may feel today however distressed however upsetting your providence might be today however much alone you may feel however despondent or subject to the forces of any kind of addiction he can reach in and touch your life and I want to ask you do you find comfort in that because I certainly do and I hope that you do too he is the true servant of God and the Bible tells us of his character traits remember how the servant of Jehovah is described a bruised reed he will not break and a smouldering wick he will not quench what is that a picture of it's a picture of you and me as we are by nature broken reeds in many ways useless smouldering weeks and he takes us in our brokenness and our loneliness and he heals until he restores he is the great high priest for as the writer in the letter to the

Hebrew states we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin led us then with confidence drawn near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need the physical bodily presence of the Lord so that Peter could refer to this moment as he preached Christ God raised him on the third day made him to appear not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead now we don't obviously see Jesus physically or bodily but we see him and meet with him in the truth he manifests himself to us by his spirit and he brings peace and perhaps you can testify to where you have been in fellowships where the presence of the

Lord was very evident the presence of Jesus bringing peace secondly the preeminence of the word I am sure you noticed how Luke draws attention again and again in his narrative to the preeminence of the word the women for example who went to the grave they were pointed back to the word remember when the angels met them and it wasn't the meeting with the angels that so much convinced them of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus but the teaching of the word remember what Luke reports the angels said is not here but risen son of man must be delivered into the hands and be crucified on the third day rise again and then

Luke adds this in verse 8 and they remembered his words they remembered his words you see the angels weren't waiting for a response they remind them of the teaching received and you see this emphasis on the word again in the account of the experience on the road to Emmaus Jesus doesn't immediately say to them when he steps out of the shadows of the Emmaus road and accompanies them he doesn't just say to them well I'm Jesus he does and he doesn't he doesn't say it just outright he places the teaching of the truth before their minds and hearts and through the teaching of the truth he is disclosing to them his identity that he is indeed

[ 25 : 17 ] Jesus the preeminence of the word is again emphasized and the teaching bore fruit their hearts were we are told strangely warmed by the word proclaimed and there arose a compulsion within them to share with others what they had experienced that's the nature of the blessing of the gospel Christians want to share the blessings of the gospel with their fellow men in the world the lively Christian has a generous heart they wish to share it is all part of fellowship in giving and receiving and so you have the word again taught to these somewhat bemused early believers and wouldn't you like to have heard the sermon that he preached as a real cracker of a sermon it's biblical it's

Christ Christ centered it's evangelistic it's mission oriented he explains to them again what he had taught previously but which remain deeply mysterious to them and you notice he doesn't begin with the physical reality of his own resurrection but with the infallible word of God these notice what he says verse 44 these are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me what does that tell us does it not tell us that Jesus wished their experience of the resurrection to be grounded firmly on the massive testimony and perspective of the word of God and when he speaks of the law of

Moses and the prophets and the Psalms it's really shorthand for the whole of the Old Testament now remember those who made up this small group had difficulty in understanding the truth did Jesus decide well perhaps I better use another method rather than teaching from the word well Jesus didn't do that he persisted in his teaching of the word what he had taught before he taught again and then Luke tells us of what I can only describe in this way the penny dropping moment in their lives or as some commentators describe it the aha moment he opened their minds to understand the scriptures years and perhaps some here can testify to having experience of that moment teaching that seemed deeply mysterious to you until you had that moment when you understood there was a penny dropping moment an aha moment when the teaching of the word of

God opened up and your understanding was opened up to it perhaps you were here did you ever wrestle with the thought of conversion how are people converted how did they come to faith in Jesus Christ and then you heard the way of salvation set before you in the Bible and you asked when it became plain to you how did I not understand that before how did I not see it before and the answer is simple my friend you and I needed the mind opening work of God remember what Paul taught in writing to the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 2 the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are folly to him he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned no matter how gifted we might be how greater intellectual powers might be the gospel will always remain a mystery until

God enables us to understand it and here Christ preached himself crucified and risen suffering dying and rising again and he did it from the whole of the Old Testament it reminds me of a discussion I had a way back when I was a divinity student with a man who was not a free church student but he was in the college as it was then he came from a non psalm background and he used to extol the virtues of many hymns which spoke of Christ in his sufferings his death and resurrection and he would claim that the psalms were silent on such martyrs well Jesus did not think so nor do

[ 31 : 11 ] I hope to you everything written about me he says to the group and to us too in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled there is such a rich vein there a lifetime of study and many penny dropping moments if you care to study them the preeminence of the word bringing illumination and understanding through the ministry of the Holy Spirit the presence of Jesus bringing peace thirdly the purpose of the word and here it is set before us verse 46 thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at

Jerusalem in other words this was all part of God's providential plan if we go right back in terms of biblical revelation this is what you find God saying to Abraham in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed the mission call is not something new it was in the providential plan of God from the beginning could Jesus not have said to the gathered group I am that offspring and it is through my death and resurrection that they shall be blessed he could have remember the words of some to God the father speaking to God the son ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession and so he explains to this little group what the result of the resurrection will be it is your conversion your salvation this is the purpose of the word to evangelize it is the whole thrust of the word of

God ever since man fell God through his word has been calling people to repentance and you remember the graphic picture that is set before us in Psalm 103 of the nature of the forgiveness that God bestows as far as the east is from the west so far does he remove transgressions from us so you see the purpose of the word it's not only to instruct about the sufferings death and resurrection of the Lord but it is also to put emphasis on the necessity of mission outreach that's a global work and you might say oh well that's for some others but it's not from me well no believer is exempt from this mammoth task now see what he says you are witnesses of these things no these and the in that room they were eyewitnesses they could write as

John did in his first letter that which was from the beginning which we have heard which we have seen with our eyes which we looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life we in the 21st century have not seen him in the sense that they did physically but if you are a believer in Jesus Christ then you are a witness nonetheless you know the gospel message you've heard the Easter story you're tasked with spreading the good news all nations doesn't mean people far away from you they may be in your home in your family next door neighbors in your street or area where you live we are tasked with being witnesses to them remember the great commission that Christ entrusts to his disciples go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father of the son and of the holy spirit teaching them to observe all that

I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age the purpose of the word you might say in a sense is to fire up believers with mission zeal to fire you up with mission zeal to propagate the good news the preeminence of the word bringing illumination and understanding through the ministry of the the presence of Jesus bringing peace and finally the power required verse 49 and behold I send the promise of my father upon you but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem till you be endued with power from on high at the very outset of this gospel

[ 36 : 39 ] Luke in writing of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ draws our attention to this when he is drawing attention to how Jesus came into the world and he draws our attention to what was spoken to Mary the power of the most high will overshadow you and here almost at the close of his gospel he speaks of being clothed with power from on high he is speaking of the ministry of the Holy Spirit this is what these early evangelists required wasn't only when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles that they received the power to witness we know from the book of Acts how that became true of them and while we believe that Pentecost was a once for all epoch making event can we not say that repeatable elements were built in to Pentecost the empowering for witness was not to be limited to the single event of Pentecost wasn't to be exclusively of that or to be the exclusive right of the apostles it extended beyond their persons and beyond their time and is this not what

Christian believers still need power from on high for the furthest of the gospel do we pray for it do we think of it as a necessity how do we receive it you know could I suggest it is by being more with Jesus engaging in serious intercession in his name meditating more on the glories of his personal work and I suppose what I'm suggesting involves waiting on him in order to be anointed and I think I ought to add that waiting frequently involves being emptied in order to be filled the power that is required that of the Holy Spirit the presence of

Jesus bringing peace the preeminence of the word bringing illumination and understanding through the ministry of the Holy Spirit the purpose of the word to become fired with missionary zeal does this message does it grip your mind and heart today let us pray O eternal God we thank thee that the person the second person of the Trinity should grace the meetings of poor unworthy and undeserving sinners in the world that your presence is experienced when they meet together how wonderful and how uplifting for those who gather in thy name to be assured that thou art there and that thou art there to bless to bring peace to bring enlightenment and illumination to send darkened minds and hearts to bring teaching before minds and hearts that enable sinners to grasp the thrust of thy truth and the necessity of the sufferings and death burial and resurrection of the

Lord Jesus Christ oh grant the grace for that mission zeal that would make us all missionaries in a real sense in the world cleanse in the blood and the glory shall be thine in Jesus name we ask it Amen Amen