

Everything Must Be Fulfilled

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[0 : 00] Let's pray as we stand. Father, we are giving you thanks and praise for the resurrection of the dead today and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We pray for your Holy Spirit to open the Bible to us that we might understand and that we might know your love and power for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Please be seated. Well, it is a joyful day today.

It is a day of great celebration. And being up front here with the choir over here and all of you singing, and you sing very, very well, I must say, it is moving.

It is wonderfully celebratory to hear you sing Jesus Christ is risen today and to know that there is a deep and powerful joy that is yours because Jesus rose from the dead.

[1 : 00] It was great also hearing the children's talk at 9 o'clock because Eric spilled a secret and told them that they were all going to a party, which was true, but it was supposed to wait until the end of the lesson.

So all of the kids going out were excited and saying, it's a party, it's a party, it's a party. And I think Lisa survived, but I'm not sure.

She's the children's minister. But it is. It is a day, as Keith said, that is celebrated throughout the world in every culture and ethnic group.

And it is because of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that's one of the reasons why we read Luke today. And that's in your bulletin.

Unfortunately, there's no verse numbers, but I'll sort of guide you through it a little bit. But I want to look at this reading, particularly at the bottom of the page, because Luke is a medical doctor.

[1 : 56] He's a historian, a very fine writer as well. And he is laying out for us the reality of Jesus rising from real death to real and new life.

And he is telling us that the reason for our hope is on this firm foundation. And I think what we're going to see in this passage is you're going to see from Luke him describing how people respond to this.

And it's very interesting. He said up at the top of the page there that the disciples thought that they were idle tales, didn't believe the women who saw an empty tomb.

And then if you look down to the second part of the reading, it says in the second paragraph that these people were startled and frightened. And Jesus said, why are you troubled?

Why do questionings rise in your heart? You see all these words of doubt and questionings and just being disturbed. And I think that there is a lot in common with those first witnesses and the first people who heard about the resurrection and the average person in Vancouver.

[3 : 12] because if we take what Luke says about the resurrection seriously, that ought to be our response as well. When you first believed or you first came in contact, I should say, with the resurrection, the bodily resurrection of Jesus by hearing about it, by reading about it, if you understood what was being said here, you should have been startled.

You should have been frightened. You should have been questioning in your heart as well. And maybe some of you are going through that now in this congregation as well.

In a way, I hope you are because it is saying that you are understanding what Luke is saying about the reality of the resurrection. Luke, just before this passage, has been writing in a very clear and analytical way in the past two chapters how Jesus was beaten and how he was mocked and how he was crucified on a cross, the worst way to be executed, the cruelest kind of death.

And he describes how Jesus breathed his last. And then he describes Jesus being laid in a tomb, a rock tomb, he says, with detail. And how the women came and saw him laid there and planned how they would bring spices and dress the body for burial as well.

But in our readings today, Luke is also talking about extraordinary things that is very difficult to wrap our minds around and the minds of the people who were there on that first Easter.

[4 : 52] Women, they said to them that they saw an empty tomb. And they saw angels saying that Jesus had to suffer and rise again on the third day. And then Jesus is described in the same day by two people who were walking to Emmaus telling about how Jesus talked about the scriptures and how it was fulfilled in Jesus and how they didn't realize it was Jesus until they broke bread together at night.

And those two people go right to our account today and they tell the disciples the same thing. They say, the Lord is risen indeed. Now, in our passage, on the evening of the first Easter, Jesus himself suddenly comes among these frightened people who are hiding and he is suddenly among them. And as he shows up, how did they respond? Did they say, welcome Jesus, we were expecting you? No. No. It completely blew their minds.

They were shocked. They were frightened. And the first thing they thought is, it's a ghost. That's the only thing it could be. And that's why Luke describes Jesus very patiently explaining to them what they are seeing.

He says, a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have. And then Jesus says, look. Look closely. See the nail scars on my hands and my feet?

[6 : 23] It is I, myself. And this is a wonderfully patient and clear way Jesus, knowing their hearts, is explaining to him the reality of the resurrection.

Because the same person they had eaten with many times, the same person that they had seen feed 5,000 people with a very small amount of bread and fish, the same person who had healed the sick and cast out demons, the one that they had heard continually preach as one who had the very authority of God.

It seemed like he was God himself as he preached. The one who taught that he came to seek and save the lost and the one that they saw die a horrible death just two days before, Jesus said, Jesus said, it is I, myself.

I am the same person. See me, touch me, handle me, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. And it's wonderful to know that this is a doctor that is writing about this.

He said, this is real. This is a real person that is standing before them that is solid, that you touch. And I think that sometimes we think that that culture of first century Palestine was much less sophisticated and prone to believing stories like this than our own culture, sophisticated as we are, that is generally skeptical about something like this.

[7 : 53] But, we need to understand that the unbelief of Jesus' friends was very common among the whole people that they were part of.

Many Jews at that time had come to believe in the day of the Lord, a future resurrection of everyone who was righteous. And on that day, the whole world would be changed because suffering would be taken out of it and death would be taken out of it and it would be renewed.

And so, the idea of an individual being resurrected in the middle of history, as the world continues with its sickness and its disease and its brokenness and death, for a person to be resurrected in that context was inconceivable to any person living in first century Palestine.

They shared the skepticism of our culture in a different way. And so, the disciples were seeing and hearing and touching the inconceivable.

and Jesus, who they knew so well and who died, was clearly alive. Alive in the most powerful way imaginable. Alive in a way that he would never die again.

[9 : 09] And so, this is as hard in our culture to accept as it was in Luke's time. And there have been many efforts to make it more palatable, to make it more acceptable to us as modern people.

And one of the ways to do it is that some theologians now say it was a spiritual resurrection. Actually, it's been going on for quite some time. In other words, it wasn't a bodily resurrection. It was an idea.

It was an idea of Jesus overcoming death and it was a way that helped the disciples deal with their grief. It was a way of being able to see that good can come out of bad, out of all the terrible events that they witnessed.

That kind of resurrection is easier to explain to people. It's far less difficult to grapple with and it's not uncommon to hear, even among churches. Now, the trouble with this idea of a spiritual

resurrection or an idea that helps you with your grief and gives you hope is that Luke's account and all the other gospel accounts simply won't allow that explanation.

It's just too down to earth. It's about the solidity of Jesus' body that Luke is talking about. It's about seeing and hearing and handling him.

[10 : 28] And far from wishful thinking, it describes Jesus' own family and friends having a very hard time accepting what all of their senses were clearly telling them.

And that's why it continues, as we go a little bit further down, where they continue to still disbelieve for joy and they wondered. So even after touching Jesus, seeing all of these things with their senses, they still can't quite accept what is happening.

And so what happens next is very interesting. Luke says, and I think the Greek says, is there anything around here for me to eat? And they must have been startled and there's a piece of broiled fish that they give to Jesus.

And Luke says that he took that piece and he ate it. And it seems from the way he describes it that everyone is staring at him. What will he do with this fish?

And he ate it just like he had always eaten with them before. And I want to say a brief word about that fish. Why do you think Luke mentions that it was broiled fish?

[11 : 38] Well, I don't want you to listen to one of our staff members in our Bible study. He said, it's because broiling is healthier than frying. That's not the right answer.

The reason this is important is because it is an unnecessary detail. It means that that verse comes from people who were there.

It was something that was in their memory that stuck out in them. They remember the meal. And we see later on in Acts that Luke that Luke had a couple of years in Jerusalem about 20 years later to verify the eyewitness accounts of the people who were there that day that he's writing about for us today.

And he spoke with them and was able to make sure this is the exact account. And we don't have much of a choice here. Either he's telling the truth or he's lying.

And the idea that he's writing a fictional eyewitness account is actually impossible. And it's because we see that modern novels have not yet been invented at that time.

[12 : 47] And a book that I read this week that was helpful for this was *The Reason for God, A Belief in an Age of Skepticism* by Timothy Keller.

It's very helpful for this. I want to read a part of a page where he talks about this. Because Luke's writing as we see here is very unlike myths or legends or vision literature which was the fiction of the time.

Here's what Keller says. He says, C.S. Lewis was a world class literary critic. When reading the gospels he noted, I have been reading poems, romances, vision literature, legends and myths all my life.

I know what they are like. And I know none of them are like this. Of this gospel text there are only two possible views. Either this is reportage or else some unknown ancient writer without known predecessors or successors suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern novelistic realistic narrative.

He goes on to say that Lewis meant that ancient fiction was nothing like modern fiction. Modern fiction is realistic. It contains details and dialogue and reads like an eyewitness account.

[14 : 05] This genre of fiction however only developed in the last 300 years. In ancient times romances, epics or legends were high and remote. Details were spare and only included if they promoted character development or drove the plot.

and that's why if you're reading *Beowulf* or the *Iliad* you don't see characters noticing the rain or falling asleep with a sigh. In modern novels details are added to create the aura of realism but that was never the case in ancient fiction.

So the only explanation for why an ancient writer like Luke would mention broiled fish is because the details had been retained in the eyewitness memory.

That's very important. It's very hard to get around the fact that Luke is describing what people saw and heard and touched that day.

What they reported. And I notice Harry Robinson is here today and I'm going to mention you in a sermon Harry because he was a previous rector here and in a sermon that he preached that I heard he preached on this verse he reportedly said that Jesus ate that piece of fish and Bible

commentators have been having indigestion ever since.

[15 : 22] And I think that's true because it is real. He's writing about something real something that is an eyewitness sense to it. And you may be saying well so what?

What if these people really did see and touch Jesus' resurrected body and hear him speak to them? Why does that mean for me today? Why does that change everything?

Well the answer is it means everything. It is the true great hope for all of creation including you and me personally.

It's the reason why we are celebrating today. And I can only touch scratch the surface in the few minutes that I have left to talk about this but I will mention several things just from the last few lines of our reading that gives us some of the meaning of this resurrection for us the resurrection of Jesus.

The first thing it means is that Jesus is the key to understanding the Bible. Look at the top of that last paragraph.

[16 : 30] Then Jesus said to them these are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

In other words he's saying here that all the promises of God in the Bible are fulfilled on Easter day when Jesus rises from the dead.

And I want to give you an example of this. One of the great promises in the Bible was made to Abraham and God said to him that he would bless this fallen suffering world through a particular people and that this would be a blessing that would reach to the ends of the earth.

And of course this is answered and fulfilled in the most awesomely imaginable in Jesus. Because when we see Jesus and the scars on his hands and his feet we are seeing the death of death. We are seeing the undoing of all the evil that has come into the world. We're looking at God's rescue plan for the world completely unfolding before us in this resurrection.

[17 : 44] And that's because Jesus was born to be the perfect sacrifice who takes upon himself the sin and evil of the world and he dies. But then God raises him to eternal life so that he is the king who forgives sin now.

He gives those who trust him peace with God now. And this is what God's goal is throughout scripture. It is throughout the Bible he is working to restore the friendship that humanity lost in the Garden of Eden.

And that is fulfilled when Jesus has risen from the dead. This is the good news. And it runs throughout the Bible that Jesus himself restores relationships with God.

And I love verse 45 because Jesus says, what Jesus did Luke says is that he opened their mind to understand the scripture. That's the next line there. And this is the great gift the risen Jesus gives to us today as well.

And I invite you to do this. When you open the Bible pray. Pray before you read. Because what Jesus does is he gives you true understanding of God's word because it is about him.

[18 : 58] And he helps you to obey it. He reveals himself in it so that you can love him. And there is great joy in this. And I hope that every time you open the Bible no matter how long you've been reading it that you will pray in that way.

Jesus open God's word to me today and he will answer it. That is the power of the resurrection. Now a second meaning of resurrection for us is that God is now bringing people into friendship with God through preaching.

And here is how Jesus says it in the next verse. He says that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be preached in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

And what that means all nations is that every ethnic group needs to hear about the risen Jesus. That he brings repentance and forgiveness. Now what the resurrection means for us is that it makes it possible for everyone to turn to God for forgiveness.

And what I mean by that is when you hear that Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin and then destroys that sin and death by rising as the ruler of everything you know that there is one who alone can forgive you.

[20 : 23] You know that there is one who alone can bring you peace with God. He is the only one who can change your relationship with God who can change your heart. To repent is to ask the risen Jesus to do this for you now.

To do what you cannot do for yourself. The gift of repentance is that we have one who does this for us. And wonderfully no one in the world is beyond Jesus' power to draw him or her into God's very life together with other people who have repented because of the resurrection of Jesus.

No one is disqualified. And that is why Jesus says preach it to everyone. That is the great mission of the church. It is not just about people in the pulpit like me talking to lots of people. It is also every time a Christian is sharing with their friend or family member talking about the resurrection the gift of the forgiveness of sins.

This is being proclaimed in the world. It is what we are as Christians most called to do. And then finally a final meaning of the resurrection is that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit.

This is a wonderful gift. This is a personal gift of God coming into our lives. Jesus said if I leave then I will send you the Holy Spirit the Comforter the Counselor the one who leads you into all truth.

[21 : 47] He will be in you filling you personally. Jesus says in this passage as we go on that go up to Jerusalem and behold he calls it the city behold I send the promise of my Father upon you but stay in the city until you are clothed with power on on high.

The promise of the Father is this Holy Spirit and what we see here is that it is power it is God's power and we see that in Pentecost 50 days later.

But what is the power for? Well it implies here you are witnesses so the implication is that it is power to be a faithful witness of Jesus a faithful witness that Jesus is risen and that he is in your life and the Holy Spirit gives you power to know the reality of that resurrection and to speak about that reality as well.

We cannot see the Holy Spirit but his work is unmistakable. It's one of the things that we can see and observe around us. It is through him that you have spiritual life.

Through that spirit you know God's love. You know that you are God's child forever. By the Holy Spirit's power Jesus changes hearts and minds now so that you love the risen Jesus and you want to obey him.

[23 : 11] And that reality of the resurrection is confirmed every time you see people being changed by God's power from the inside out. And you know you see it in the lives of the people in that room.

Fifty days later on the day of Pentecost they go from very frightened confused people to people who are very boldly talking on the streets about the fact that Jesus rose again and telling people to put their trust in him that he has fulfilled all that they know about the scripture.

It's an extraordinary change and it is the reality of the resurrection that changed him. the Holy Spirit doing a powerful work in them that would start then and continue throughout their lives.

So I want to close by saying that the promise of the Holy Spirit is for you and it is for me as well. It is the gift of the resurrection that the Holy Spirit that Jesus gives would be ours, would fill our lives. and the goal of the work of the Holy Spirit really sums up the greatest joy of Easter. And I want to describe that goal of what the Holy Spirit is doing in the lives of people that he fills.

[24 : 24] It is from what John says in 1 John 3 2. And remember John was there on that first Easter day. He was one of those people seeing the solid Jesus resurrected from the dead.

He says this, Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when Jesus appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Now I think this is the greatest joy we have at Easter, that Jesus will come again. And the promise here is that we will be like him and we will see him.

This is the deepest heart's longing and joy of every Christian is that we would see Jesus just as those people on the first Easter day did and to see him in all his glory and to know that we love him and that he has rescued us.

It is the greatest joy that comes because of the reality of the resurrection and that resurrection guarantees it. And that's why we say today, Alleluia, Christ is risen.

[25 : 37] He is risen indeed. Alleluia. Let us pray. There will be brief pauses between prayers when you may add your own intercessions in the quietness of your hearts.

Heavenly Father, today, this Easter morning, we rejoice in the resurrection of your son, Jesus. For each one of us, Jesus conquered death and rose again to break the power of sin in our lives, to banish all fear from our hearts, and to give us inward rest and peace.

Thank you, Father, that as we turn to you in repentance and know your forgiveness, we receive the gift of your Holy Spirit in our lives and know your resurrection power.

Help us then to participate in your worldwide rescue work of bringing others to you, obedient and faithful and strengthened by your grace.

Father, our world is in turmoil.

[27 : 07] Please protect Christians in Joss, Nigeria, who are in danger, many of whom have died for their faith in recent conflicts. peace. We pray for peace for the people of Afghanistan.

Thank you, Father, for the Canadian Armed Forces who serve there. Please protect them day by day. Give them every provision for their work and sustain them and their families.

Almighty Father, we thank you for our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church.

Please bring your healing to affected individuals and communities caught up in the present crisis.

And we remember our own Anglican communion, which struggles with tensions and divisions.

Father, we pray that we might come under your word in all aspects of our life together. We

remember our bishops, Don Harvey, Trevor Walters, Stephen Leung, and Charlie Masters.

[28 : 34] Thank you for their leadership. Give them your strength and protection. your family.

Dear Father, we lift up our own family of St. John's. Continue to show us the way forward as a community, keeping us united and always looking to you.

Thank you for our clergy and staff who serve us unstintingly and lovingly. By your Holy Spirit, may they and their families receive every spiritual blessing to do what God has called them to do.

We remember David and Bronwyn and pray for David's continued healing and restoration.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for those involved in the recent short-term mission to Cambodia, a team who saw a lot of difficult things along with your powerful redemption.

We pray for your restoration as they assimilate and debrief in the coming weeks. Lord, we take a few moments to pray for those in our church family who are ill or in any kind of need.

[30 : 16] We remember friends and families, family of Barbara Kermie in their loss, especially her daughter Mary. we lift up to you, Ken and Gail, Rosemary, Rowena, and Sandra.

We thank you, Father, for your love and care for each one of these that they might know your great mercy and healing touch. Lastly, we bring to you a concern or a thanksgiving that may be on our hearts this day.

All these prayers we offer in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.