

Luke 24:36-53

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

Date: 03 September 2023

Preacher: Rev. Will Gray

[0 : 00] Well, as the kids are finding their spots up here on the stage, as Jordan said, this is the last week of our family series, of this series we've been doing in the Gospel of Luke.

And as we come to this last story, the last words in the Gospel of Luke, here's the big idea that I hope we'll all take away from today.

This is the big takeaway, that the seeking, saving love of Jesus is the key to understanding the true story of God and the world.

But first, I'd love it if you would pray with me. Father, we ask that you would open our minds to understand your word this morning.

Teach us, encourage us, correct us, equip us with everything we need as you send us out into the world to love and serve you. Amen.

[0 : 59] So, for the last four weeks, we've been in the Gospel of Luke, hearing stories about how Jesus seeks and saves the lost. In week one of our series, we discovered that Jesus came to seek and save the lost, that this was the purpose of his life and ministry.

In week two, we saw that Jesus has authority on earth to forgive sins. And in weeks three and four, we saw two very different responses to the love and grace of Jesus, in the woman who was forgiven, and the older brother in Jesus' parable, who was self-righteous.

We've been on the ground with Jesus as he seeks and saves the lost, but today, we're going to take the plane up to 30,000 feet to show how knowing his seeking and saving love unlocks the true story of God and the world.

Before we dive into our text, though, I want to give a brief word on the importance of stories. The importance of stories. Stories are a fundamental part of human experience and human communities.

Stories entertain us. They comfort us. But they also form us. The big stories that we believe about the world shape our affections, and they direct our actions.

[2 : 25] For example, if you believe the story of prosperity or consumerism, your life, your time, your energy, even your love, will be aimed at getting more wealth and better things.

Why? Because the story you believe promises that getting more wealth and better things will bring you peace, joy, fulfillment, acceptance. The truth is, we actually can't live without a story to orient our actions and affections.

So, in the absence of a guiding story, a clear way forward, this burden falls on each individual person. I think this is a lot of what we see in our culture today.

People, especially young people, are really being crushed by the burden of creating their own identity, of coming up with their own purpose based on their changing desires, and this flood of stories, often confusing, contradictory stories that they hear and see all around them.

And into this confusion and chaos, Jesus speaks today to show us the true story of the world, and to actually invite us to joyfully participate in that story.

[3 : 51] So, as we turn to Luke 24, we see Jesus teaching his disciples at the great turning point in history.

He was crucified, dead, and buried, and now he appears to his disciples. He speaks his word of peace over them, and he proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that he has truly risen from the dead by showing them his scarred hands inside and by eating with them.

As we said to the kids, this isn't a ghost. This is the same Jesus who was crucified and buried, risen from the dead. And in this decisive moment, Jesus teaches his disciples, and he tells them that all of God's purposes in the past, the present, and the future hold together in him.

Look at verse 44. This is one of the most remarkable verses in scripture. Jesus says, Now, the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms is shorthand for the whole Old Testament.

So, Jesus was claiming that all of history was in some way pointing to him. That God's story of creation, sin, his covenant with Abraham, the Exodus, kings and prophets, all of it was telling one story of God seeking and saving his lost children.

[5 : 38] It was a story of redemption waiting for the Redeemer. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He then opens their minds to see in scripture how he has fulfilled this story, where the story is going next, and what role they would play moving forward.

Look at verse 45. Jesus says, As Dr. Luke said, Every moment of Jesus' life, he was embodying the heart of God for the lost and needy, as he taught and called and healed and delivered and saved people.

But, it is ultimately and most fully in his death and resurrection that Jesus wins the decisive victory over sin and death and secures everything that God had promised for his people.

Forgiveness, eternal life, adoption into God's family, the gift of the Spirit, and the hope of resurrection. When Jesus breathed his first breath in that tomb, the power of sin was broken and death was defeated.

It's difficult, I think, to imagine how startling all of this must have been for the disciples. Luke says in verse 41 that they were disbelieving for joy and were marveling.

[7 : 17] In other words, they were speechless, shocked, dumbfounded. But the story isn't over, and the disciples have a very important role to play in what comes next.

So, Jesus keeps teaching them. He says in verses 47 to 49, Now that he has suffered and risen from the dead, that repentance for the forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.

So, death has been defeated. The curse of sin has been broken. And now the world needs to hear the good news that they can turn from their sin and join the party of found and forgiven sinners.

And Jesus tells the disciples that they will be witnesses of these things. And this is one of the great joys of following Jesus.

He not only seeks us and saves us, he also sends us. He seeks us, saves us, and sends us to seek other lost sinners and to show them the way of salvation.

[8 : 34] And friends, this is the chapter of the story that you and me are living in today. The one who came in humility to seek and save the lost is now ascended in glory.

He is seated on a throne in heaven, ruling over creation. And until Jesus comes again, God will keep seeking, keep saving, keep forgiving, and transforming the lost.

And we get to participate in this amazing work that God is doing. Now, kids, I'm going to wrap up in about two minutes, okay?

Two-minute warning, and then we'd love to see some of what you've created. So, so far we've been flying at about 30,000 feet, surveying the majestic landscape of God's big redemptive story and seeing how it all hangs together in the seeking, saving, and sending love of Jesus.

But now as we close, I want to bring us back down again and ask the question, what does understanding this story do for us as we go back out into the world this week to face the realities of family, work, school, identity, belonging?

[10 : 01] What does understanding this story do for us? Well, we said earlier that stories do two things. They shape our affections, and they direct our actions.

And if you read from the beginning of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, you see both of these things happen in the disciples. You see a radical change in the followers of Jesus as he appears to them and puts together the pieces of this story.

Their confusion turns to understanding. Their regret turns to gratitude and worship. Their fear turns to faith, and their great sorrow turns to great joy and rejoicing.

And these new affections spill over into new actions and purpose. Those who are found by Jesus are not only recipients of his grace.

That's where it begins. We receive the grace of Jesus. But by the power of the Holy Spirit, we actually become active agents of God's grace in the world.

[11 : 11] We become participants in this story. When Jesus appeared to his disciples in our reading today, they were little more than a ragtag band of friends, confused and frankly terrified of suffering the same fate that their master had.

But Jesus doesn't leave them in fear and confusion. He speaks his peace over them. He opens their minds to understand this story, and then he leads them out in great rejoicing to boldly take the good news of repentance and forgiveness to the ends of the earth.

In other words, he empowers them to become participants in his story. And I wonder if you have experienced this kind of transformation.

Do you know the peace and joy that comes from knowing that you are loved and have been found by the creator of the universe and that he will never, ever let you go?

Do you know the sense of purpose that comes from knowing that you have not only been found by the Savior, but that you have been sent by him to love him and to make him known in all that you do?

[12 : 36] In the confusing and crushing flood of stories that we are bombarded with every day, one stands out above all the rest.

It's a story about the God who made us, who loves us, who seeks us and saves us, and sends us in his power and presence to make him known in the world, to be light in the darkness.

This is the true story of the world, and Jesus is calling each and every one of us here today to joyfully take our place in that story, to be his joyful witnesses in the world.

Glory be to God forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[13 : 51] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.