

Jesus Himself Stood Among Them

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to the passage that we read, the Gospel according to Luke chapter 24. And we may read again at verse 36.

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them. Jesus himself stood among them.

It's not entirely clear where this small group of believers were gathered. It may have been the upper room that has such a fragrant place in the life of the church.

But it is not clear, and Luke doesn't tell us. But this small group of believers, they had much to discuss.

Incidentally, I believe that all groups of believers, whether small groups or large groups, have much to discuss, don't they?

[1 : 24] You cannot be touched by the life-changing power of divine grace and experience, the enlightening teaching of the Holy Spirit of God, without having much to discuss.

A silent group of Christians is a contradiction in terms. They should not be silent. They have much to be vocal about.

And even when they are lacking in understanding, they have much to discuss, as is evident from this little group who are set before us in this chapter.

As a group, they had experienced the darkness of deep despondency on seeing their beloved Lord crucified to death.

His death and burial had left them traumatized. But now they were receiving reports that he was alive.

[2 : 45] And it was a lot to take in. Our minds are so finite. And so unable to grasp and understand all the information sometimes that is thrown at us.

Some were unable to accept the reports, for they were still grieving the death of Jesus.

Luke reminds us of this earlier in the chapter, where he records for us the experience of Cleopas and his traveling companion.

They were still sad, despite the reports that they had heard of an empty grave. But in this little group that had gathered, whether it was the upper room, they were beginning to hope that circumstances were not so bleak after all.

Glimmers of light were beginning to percolate into their darkness. Their emotional life was being swept from deep depths of gloom to new heights of joy.

[4 : 07] And the common topic was the rising of the Lord. The Lord has risen indeed. It became synonymous with Easter.

And then Luke gives us this snippet of information. He has appeared to Simon. It is just a snippet of information.

An audience that is shrouded in secrecy. Yet it was known and believed in the early church because there is reference to it.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he appeared to Cephas. Yet there is no report of what took place at this appearance.

And trying to guess what took place would be mere conjecture on my part. But I cannot but think that it was a meeting that was of immense help to the disconsolate disciple.

[5 : 27] Remember, he had come out of the hall of the high priest and had wept bitterly as he reflected on his act of denial.

He may have been asking many questions. He may have been writing hard things against himself. Would the Lord ever draw near to him again? Would he ever enjoy the benefit of fellowship with the Lord again after these acts of denial?

And although we're not told what transpired at that appearing of Christ to Peter, it seems to me that Christ is bringing encouragement and uplift to Peter when he was in the depths.

And perhaps you too are present here this evening or watching or listening via the Zoom link.
[6 : 43] And you can testify to private audiences with your Lord through the truth, which have given you tremendous encouragement.

audiences that have helped you to rise from the depths of darkness. Audiences that have made you appreciate even more the love, compassion, and forgiveness so freely and graciously bestowed upon you.

Audiences that have made you, God, and graciously bestowed upon you. It's just a snippet, but it's worth reflecting on. And then Luke goes on to tell us how this small group were joined by Cleopas and his troubling companion, possibly his wife, and they had retraced their steps to Jerusalem. They came to add their personal testimony to the expanding evidence in support of the claim that Jesus had risen from the dead.

So I want to set you just four thoughts before you. First of all, the presence of Jesus. Secondly, the presence of Jesus.

[8 : 40] He ■ He wrote till when he defted by the coeffula Let me ask you, do you miss it?

We are told that this little group gathered on Sunday evening, and they were exchanging their experience in relation to Christ.

How often have many of you, if not all of you, done exactly the same thing? Again, some of those in that little group had seen the evidence, but others had not.

And Luke tells us while they engaged in this exchange of experience, Jesus himself stood among them. At one level, it is fulfillment of his own promise to his disciples, given in the upper room.

Remember, in John's Gospel, chapter 16, in the upper room, when Jesus says, a little while, and you will see me. And you remember how the disciples pondered over what he meant.

[10 : 12] And then Jesus went on because he recognized that they were mystified by what he was saying. And Jesus says to them, truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.

How the world rejoiced when it thought that Jesus was no more to be a part of the world. How little the world appreciated that it was through death that he was to play a major role in the life of many in the world.

Yes, they rejoiced. And you will weep and lament. And so they did. You will be sorrowful, he says, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

And you remember he went on to use the illustration of the birth of a child. The pains of childbirth in the life of a mother.

Replaced by great joy when a healthy child is born. And then he says, so also you have sorrow.

[11 : 38] But I will see you again. And your hearts will rejoice. And no one will take your joy from you.

And so now they see him. And their sorrow and yes, even their terror. His turn to joy. Their troubles and doubts are removed.

As their great high priest, he had gone into the holy place. He hadn't gone with the blood of an animal. As the type did in the Old Testament.

He had gone with his own blood. He had paid the price demanded by a holy law. The offering was accepted by a holy, righteous God.

And now the returning high priest. He greets them with the benediction. And I'm not sure that you've ever been in a sermon that began with a benediction.

[12 : 51] And was expanded. But that's what happened here. He began. He greets them with a benediction. The word shalom.

It's more than just a polite greeting. In fact, it may even be shortened for the Aaronic benediction. You remember, the Lord bless you and keep you. Which ends, the Lord give you peace. And here is the one who is their peace.

And who preaches peace to them. And they are presented with the visible evidence of resurrection. Jesus simply appeared in the room.

He had risen indeed. And yet there was an element of uncertainty. And to prove that it wasn't some kind of apparition or figment of their imagination.

[13 : 54] We are told. He asks them to touch him. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have.

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands on his feet. He showed them the piercings that marked his body. It's a silent but powerful and effective argument.

And a 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.

But not exactly like ours. The same yet different. He was simply there, spite of the locked doors.

Now, you can tie yourself in knots, trying to work out how he came in. He didn't enter by a window or through the roof.

[15:05] He didn't send for the church officer to open the door or change the lock. He was simply there. And from that, I think we can make this deduction.

Today in your life and 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 youth leader can go. He can go where no friend can go. He can reach you.

And reach into your life. Anywhere. And anytime. No place where you might be. And no depths which constitute you as a person.

Which Jesus cannot penetrate and enter into. Jesus' resurrection from the dead equips him to do what no one else is able to do.

[16:15] And so, he can reach into your life. However broken you may feel tonight. However distressed.

However upsetting your providence might be. However much alone you may feel in the world.

However despondent. Are subject to the forces of any kind of addiction.

He can reach in and touch your life. Do you find comfort in that? I certainly do.

And I hope that you do too. He is the true servant of God. And the Bible reminds us of the character traits of the servant of God.

God. This is how he deals. With those. Whom he has come to minister to. A bruised reed he will not break. And a smoldering wick he will not quench.

[17:18] That's you and me by nature. Broken reeds. Smoldering wicks. And he takes us in our brokenness. And loneliness. And heals. And restores.

And we are reminded too. As I said already. He is the great high priest. And you remember what the writer to the Hebrews. Wrote about this high priest. 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. Let us then with confidence draw 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 Jesus. So that Peter could refer to this moment as he preached Christ.

And you find this recorded in the book of Acts. God raised him on the third day and made him to appeal to all the people. But to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses.

[18:22] 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. No. We do not see him.

Physically or bodily. But we find him in the truth. We find him in the word. He manifests himself to us by his spirit.

And he brings peace. And you have been in fellowships. Where that was very evident. And where that peace was very evident amongst those who constituted the fellowship.

It reminds me possibly because I'm in this congregation at the moment of our gathering. And this is going back over 50 years. I can hardly believe that that amount of time has passed.

And we were gathered in a friend's house. He's no longer living. Nor are many who were in the gathering, I believe. And we had a time of extended worship.

[19:35] And there was one elderly lady present. Who delighted in the fellowship of young people. And most of those who were there were young people then. She was a worthy in this congregation.

The late Mrs. Annie Mackay. And those of the same vintage as myself will know who I speak of. And when the worship came to an end.

She intimated in Gaelic in her own inimitable way. Literally meaning, I believe Satan has gone out beyond Goat Island tonight.

That's as far as she was prepared to allow him to go. Beyond Goat Island. Well, for those of you who are true Star Norwegians, you know where Goat Island is. It's not too far from here. Needless to say, Satan is never far away. Not even as far as Goat Island. But that was her impression during that time of worship.

[20 : 42] The presence of Jesus bringing peace. Turning things around. And that brings me to the second thing that I wish to highlight.

Thought that I wish to highlight. The preeminence of the word. I'm sure you noticed how Luke draws attention again and again in this chapter.

To the prominence. Or the preeminence. Or the place of the word of God. You remember the women who went to the grave at the very beginning of the chapter.

They were pointed back to the word of God. They were met by angels. And you might have thought, well, surely the angels convinced them of the rising of Christ from the dead.

I'm not so sure. That it was the angel that convinced them of the resurrection of Christ. But the teaching of the word of God.

[21 : 47] You remember the angels asked them, why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. And then the angels go on.

They're not waiting for a response. They remind the women of the teaching they had received.

Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified on the third day rise.

And then Luke tells us, they remembered his words. In other words, the teaching of the word of God resonated with these women.

And convinced them and convicted them of the truth of the rising of Christ from the dead. And you see this emphasis, again, in the account of the experience of the two on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus, you know, Jesus doesn't immediately tell them, I'm Jesus. I'm the one who was buried. I'm the one whom you saw crucified and laid in the grave.

[23 : 01] He doesn't tell them that immediately. He takes them through the scriptures. And you remember, as he places the teaching of the truth before their minds and hearts, that this teaching bore fruit.

Their hearts were strangely warmed by the teaching they received. And as soon as they recognized him, there arose a compulsion to share with others what they had experienced, the lively Christian has a generous heart.

The lively Christian doesn't wish to keep to themselves what they experience in the fellowship of Christ.

They wish to share it. Not for any glory on their own part, but that Christ may have all the glory. It is all part of fellowshiping, giving and receiving.

And so you have the word taught again to those somewhat bemused early believers in this room. And when you look at the sermon that Christ preached, I want to have a better term, it's a real humdinger of a sermon, isn't it?

[24 : 23] Where he preaches there. It's a marvelous Easter sermon. Now, I know that some will say there's a gap here and that Luke is condensing a lot of things into a few verses.

It's not altogether clear. Some would say there was a space of days between standing among them and the preaching of the sermon or setting the word before them.

But the word is set before them. And when you look at the sermon, it's biblical. It's Christ-centered. It's evangelistic.

It's mission-orientated. And Jesus explains to them again what he had taught previously, but which remained deeply mysterious to them.

And aren't you glad how patient Jesus is with all of us? And how many times we have to have the same truths set before us until we are able to get a grasp of them, until we are able to understand them.

[25 : 31] And so he sets the truths before them. Notice what he says. He doesn't begin with the physical reality of his own resurrection.

But he begins with the infallible word of God. These are my words that 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.

That truly tells us that he wished their experience of the resurrection to be grounded on the massive testimony and perspective of scripture, of the word of God.

When he speaks of the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms, it's really shortened for the whole of the Old Testament. Now, remember, those who comprised this little group had difficulty in understanding the truth.

But Jesus didn't decide that he would use a different methodology other than the word. He persisted in his teaching of the word of God.

[26 : 45] He didn't decide that the word of God was too difficult and therefore he would put it to one side. What he had taught before, he taught again. And then Luke tells us of the penny dropping moment in their lives.

You know, you may be speaking to someone. And you can tell by their, well, in the days when you could see their face, you could tell that they're not following you.

They're not getting it. And then all of a sudden you can see what I call a penny dropping moment.

And faces light up. And people grasp what you are saying to them.

That's what happened here. Some of the theologians call it an aha moment. Not a funny moment.

But the kind of moment where suddenly you understand what has been said before you.

Now, I think we can all follow that. We may have had questions about conversing. We may have been questioning our own minds. How do people come? To follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

[28 : 07] We may have been asking questions. Did they hear something? Did they see something? And all of these, until we understood. And there's your penny dropping moment.

You were to see Christ. And find Christ. In the ministry of the word. So that the way of salvation.

Became clear to you. And perhaps you were then saying. Why did I not understand this before?

And the answer is.

Because you and I needed. Our minds to be. Opened. And that's the work of God. Remember what Paul taught.

In writing to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 2.14. The natural person does not accept. The things of the spirit of God. For they are folly to me. He is not able to understand them.

[29 : 07] Because they are spiritually discerned. No matter how great. Our intellectual powers. The gospel always. Remains a mystery. Until God enables us.

To understand. It's not something we arrive at. Through our mental powers. And faculties. However. However.

Intellectual they might be. It is God. Who enables every person. To understand. And here. Christ.

Christ preached himself. Crucified and risen. Suffering. Suffering. Suffering. Suffering. Suffering.

Suffering. And rising again. And he did it. From the whole of the New Old Testament. All of the Old Testament.

It reminds me of a discussion. I had a way back. I had a way back with a fellow students. In the days of divinity study. And he came from a different background.

[30 : 07] To my own. A very different background. He had come from a non-Psalms background.

And he used to extol the virtues of many hymns. Which spoke of Christ in his sufferings.

Death and resurrection. And so they do. And he would claim that the Psalms were silent. On such matters. But Jesus never thought.

That the Psalms were silent. On the sufferings. Or the death. Or the resurrection. Of the Lord.

Nor do I hope to you. Everything he says. 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's such a rich vein there. A lifetime of study. Many penny drop in Mormons. The preeminence of the word.

[31 : 08] Bringing illumination and understanding. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The presence of Jesus. Bringing peace. Thirdly the purpose of the word. Thus it is written.

That the Christ should suffer. And on the third day rise from the dead. That repentance and forgiveness of sin. Should be proclaimed in his name. To all nations. Beginning from Jerusalem.

And when you reflect on that. Do you not see that it is all part. Of God's providential plan.

Let's go right back into. Biblical revelation. Remember what you find God saying to Abraham. In your offspring. In your offspring. Shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

You see. The mission. Purpose. Is not something new. It was in the providential plan of God. God.

[32 : 11] And could Jesus not have said. To this very small gathering. I am that offspring. And it is through my death and resurrection.

That they shall be blessed. Remember how. The words of Psalm 2. Where God the Father is speaking to God. The Son.

Ask of me and I will make the nations. Your heritage on the ends of the earth. Your possession. And so Jesus explains to this group. What the result of his resurrection will be.

It is. You. And my conversion. And salvation. And that is the. The purpose.

Of the word. It is. For evangelizing. It is the whole thrust of the word. Ever since. Ever since. The. The man fell.

[33 : 10] God. Through the word. Has been calling people to repentance. And you'll remember the graphic picture set before us. Psalm 103. Of the nature of the forgiveness that is conferred.

As far. As the east is from the west. So far. Does he remove our transgressions. From us. So the purpose of the word.

Is not only to instruct. About the sufferings. Death. And resurrection of the Lord. But the necessity. Of mission outreach. It's a global work.

And. We. Who are believers. Are not exempt. From this. Mammoth work. You are witnesses. Of these things. They were eyewitnesses.

They could write as John. The apostle John. Did 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.

[34 : 07] We have not seen them in the sense. That they did. Physically. But we are witnesses. Nonetheless. We know the gospel message. We've heard. The Easter story.

We're tasked with the. With the. With the. With the. With spreading. The good news. To all nations. And all nations. Doesn't mean people. Far from us. They may be in our own homes.

In our families. Next door neighbors. In our streets. Or in the area. That we live in. And we are tasked. With being witnesses to them.

Remember. The great commission. Go therefore. And make disciples of all. Baptizing them. In the name of the father. And 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. To become fired. With mission seal. The preeminence of the word.

[35 : 05] Bringing illumination. And understanding. Through the ministry. Of the holy spirit. The presence of Jesus. Bringing peace. Finally. The power. Required. Behold. I am sending. The promise of my father.

Upon you. But stay in the city. Until you are. Clothed. With power. From on high. Look at the outside.

Of his gospel. Writing of the incarnation. Of Christ. Draws our attention. To the power. Of the most high. Over shadowing.

Mary. Here. Almost at the close. Of his gospel. He speaks. Of being clothed. With power. From on high.

He's speaking. Of the ministry. Of the holy spirit. This is what. The early church needed. Is what the 21st century.

[36 : 00] Church needs. It was only. When the holy spirit. Came on the apostles. That they received. The power. To witness. As we know. From the book of Acts.

How. This became. True of them. While we believe. That. That Pentecost. Was a once for all. Time. Event. Can we not say. That. Repeatable. Elements. Were built into it. The empowering.

To witness. Was not limited. To the simple event. Of Pentecost. Nor to be the exclusive. Right. Of the apostles. It extended.

Beyond their persons. And their time. And is this not. What we still need. Today.

[36 : 58] Power. From on high. For the furthest. Of the gospel. Do we pray for it. Do we think of it.

As a huge must. Because without it. We're not equipped. To evangelize.

Without it. We're not equipped. To become effective missionaries. To the nations. We need the power. Of the Holy Spirit.

How do we receive it? Could I suggest. It is by being. More with Jesus. Engaging in.

In serious. Intercession. In his name. Meditating more. On his glories. Peace. And I suppose.

[37 : 56] What I'm suggesting. Involves. Waiting on him. And waiting on him. In order to be anointed.

And I think I ought to add. That waiting on him. Involves. Being emptied. In order to be filled. Out. This power.

Is the only. Effective power. That will equip us. To be. Missionaries. For Christ.

The presence of Christ. Bringing peace. The prominence 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. The power required. That. Of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray. Oh eternal God.

[39 : 03] We pray. For the clothing. That would equip us. And fit us. For the work. To which we are truly called.

O Lord. Forbid. That we go forth. With naked zeal. Without seeking. The clothing.

That rightly equips. And makes true missionaries. For thee. That thy word. Go forth. With conviction. And power.

Through the testimony. Of those. Who are thy witnesses. That it bear fruit. To the glory. Of thy great name.

Bless. Our gathering. Together. In thy name. This evening. Bless those. Who may have joined. Via the soon link. Bless those.

[40 : 02] Who may be feeling lonely. And forsaken. Throughout. These days. Of pandemic. O Lord. Be gracious. To all such.

Those who are so conscious. Of the. Limitations. That are imposed. Upon them. Who may feel. That they are imprisoned.

Throughout. These days. And months. And now a year. And as we have heard. Before. We commit. To thy care.

And keeping. Those today. Who have buried. A loved one. Be near to them. And tender. With them. That they might know.

That thou art indeed. Close to them. And that thou art indeed. That God. And that Lord. As they mourn. The loss.

[40 : 59] Of a loved one. Take us all. In safety. To our respective homes. Bless. Bless. The congregation. And all the congregations.

The branch of thy church. That we represent. Bless all that is done. To instruct. Arising generation. And prepare.

Them to go out. As ministers of the word. O Lord. Add to the number. Who are seeking thee. Days of small things.

We pray. For the power. From on high. To come upon us. That we might see. Days of quickening. Days of reviving.

Power. Days. When. When. The work. Of the spirit. Of God. May be.

[41 : 57] Amply seen. Throughout. Our land. Help us. During these days. Of. Pre-election. Help us.

To be prayerful. At the throne. With regard. To the choices. That are set. Before us. Oh Lord. Undertake for us. Cleanse in the blood.

And now. May the grace. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. The love of God. The Father. Fellowship. And communion. Of the Holy Spirit. Rest on.

And abide. With you all. Now. And forever. Amen. Amen.