

# Mission of the Risen King

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. It's good to be here with you. I don't know about you. This past week for me has been a particularly challenging one.

Personal disappointments, the news of others who are suffering in various ways, not only because of this virus, but exacerbated by this virus as they face other challenges.

It's just been a harder week. I've battled to have my hope maintained, and I've found myself at times struggling to not fall into despair.

I find myself crying like the man who cried out to Jesus. I believe help my unbelief. I think that's a common struggle that we may be facing in our world today and in our lives in general, and maybe particularly in this most unusual season that we are in.

As we come to the end of the book of Luke, this is the end of our series, we come to a situation where the disciples are believing and not believing as well. We saw last week that Jesus met with some of the disciples as they were walking away from Jerusalem in despair and discouragement.

[ 1 : 29 ] And as he met with them, he revealed himself to them, and he opened their eyes to see that he indeed was risen from the dead. And so we see in Luke 24, 34, that he returns, or that these disciples returned to Jerusalem to talk to the 12 apostles and the disciples, and they're all together saying, the Lord is risen indeed.

So believing, they're rejoicing. And yet Jesus is not done with them, and he has more for them. And this is the passage that we're going to look at this morning.

They believe, and yet they don't believe. And as he reveals himself to them in that context, he anchors them in their faith, and he launches them out into the world to be witnesses to him as a resurrected Savior.

And my friends, this is the hope, is that this passage can do the same for us this morning. So let's look. We're in Luke chapter 24, starting in verse 36 to the end.

So let's go ahead and read that together, and then we can pray. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace to you.

[ 2 : 51 ] But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, Why are you troubled? And why do you doubt? Why do doubts arise in your heart?

See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have.

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, Have you anything here to eat?

And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it before them. Then he said to them, 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.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

[ 4 : 05 ] You are witnesses of these things. And 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.

And then he led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple, blessing God.

Let's pray together. Lord, even as you helped the disciples so long ago, we ask today that you would do for us.

Lord, that you would open up our minds so that we would understand the scriptures. And Lord, that as you open up our minds to give us understanding, Lord, you would strengthen our faith.

Lord, that you would fill our hearts with joy. And Lord, that we would be moved to worship and proclaim you as we understand this passage this morning.

[ 5 : 15 ] Holy Spirit, I pray for your help, both for me as I speak and for all as we listen to your word, Lord, that you would help us this morning to believe.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, this is the final resurrection appearance of Jesus in the book of Luke.

And remember, if you aren't aware, that Luke is actually the first half of a two-book series. The book of Acts was Luke's second volume that continues the work of Christ through the church, the proclamation of his name and the work that he does in building his church.

But here we see Jesus at this last section, anchoring his followers in a truth that cannot be denied and launching his followers into a mission that will consume their lives.

So let's look at those two things in order, a truth to be anchored and then a mission to be launched into. First, we're going to look at 24, 36 through 47, a truth to be anchored in.

[ 6 : 33 ] The truth is that Jesus really did rise from the dead. And they become eyewitnesses of this as they see him in his resurrection body.

Now, it's a fascinating story because we've already seen Jesus appear to people. He's appeared to Mary. He's appeared to Clopas. Peter went and saw the empty tomb.

There are a number of people who have already have real evidence of Jesus rising from the dead and they have all gathered back together and they're trading these accounts and they're comparing them.

And it seemed, as we said in verse 34, that they did believe it. And yet, Jesus then shows up in their midst and as is not unexpected because no one had ever seen someone be raised from the dead like this before.

They didn't believe it. Jesus steps into the midst of them and he knows their response and so he says, peace be with you. Don't be afraid. And yet, they are afraid.

[ 7 : 42 ] They think they've seen a ghost. They think they've seen a spirit because this was all that they could imagine. If coming back from the dead meant anything, it meant this, that you would come back as some kind of spirit and they were terrified.

And Jesus is so gracious and gentle with them. Why are you so troubled? Why do doubts rise in your heart? Look at me.

See that it is really I. Look at the way that he says this in verse 39. See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. He repeats that.

In Greek, it comes out so strongly. It is really me. I am the one that is standing before you. This is not just a vision. This is not a dream. It is really me. You can see.

And not only say you can see me, but it says touch me. And touch actually has the sense of being handled. You can put your hands on me and know that it is really me. Because spirits you can't touch, they don't have flesh and bone the way I do.

[ 8 : 47 ] And then he said this, and he showed them, and he showed them especially, his hands and his feet. His hands and his feet with the marks of the crucifixion, the marks of his death just three days ago, just recently where he had gained these scars that would be on his physical body forever, remembering his death for them.

This is not just a vision of a spirit, but this is Jesus, the real one who hung on the cross, risen again. It's remarkable.

And they believe, and yet there's this great phrase in verse 39, right? And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, it's kind of like, I remember when I was in college, me and my brothers conspired to travel back to visit my parents for their 25th anniversary.

They didn't know that anyone was, no, one of my brothers had planned to go home and celebrate with them, and the rest of us were, you know, off living in other parts of the country. And we managed to surprise them so that we just drove into the driveway together and opened the door, and there we were.

And mom and dad said, I can't believe you're here, with joy and marveling. And I think that's what the disciples are doing here. Like, I can't believe you're here. It's joy, it's wonder, it's amazement, it's still a little doubting.

[ 10 : 25 ] Like, is this really true? Is this really happening? So Jesus appears to them, and he's so gracious. He just casually says, hey, do you have any leftovers around?

Can I get something to eat? And this is not a throwaway. It's a weird detail, isn't it? But it's not a throwaway. Jesus is intentionally saying, you can see me, you can touch me, now watch.

Spirits don't eat food. There's no body to put the food in. It just doesn't happen. And so he picks up a piece of bread, and he eats it. And in doing this, he's establishing for his disciples, not just Mary, not just Clopas, although how gracious it is that God started with them, but now even the twelve, they are all eyewitnesses to the living flesh and blood, risen Jesus Christ.

And having done this then, he goes on in the next couple of verses to open their minds so that they can not only see him, but so they can understand what it is that he is doing.

So they can understand what it means for what they're seeing. Having satisfied their eyes, now he's going to help their minds to understand.

[ 11 : 53 ] And this is the fourth time in chapter 24 of Luke that Jesus says again that the Christ must suffer and die and then be raised again.

It's the fourth account where this is the basic storyline of the life of Jesus, that he came to suffer and to die and then to rise again.

And Jesus says, this is what I've told you all along. This is what the Old Testament is talking about when he says in verse 44, the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms.

Those aren't particular books of the Bible. He's actually using that as shorthand for the whole Old Testament. The law of Moses would have been the Pentateuch. The prophets included not only the latter prophets, which we think of like Isaiah or Jeremiah and the minor prophets, but also the former prophets, what we normally call the historical books, which are telling forth about what's true about what God did in the world in establishing the kingdom of Israel.

And then the Psalms doesn't just mean the book of Psalms, but includes all the wisdom literature.

So Jesus is saying the whole Old Testament was talking about me.

[ 13 : 09 ] Maybe he was thinking about Leviticus 16 and the sacrifice of atonement done in the temple.

Maybe he was thinking about Psalm 22. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The cry of hope and dereliction at the cross.

Maybe he was thinking of Exodus 34, 6, where Jesus reveals, or when God reveals himself to Moses, says, I am the Lord, slow to anger and abounding and loving kindness from generation to generation.

Maybe he was talking about 2 Samuel 7, where he tells David, makes a covenant with King David, that there will be a kingdom upon which one of his descendants will sit, which will reign forever and ever.

and maybe lots more of the Old Testament. One commentator says this. He's talking about the need for the payment of sins, including sacrificial victims, the pervasive theme of suffering in the Psalter, the comprehensive testimony of the Old Testament to God's mercy, love, and forgiveness of the penitent, and the increasing specifications of the Old Testament covenants, culminating in Jeremiah 31, 31 through 34, and Ezekiel 36, 25 through 28.

[ 14 : 38 ] Both of those last prophecies talking about a new covenant that is to come when God will come, make a new covenant with his people where he will take the law and he will write it in their hearts, and he will renew their hearts of stone and give them a heart of flesh where the Holy Spirit will come and make them born again.

It says, all of these things are leading and pointing to Jesus, the first one who was born again as he was raised from the dead.

Why is this so important for Jesus to say this again? He already did this with Clopas and his friend on the way to Emmaus. He's already done this once. Why is he doing it again? Pastor Kent Hughes former pastor of a church in Wheaton, Illinois, said this, Jesus did not want them to rest their belief in his resurrection on their personal experience alone.

He was not interested in an elite group with a special knowledge or experience of Christ. Resting their faith on a miracle was not sufficient.

He wanted them to ground their experience of his resurrection on the massive testimony of Scripture. So their establishment as eyewitnesses isn't simply that they were there and they could see it, but now he's opening their minds so that they can see that this book testifies about Jesus

from start to finish, and that in that understanding it is rich and meaningful and has cosmic power.  
[16:27] And with this power, with this understanding, then comes the call of proclamation. Do you see the three things that Jesus said in 46?

Thus it is written, the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise. And then verse 47, and then his message should be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

You see, because if Jesus really did rise from the dead, and if it really is true, what the Bible says about the significance of that, it changes everything.

This is my own experience. Having grown up knowing something about Christianity, Christianity, but not really understanding Christ and the gospel.

In high school, I had friends who believed in Christ, and they shared with me by their lives and by their love and by their words more about who Jesus is and what he did.

[17:30] In the end, someone gave me a copy of Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis, and as I read it, my mind was opened, and I became convinced that Jesus really was who he said he was in the Bible.

And if Jesus really was that, then it changed everything. It called me to respond. It called me to have to make a decision.

Do I believe and entrust myself to this Savior or not? And if it's true, then not only do I have to respond, but that it's a message that must be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

And so, we come to the second point. Not only does Jesus anchor his followers in a truth about his resurrection, but having anchored him, then he launches them out into the world to proclaim this good news, to be on a mission that they are launched into.

And this is a focal point. You see this in verse 48 and following. You are witnesses of these things. And he's not merely saying you are passive recipients of these things.

[18:54] He's saying witnesses who must now testify, witnesses who now must stand in the court of public opinion and say, this is what I have seen and heard and know is true.

He says to his disciples, this is what I have called you to do. And this is what he says to his disciples even today. This is what I have called you to do. And look, we need to recognize one thing.

We are not eyewitnesses in the same way, are we? And yet, Daryl Bach, one of the commentators on Luke, says this, we are witnesses, however, in a different sense than these original disciples. They testified to what they saw, whereas we bear witness to their testimony and to our experience of the resurrected Jesus.

God's call wasn't simply for the first group of people in that room, men and women, who saw him to tell the story for one generation and then for it to fade, but that they would be a model and that their eyewitness testimony becomes the basis upon which we have a testimony and a witness for us to share throughout all generations.

[20:15] This is what the passage that Laura read earlier from 1 John says, what we have seen, what we have heard, what we have touched with our hands. This is what we proclaim and pass along to you so that you may have the joy of knowing Christ.

Friends, this is why this book is so important because we are not without testimony. We are not without evidence that this is true. The whole book of the Bible and particularly the New Testament testifies to the reality of this and empowers us to be witnesses as well.

What are we empowered to do as witnesses? Well, there are a couple of things. One, being witnesses means we have something to say. In verse 47, it says, what do we have to say?

We have to talk about repentance and forgiveness in the name of Jesus. Repentance means that there's a call to respond to the truth of the resurrection.

Repentance is a response of turning away from other things, turning away from other ways in which we might try to become right with God or to save ourselves or to make us right in the universe.

[21:31] It is turning from all of those other things and turning to Jesus because he rose from the dead. Why? Because he has achieved forgiveness of sins on our behalf.

If repentance is the response that we're calling people to, forgiveness is the offer that we're giving to them. Not because we can do it, but because Jesus has already done it.

You see, the whole story of the gospel is that Jesus came to bear the sin of human beings, of you and me, as we reject and deny God on a regular basis by our unbelief by our willful independence, by our self-salvation.

And Jesus came to die on the cross for those sins so that we might not bear the wrath of God against those sins, but rather that we might receive forgiveness because the sins have been paid for by Jesus.

And so rather than them being in our account, the account has been cleared. And we are now able to come to God in trusting faith.

[ 22 : 45 ] This is what Jesus has done for us. And so repentance is the call to respond.

Forgiveness is the offer that's given out in Jesus' name. That is on the basis of what Jesus has done and who He is.

Jesus, our substitute and our Savior. Jesus, by His resurrection, the one who has victory over sin and death and is declared to be vindicated as the Son of God.

A resurrected Christ calls the world to respond. and in that response results in a new relationship with God.

Friends, I don't know if you've thought about this. There are many today in our world who think aren't all religions the same? They believe in a higher power. They try to make us better people. They're hoping, you know, ideally to improve the world.

And sure, some of those things are similar across the board. But Christianity is distinct in this very thing.

[ 24 : 03 ] It claims that God came to earth and lived and died and rose again. And if He did that, that is the most important thing that we would ever know.

No other religion teaches that. This is the thing that I had to wrestle with on my own journey to faith and this is what we all have to wrestle with as the world, as Christ is proclaimed.

Friends, I wonder what do we preach? And by that, I don't mean standing on a street corner or sitting up here in a pulpit. But by our lives, what do we say?

Jesus is a friend is a friend next to you. Jesus is one who comes and helps us in our troubles. Jesus will heal your diseases.

Jesus is going to bring meaning and purpose and richness to your life. Friends, I'll tell you what, all those things are true and they're wonderful truths about who Jesus is.

[ 25 : 12 ] but the core of the gospel is that Jesus came to die for sinners like you and me. And by rising from the dead, he achieved a salvation for us whereby we may have peace with God, forgiveness of sin, and eternal life with us.

are we ashamed to talk about that? Are we embarrassed to talk about a resurrected Savior? Are we convinced in our own mind that it really did happen?

Can we explain its significance? Friends, it's good for us to know and to grow in our understanding and our ability to explain it to others.

I want to point you to a few resources. We're going to put them up on the stream in the chat. They'll also be on our website. One of the great resources out there is actually one of our elders, James Choi, on his faculty page in the School of Management at Yale.

James Choi, you can look it up, Google his name. He has a great thing called Why I Am a Christian and it is a page worth looking at.

[ 26 : 33 ] There are some other resources out there that I think are wonderful resources for you to become established and convinced about the resurrection and understanding of it. William Lane Craig wrote a book called The Sun Rises.

There's also a great book out there. It's edited by a guy named David Baggett but it's called Did the Resurrection Happen? And it's a conversation and actually an ongoing conversation between Gary Habermas and Anthony Flew.

Anthony Flew was an atheist and Gary Habermas was a Christian and they debated the evidence for the resurrection but this book is 20 years later talking about the evolution of their conversation and involving some other people in the conversation to talk about it.

It's a wonderful exchange. And for those of you who are scholars, N.T. Wright, the resurrection and the Son of God is an overwhelmingly convincing narrative testifying to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And if you're out there, if you're in seminary or if you're in divinity school or if you're in religious studies classes and you're wrestling with this at a whole other level, this is the book for you to go to.

[ 27 : 52 ] It's about 700 pages. It's not easy. I'm not going to lie. But it's a wonderful resource for you to be convinced, for you to know these things.

Friends, these are ways that you can be equipped to be convinced of and understand why we believe the resurrection. but I'll tell you what, you don't have to know all those things to be able to bear witness.

You don't have to be a New Testament scholar. You do need to know His Word to know how it is an account of Jesus raised from the dead and to be willing to stand up and say, this is what we know. This is what we know. And if this is true, it changes everything. So witnesses have something to share, don't they?

But they also have a world to tell. Jesus goes on in verse 47 and He says, repentance and forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in His name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem.

[ 29 : 08 ] And this is an amazing thing, right? Because Jerusalem has been the terminal point of Jesus' life and ministry. He ends up there to accomplish His work of salvation by dying and rising from the dead.

But now Jerusalem, according to Jesus, is the launching point. It is the place from where this sound is going to go out to the ends of the earth to all people.

And of course, this has always been God's plan. This was not a new thought like, hey, we've got a great product. Let's see how many people we can sell it to. This has always been God's plan.

Going all the way back to Genesis 12, God comes to Abraham and He says, I am calling you to trust in Me and to follow Me and I will make you a father of great nations and I will bless you and I will make you a blessing to all peoples of the earth.

in the very beginning of God establishing His redemptive work, He said, the goal of this is that the whole world would be blessed. And we see it throughout Scripture.

[ 30 : 13 ] Isaiah 49, verse 6 says, it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob to bring back the preserved of Israel.

I will make you a light to the nations that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth. Or Psalm 22, 27, all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord and all the families and the nations of the nations shall worship before you.

And friends, this doesn't seem new to us, but in the first century where Jesus, as a Jew, coming among Jews primarily, initially, this was momentous.

Now Luke has given us hints all the way along where Roman centurions and Syrophenician women and all sorts of people are being brought in from the outside. But Jesus, risen from the dead, I have not come just for the Jews, but for the Greeks, for the Ethiopians and the Arabs and the Persians and all the peoples around in their world.

and now we know that he meant as well the Laotians and the French and the Aleutians and the Quechua and the Russians and the Maasai and people from every continent, from every people group, from every tribe and language and tongue.

[ 31 : 45 ] And we know this because in Revelation there's a picture of God gathering people from every tribe and tongue and nation around the throne worshipping Jesus. Friends, if you've ever wondered whether Christianity is an exclusive religion, whether it is inaccessible, whether it is only for a certain group of people, here we see so clearly it is not.

God has opened wide the doors of his banquet hall to the world and he has said by the proclamation of Jesus to the end of the world, he is inviting everyone to come in.

Come and take part in his salvation banquet. Turn from the fruitless meals of your own life and feast here in Jesus. Believe in him.

He's not just the savior of a tribe, but he's the savior of the whole world. Friends, we here at Trinity have a great opportunity because we live in a wonderful city that is a crossroads.

Did you know that over 16% of people who live in New Haven were not born in America? It's really interesting, isn't it? Yeah. It's a high percentage, far higher than the national average.

[ 33 : 11 ] Because we have universities that are world-renowned, because we are a sanctuary city for refugees, we have people from all over the world who are our neighbors and our friends and our co-workers.

What an opportunity we have to bear witness to Jesus to the ends of the earth right here. But I also want you to know that the elders at Trinity pray regularly that we would not merely be a place, a church that witnesses here, though we want to do that well.

But we pray that some of us from our midst would hear the call to go to places like Jonathan and Natalie, go to places where Christ is not known, go to places where people have not heard about a

resurrected Savior, that they would be willing to spend their lives doing this.

We pray that Trinity would be a church that launches people into the world ready to be witnesses for them. So what about you?

Are you ready to be a witness? Whether near or far, are you ready to stand and tell the story of Jesus who came and lived and died and rose again for our salvation?

[ 34 : 37 ] Feels pretty daunting, I'll bet, to many of you, as it does to me often. The good news is that Jesus knows how hard it is. And so at the very end of this passage we see two things that give us great hope.

One, in verse 49, he gives us a promise that we don't have to do this alone. Luke says it very briefly. He'll expand on this in the book of Acts hugely.

That he is going away to the Father so that the Father can send the Holy Spirit down on his disciples to empower them and fill them with confidence and joy in the resurrected Christ and to loosen their tongues to proclaim him.

And so he tells them, go to Jerusalem and wait because this is the next move. I'm going to pour out my Spirit and I'm going to empower you for this mission that I've called you to.

And then finally, look at the way that these disciples end their days. He led them out as far as Bethany and they lift him and he blessed them and he goes up to heaven.

[ 35 : 48 ] And again, this is a very brief account of what we see more expanded at the beginning of the book of Acts where Jesus bodily raises up, right, so that he's with the Father sending the Spirit with the promise that he will come again.

And the effect of this is that when he had parted from them and was carried up to heaven, what did they do? They didn't say, huh, that was weird and go home.

It's what I might have done. Instead, they go back to Jerusalem as he told them and they worshipped in the temple. And remember, the temple was the very place where four days ago the leaders of the temple had crucified Jesus and they're going right back to that place to worship God with great joy anticipating God's helping power coming upon them so that they will live out this calling.

if at the beginning of this passage they were still where I am often, I believe, Lord, help my unbelief. At the end of this passage, they are worshipping courageously in the face of their enemies with joy because they have seen and know that Jesus is risen from the dead.

[ 37 : 19 ] May that be ours as well. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this passage. We thank you for the way that it comforts us, the way that it challenges us, and the way that it calls us.

Lord, I pray for those this morning who may be wrestling with the truth of the resurrection. Lord, will you come alongside of them and equip them and help them to know and to understand this truth.

Lord, I pray for all of us that we would be strengthened in our faith, filled with joy, and that our tongues would be loosened to bear witness that Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Lord, Lord, that we would do this here in New Haven and in the New Haven area and to the ends of the earth.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.