

A good ending can make or break a story. When you read a story that just nails the ending. Everything gets tied together, and it leads to the resolution that the story demanded whether it's a happy one or a tragic one. It can be the kind of story that stays with you forever. They're also times that the story falls on its face. Or you get to the end and I just kind of peters out. Some endings can be so bad that they ruin everything that's come before. There have been two different television shows that I watched for years that had endings so bad it made me never wanna watch any of it ever again it made me feel like I've wasted my time.

This morning, we are finally to the end of the gospel of Luke. I told you at the beginning that the Message of Luke is Jesus is the promised King who came to preach and enact His kingdom, which is for all people, through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Now we are at the end

And it is significant because the story in the gospel of Luke ends in a unique way. Luke is the only gospel writer who tells us about the ascension of Jesus. When Jesus ascended up into the heavens in front of witnesses.

What I want to see this morning is how the ascension of Jesus and how the end of the gospel of Luke should inform the way that we think about Jesus' life, ministry, and what it requires of us. There are three things that we need to understand and leave the story of Jesus with.

Turn your Bible to Luke 24:26-53

I. The resurrection was physical (v. 36-43).

The first thing that we need to understand as we finish, the gospel of Luke is the resurrection of Jesus was a physical resurrection.

It was a physical, literal, and true resurrection of the body of Jesus.

The same Jesus that went into the grave is the same Jesus who was resurrected.

And so when Jesus appears to His disciples, much of what He is focused on is showing and proving that the resurrection was a true and physical resurrection .

Let's take a look so I can show you what I mean.

Verse 36, **"As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!"**"

The disciples are gathered together.

And they are discussing the resurrection of Jesus.

They are talking about the different reports that they have had that people have seen Jesus.

The two men on the road to have seen and broken bread with Jesus.

Simon Peter has seen Jesus.

And so as they are talking about the resurrection, Jesus suddenly stands in the middle of them.

Jesus miraculously appears and shows up in the room, even though nobody knows how He got there.

Nobody saw Him come in.

Jesus began His story by entering the virgin's womb, when no one thought it possible.

And at the end, He again enters where no one thought He could be,

And Jesus says **"peace to you"**

This is a normal Jewish greeting.

You greet someone with the shalom.

You wish them peace.

But when Jesus appears after His resurrection, it is not a mere greeting.

Jesus is wishing peace to the disciples who have been afraid and frightened since Jesus's death.

Jesus is wishing peace to those who have been trapped in their grief and hopelessness since His death.

And Jesus telling them that now they have peace with God.

Because of the blood of Jesus spilled on our behalf for the forgiveness of our sins now all of those who are followers of Jesus can have peace with God based on what Christ did.

There's a lot wrapped up in those few words.

Verse 37, **"But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit."**

Understandably, they are very frightened.

Most of us can't help but jump when somebody shows up behind us and starts talking makes a loud noise.

The disciples have an understandable reaction.

They're also frightened because they're not sure what's really going on.

They think that Jesus is just a spirit.

They believes that Jesus must just be a ghost.

Especially because He appears to be popping up all over the place.

He's just made another appearance among their midst when they didn't see Him before.

This is the debate that they're having amongst themselves.

This is the objection that those the question the resurrection of Jesus have.

They tell us that it can't have been a physical resurrection.

It was just spiritual.

Or the disciples saw ghost and were confused.

Or this is a case of mass hysteria hundreds of people report seeing the same thing that didn't really happen.

If you ask the disciples right at the beginning of this conversation, they would agree with that assessment.

They would say yes people did, but we're pretty sure it was just a ghost or a spirit.

Because Jesus is dead.

And we know that He is dead.

Verse 38, **"And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"**

Jesus asks them a question

And He asks I think with grace and compassion.

He asks them why they are frightened because they don't need to be.
There is no need for them to be troubled.
There is no need for them to doubt.

Verse 39, **"See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."**

Jesus moves to prove that His resurrection is a physical resurrection.
Jesus tells them to look into see at his body.
It's still is Him.

They look at His hands and His feet they will see the scars from the crucifixion and the nails.

Because His body has been resurrected, and it has been healed, but the scars remain.

The scars that He could only have gotten one way.

The scars that they have ever seen on corpses because no one survives a crucifixion.

And Jesus wants them to touch him. Jesus wants them to feel him. Jesus wants them to come so they know he is not a spirit.

To take them into his arms and hug them. So they can know it really is Jesus.

And Jesus didn't survive the crucifixion He died in it.

There are some who try to say that Jesus was not really physically resurrected.

That He didn't actually die on the cross.

The Roman soldiers failed at their job or Jesus pretended to be dead.

And after three days in the tomb by Himself, miraculously recovered and was able to walk around.

The idea that someone could recover from that kind of physical torture with no medical intervention at all is itself an expectation of a miracle.

I want you to see how Jesus responds to our doubt.

Because there are times that we can think of ourselves as lesser Christians if we doubt.

Or we can be filled with condemnation if there are moments in the darkness that we are unsure.

As we bury a loved one in the ground, we doubt that if there really is anything waiting for them with Jesus.

Or as we read in the Old Testament some of the judgment that God brought we doubt and wonder if He really is good if He could do that.

I want you to see that Jesus does not respond to the disciples telling them to believe more.

He does not respond to their doubt by telling them to stop being so terrible.

Jesus response to doubt by moving closer.

Jesus response to their doubt by coming and letting them touch Him.

Now He doesn't touch them.

He invites them to Him.

Jesus moves closer to them, but they still have to take a step of faith and reach out.

And if they reach out, they will find out that it is Jesus.

He is not a spirit. He really has been resurrected.

Jesus goes on to say that spirits don't have flesh and bones like He does.

Sometimes when we talk about the resurrection.

Especially the resurrection that will come for believers.

When we will all receive glorified bodies.

We can think of those those bodies as being more spiritual than physical.

As if our glorified bodies mean we leave flesh and bone behind.

But the resurrection of Jesus was not spiritual it was physical.

And Jesus has flesh and bones.

His body is certainly glorified, but it is still a human body.

Because God made our bodies.

And in the garden of Eden, God made the human body and he said it is good.

The resurrection is not evolution. It is a restoration.

The resurrection does not take us to higher plane of existence that we couldn't get before.

The resurrection restores our bodies when sin and death and sickness in the world.

Jesus wants to see that He is still human.

Verse 40, **"And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling,"**

Now they see and they no longer doubt, but they're disbelieving with joy. It is like the doubt is filled with faith and love.

They except the Jesus is physically resurrected, but they don't understand it, they don't comprehend it, and they don't know what to do about it.

They cannot believe that is happening.

If you've ever gotten incredible news.

Finding out you're pregnant, or you got that job you were really hoping for, or you were just given an incredible gift.

That moment of disbelief where it doesn't feel quite real that's what the disciples are feeling.

Verse 41, **"he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.**

He asks for food.

And Jesus ask for food again to prove that His resurrection is a physical and real resurrection.

His body still can eat food.

Eat some fish.

He does not break bread with Him this time.

Because Luke always uses breaking of bread to mean communion.

But He does eat.

He eats to show them that the resurrection of Jesus is a physical resurrection.

You see the resurrection of Jesus has to be physical resurrection or our faith falls apart.

Our Christian faith is based on the idea that Jesus Christ was truly and physically resurrected from the dead.

Because Jesus said He would be resurrected from the dead.
Jesus came back and proclaimed that He was resurrected from the dead.
And the disciples preach that He was resurrected from the dead.
If Jesus is not physically resurrected from the dead, our faith is a lie.

The resurrection from the dead is at the heart of the gospel.
We have been set free from the chains of sin and given new life by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins.
His resurrection proves that our sins have been forgiven.
His resurrection proves that the sacrifice was accepted.
If Jesus died, and that was it, then we are still stuck in dead in our sins.

And the resurrection of Jesus is the resurrection that we can expect.
We will be resurrected in the same way that Jesus was resurrected.
When Jesus returns to resurrect those who have put their faith in Him.

So whatever you believe about the resurrection of Jesus is also tied in to what you believe about what is waiting for you after you die.
If Jesus was not physically resurrected, there is no physical resurrection that you can hope in.

The physical nature of Christ resurrection is essential to our faith.
It is a nonnegotiable.
Here at Tanglewood, we try to focus on the essentials.

And we make room for people who are going to disagree with each other on a whole lot of things in theology and God's word. And there's plenty that we can agree to disagree about worship together each other and have unity with one another.

There are some things we cannot disagree about. You cannot disagree about the resurrection of Jesus. If you were going to be a Christian, whether Protestant or Catholic or Methodist or Presbyterian or Nazarene or church of Christ or Baptist or whatever else you want to be, you must believe that Jesus was physically resurrected.

2. The resurrection commissions us (v. 44-49).

In Jesus' last appearance to His disciples Jesus gives His last instructions. Jesus wants to teach them the final lesson.

The main thing that Jesus wants them to understand is that He is sending them out into the world to proclaim the physical resurrection.

Look at how Jesus does this.

Verse 44, **"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."**

Jesus wants them to see that He has fulfilled everything that the Bible said He would.

There is a sense in which He is repeating what He did last week on the road to mess with the two disciples .

But there is something different that's happening here.

Jesus is not simply giving the same lesson that He gave last week.

Because there's some differences in what Luke says here and what Luke said before.

Before Jesus went through all of the scriptures starting with Moses, talking about everything concerning Himself.

He specifically mentions the prophecies and the Psalms.

And His focus is not on how how they all point to Jesus, but here it is how everything that Jesus has said must be fulfilled.

So there's a subtle difference here.

Now Jesus is talking about everything that scripture prophesied that He would do.

And He has done it all.

And Jesus mentions the Psalms because the Psalms are filled with prophetic words.

The Psalms are filled with prophecies that Jesus then did fulfill.

Psalms 16 says, God would not leave His holy one to rot in the ground.

Psalms 22 Jesus quotes on the cross.

It said Christ would have His hands and feet pierced, thirst, and have lots cast for His clothes.

And they said much more.

Verse 45, **"Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,"**

So Jesus goes through the Scriptures and opening their mind so they can understand it .

He's opening their mind in the way that He teaches the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit divinely at opening their mind that they can comprehend what the Scriptures say .

Verse 46, **"and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,"**

With Jesus saying this is what was written.

Not just that Jesus would die.

But that the Christ.

The Anointed one.

The Messiah

The Redeemer would have to suffer die, and on the third day rise from the dead.

This was not just for shadowed, but prophesied and fulfilled in the true death, and then the physical resurrection of Jesus.

Verse 47, **"and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."**

But the resurrection was not just for their sake, but it also commissions. Part of what needs to be fulfilled is the forgiveness of sins needs to be proclaimed to the nations.

The resurrection commissions the disciples to now go and tell people about the resurrection of Jesus.

They have been commissioned to proclaim to preach.

It is a proclamation.

It is a declaration.

It is something that the disciples and followers of Jesus are to go to tell people that there is forgiveness for sins.

To tell people that there is redemption available available to them.

But they are to proclaim the repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Because the message of the gospel is not just that there is salvation available to you.

The message of the gospel is that there is a forgiveness of sins.

That all of the wrong that you have done can be atone for.

All the mistakes that you've been made in your life can be washed away.

You can be made new.

You can have your sleep, wiped clean.

And this is accomplished by what Jesus did on the cross and in the resurrection.

But it also means that you need to repent of your sins.

Repentance means that we need away from our sins and turn towards Jesus.

Repentance is a direction direction.

Repentance is an attitude and a heart.

Repentance from sins doesn't mean that you have to be so holy and do so many good works before you can earn and merit salvation.

Repentance from sins means, now that you have received the forgiveness of sins, it needs to lead to life change.

It means that you follow Jesus.

It also means that you want forgiveness.

You have to be sick of the way that your life is going in the sin that you were stuck in and want to stop doing this and instead follow Jesus.

The early church of their proclamation of the gospel was this idea of the two ways.

They would say that there are two ways we can go in life.

There is the way of death and your sins.

It is a life apart from following Jesus.

It is a life live apart from faith, and it is a life live, pursuing the things of this world and things of your own heart. Whatever it is the world has to offer you.

And that way leads to death.

And there is the way of Jesus and the way of life.

And we live that way, and we walk that way, and we follow Jesus that way when we live a life of repentance.

The life lived we know that we are sin, but we turn from our sins and we turn towards Jesus.

We are not content to stay where we are, but we want to stop living the way. We are instead live for Jesus.

The disciples are proclaim to preach repentance.

The resurrection is not just good news for us to hear for ourselves.

The resurrection is also good news that we are compelled to share.

And the resurrection is that we are commissioned, and we must share.

This proclamation must be **"to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."**

The message and name of Christ is for all peoples and all places.

It is not just for the people in Jerusalem, it is for every city and village.

It is not just for the Jews, it is for the Gentiles.
It is for every tribe and every tongue.
Jesus came and died for everyone.
And our responsibility it is to take it everywhere.
But first we begin with where we are.
They start in Jerusalem, where they are.
We should start with the people around us where we are.
But we should not stay there.
We then need to go to all the nations.

Verse 48, **"You are witnesses of these things."**

The disciples are commissioned as witnesses of the resurrection of Christ.
They have seen it with their own eyes.
They have heard Christ's teaching with their own ears.
They can preach forgiveness of sins, because God has forgiven them.
They were eye witnesses.

But we still today are witnesses to Christ.
This is why we often call sharing our faith "witnessing."
Because we are bearing witness to Jesus.

Verse 49, **"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."**

But Jesus ends with a promise.
He tells them that they will not have to do this on their own.
He is going to give them power from on high.
They will be given the power that they need in order to share the resurrection.
They will be given just what they need in order to reach the nations.
But they have to wait in the city until it comes.

Jesus is talking here about the Holy Spirit.
And the Holy Spirit is exactly what all of us have been given to.

We have been clothed in the same power as the apostles and disciples.
We have been given the same commission to share the gospel.
We have the same Lord.
What will we do?

Point 3. **The resurrection culminates in the ascension (v. 50-53).**

The ascension is what we call Jesus' going up in the sky towards heaven.
It is the final act that Christ takes in His time on earth.
And it is the culmination of all that He has done.

But it is an often overlooked portion of our theology.
Luke is the only gospel writer who includes it.
We get a glimpse of it here, and a slightly longer version in Acts.
But for most Christians, they know about Christ's death and resurrection.
But they are not sure what significance the ascension has.
I want to try and show you the ascension is not just anything miracle Christ worked.
It has immense theological significance.
And it is tied to the resurrection.

Let's dive into verse 50.

Verse 50, **"And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them."**

Jesus reaches the point where He is going to leave them.
But before He does, He blesses them.
And He lifts up His hands over them.
He gives them one last blessing and benediction.

Much like the patriarchs in Genesis.
Before they died, they would bless their children.
And they would pass on the chief Abrahamic blessing to the chosen son.
That was foreshadowing what Jesus would do now.
But His blessing is not for just one.

His blessing goes to all of them.
And it comes not before His death,
His blessing comes after the resurrection.

This is one of the reasons we end our services with a benediction.
We want to conclude the same way Jesus does.
We want to be sent out with a blessing.

Verse 51, **"While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven."**

After Jesus blesses them, He does not die.
Instead, He leaves them by being carried up into the heavens.

This is similar to the prophet Elijah.
Elijah was one of the greatest Old Testament prophets.
He worked some of the most incredible miracles.
And when His time on earth was over, he did not die.
Instead, he was carried up into heaven.
He also ascended to the heavens.

And only one person was allowed to witness his ascension.
Only Elisha was able to see it.
And Elisha's witnessing of this event proved he was going to continue the ministry of Elijah.

In a similar way the ascension
Jesus' ascension echoes Elijah's.
Except not just one is chosen.
All of the disciples are included.
Over 500 of them including a number of women disciples.
They all are blessed to see the ascension.
They all are commissioned to carry on the work of Christ.

Verse 52, **"And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God."**

They realize and recognize fully that Jesus is not just the Messiah, but God
And so they go back to Jerusalem filled with joy that their redeemer live.
And they constantly spend time at the temple rejoicing and praising God.

Now, why is the ascension of Jesus significant?

The ascension of Christ shows that His purpose is now complete.

His work is all done.

He has no more sermons left to preach.

No more parables left to teach.

No more disciples to call.

No more prayers to pray.

No more miracles to work.

No more prophecies He must fulfill.

His work on earth is finished.

It is the conclusion of His ministry on earth.

It is the last public or private act He will take.

It declares that He is finished.

It also tells us where Christ is now.

It explains His absence to us.

He did not just wander off into the wilderness and disappear.

He ascended into the heavens.

The ascension of Christ shows us that He is exalted in heaven.

Philippians 2:9 **"Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name above all names."**

Ephesians 1:20 **"He is seated at the right hand in the heavenly places."**

The ascension is a demonstration, like His baptism, that God is pleased.

And Jesus went to the heavens to sit on the throne.

He came humbly as a baby to a poor family.

But now He is exalted into all of His power and glory.

Now He reveals the fullness of His divine power and wonder.

The ascension of Christ shows us that He is doing His priestly work. He is now our high priest, not in a temple in Jerusalem. Now He is in the temple before God. He mediates the new covenant. He intercedes on our behalf. And He is our mediator between us and God.

The ascension marks the transition to the time of the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells the disciples to wait until the Spirit come. In the Old Testament, God the Father was primarily working, while we got glimpses of Jesus and the Spirit. In the Gospels, Jesus came down to be God in flesh for us. And now Jesus ascends with His work completed. Now the Holy Spirit is present and works in every single believer equipping us to do Christ's work. But this couldn't have happened without the ascension.

The ascension of Christ marks the transition to the church. Christ has finished His work and left it to us to carry it on. He repeatedly in Luke sent out His disciples for a little bit of time. But now Jesus does not just send out the 12 or the 72. Now Jesus has sent out every single believer. We have all been commissioned. It is our turn to do the work of Jesus enacting His kingdom in the world. This is one of the reasons the church is called "The body of Christ." The physical Christ has ascended to heaven, now we are His body on earth.

The ascension of Christ shows that He has power over life and death. The ascension proves that death has no power over Christ anymore. It does not good to come back to life if you have to die again. If Jesus had merely pretended to come back to life, then His later death would prove Him a fraud. But the public ascension to heaven removes Him from death's grasp. Jesus does not have to wait to die to go to heaven.

Jesus can go whenever He wishes.

The ascension of Christ foreshadows His return.

He will come back as He left.

One day He will descend back down to earth in the fullness of His glory.

And the ascension sets the expectation that we are to wait.

The story of Jesus is not yet done.

It is to be continued.

And the chapters ahead of us are more amazing than any of the chapters we have read so far.

That is really just an overview of what the ascension means.

It is not just an epilogue.

It is not just a weird even that happened at the end.

It is the culmination of all that Christ did.

CONCLUSION:

1. The resurrection was physical. The resurrection commissions us. The resurrection culminates in the ascension.
2. The message of the Gospel of Luke is that Jesus is the promised King who came to preach and enact His kingdom, which is for all people, through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus has enacted the Kingdom. And now the work is left to us. Will we proclaim the kingdom and resurrection? Will we participate with the kingdom and the resurrection?