

Sunday Sermon: June 2, 2019

Sermon Text: Luke 24:44-53

Sermon Theme: This is Not the End of Anything

⁴⁴ *He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."*

⁴⁵ *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.* ⁴⁶ *He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,* ⁴⁷ *and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* ⁴⁸ *You are witnesses of these things.* ⁴⁹ *I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."*

⁵⁰ *When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them.* ⁵¹ *While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.* ⁵² *Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* ⁵³ *And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.*

Before there were sequels after sequels at the movies we went to the stand-alone movie and we knew how the movie was going to end. The cowboy was going to ride into the sunset, the king would leave the battlefield after a victory, the hero would walk away from the defeated villain. In these movies, there were no cliffhangers, the end of the movie, was the end. We were left to believe that this was the end of the story and that there was nothing more that would happen.

Many people look at Jesus' ascension like the end of those old movies. They think that Jesus' ascension is the end of the story and there is no more to tell. Jesus' ascension is the end of his time of earth. But really it is not the end of anything, it is the beginning of some amazing things. Jesus' ascension is the beginning of the work that Jesus gives us to do. Jesus' ascension is also the beginning of Jesus' victorious rule in heaven.

During the 40 days after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples many times and taught them many things. Jesus knew that he would not remain with them forever. He knew that his time on earth was drawing to an end.

Jesus came to earth with a specific purpose given to him by God. He came to earth to live perfectly in our place, following the Law because we couldn't. He did that. Secondly, Jesus preached the message of salvation. He was the Savior and Messiah. Finally, Jesus had to suffer and die on the cross taking our punishment so that the price for sin was paid for. He did that as well. God did not send Jesus to earth to stay here forever. When Jesus accomplished the work he was sent to do, he would return to the place where he had come from.

Jesus had talked about this with his disciples. On Maundy Thursday, he had tried to share this with his disciples to comfort them and to let them know that he was always working for them. **Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms, if it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**

He had told Mary Magdalene in the Garden next to the tomb, **Do not hold on to me, for I have not ascended to my Father.**

The last 3 years had been part of the seminary program for the disciples. It was an education that taught them how to deal with the sick and the lame. They learned how to talk with those who were suffering and dying. How to reach out to those who were lost in sin who needed the light of the Gospel in their life. Jesus had taught them that the truth of salvation and eternal life was only through him. Jesus' ascending would signal a beginning for them. This would be the beginning of their ministry. They would go out with the Jesus' message. They would go out with the Gospel to lead people to Jesus.

Yet, they were just people. They were the same people who 40 days before had locked themselves in the upper room. They would need help with this work that they were beginning. Jesus gave them special gifts that would help them do this. **"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."**

⁴⁵ **Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.** As they sat there with Jesus, Jesus opened their minds so that they could understand how all that he did in his life and by his suffering and death fulfilled God's plan to save the world. Imagine what it was like to understand in a moment the prophecies of the Old Testament and how Jesus fulfilled every one of them. Imagine what it was like for them in that moment to understand these things that they had struggled with.

This knowledge given to them by Jesus would help them as they began their own Gospel ministry. **“This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.** Imagine what it was like for the disciples to understand in that moment to know so clearly who you are as a child of God, to know your purpose so clearly that you are ready and willing to take up that job and go in the name of Jesus.

Jesus had promised that they would not be alone. Although God the Son would be returning to heaven would be ascending, God the Spirit would not leave them. Jesus promised that God the Holy Spirit would be with them to give them strength and would work through them so that the Word would be spread and people would believe. ⁴⁹ **I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”**

The Holy Spirit would be a very special gift that would help guide them and lead them through the many difficulties of life. It would be the Holy Spirit who would give them the words to speak to lead people to Jesus. It would be the Holy Spirit who would change hearts and create and strengthen faith in the people that they spoke to. The Holy Spirit would be a very powerful gift for this new work that they would be doing.

All of this was a new beginning for the disciples. They would no longer be the learners, followers or students, who were learning at Jesus feet. Now they would be the preachers and teachers. They would be the missionaries who were sharing this message with others.

Jesus gave this new job, this new beginning to his disciples, but he also gave that same job and work to his church; all who believe; you and me. You might not have heard these words in Luke 22, but you have probably heard the words of Matthew 28. **Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

These words should be well-known to us. This is our commission, these are the words that should dominate our thoughts and guide our days. We are life guards, not over the water, but over the eternal souls of others. Jesus has included you and me in this work that others might not ever experience the pain and suffering of hell. Jesus has included us in this work of that sharing that Word that others might turn from death in sin, to life in Christ. Do you know someone who needs their life guarded from sin, death and the devil, through the Gospel of Jesus? How have you taken up this new work in your own life.

Sadly, when we look at the work that God has given, we have to admit that we have not been very good at it. Too often we deny that it is our job or refuse to do it. “That’s not my job. I can’t do it.” Too often we treat the eternal souls of others with apathy. “Lord, send someone will talk with them about Jesus, just not me. Maybe they will hear and repent yet. They just won’t hear it from me.” Too often we fail to be the missionaries and teachers that God wants all of his people to be.

Jesus gave this command as an earnest command and a time sensitive one. As you are going through your life make disciples, be witnesses, live your faith that others might see it and ask about the hope that you have. Even though we often greet this command with a lack of enthusiasm, Jesus promises to give us special gifts as well. **And surely I am with you always of the very end of the age.**

We have a new beginning in Christ. We are his ambassadors, his witnesses, his preachers. This promise of Jesus also shows us his great promise as well. Jesus promises that we are not alone when we are missionaries and teachers. He promises that he will be with us as we speak his Word, as we live our faith, as we proclaim, his Word.

Jesus’ ascension was really the beginning for the disciples and for us of the mission work that is part of our calling as believers but it was also a beginning for Jesus as he ascended into heaven as the victorious king to rule over all things for the good of us, his church.

Jesus is no longer walking and talking with on us earth. Yet, his ascension is so important for us. While he was here on earth he did not make full use of his heavenly power and glory. After he ascended, he did just

that, he once again sits on the throne of heaven and guides, preserves and protects all things: all nations, all peoples, all leaders and every other thing on earth with his almighty power.

This work in heaven is new and different from the saving work that he completed on earth. Did you hear the pictures of the rule and authority of Jesus in our second lesson. He is the King above all kings and the Lord above all lords who rules over everything in perfect justice. His blazing eyes see all that is in the world, nothing escapes his attention. He is the eternal ruler over all the realms of men and the crowns of that authority sit on his head.

Yet, his rule is not kings of the earth. He rules in perfect love and holiness. This King who rules over all things is the same one who walked to cross and has laid down his life to take away every one of our sins. This is the King of love who died in our place so that we will not die. There is peace with this King because he has brought it by his blood.

With this rule of perfect love and perfect justice he will watch over the world and rule over for the preservation and protection of his church. He will not lose one of his own.

This is the power and promise that is with us today and every day. When Jesus ascended he was not leaving us alone. It was the beginning of our work on earth and his work in heaven through which he will be with us always. As we walk this earth we do not walk alone, we have the promise of the King of kings and Lord of lords that he will be with us as we complete the mission we have been given.