

Easter Sunday

⁴ Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the Lord shall prosper.
(Isaiah 53:4-5, 10. NRSV)

⁴⁷ So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying,
“Certainly this was a righteous Man!”
(Luke 23:47. NKJV)

Behold, I Send The Promise

April 8th, 2012

Luke 24:1-49

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Open your Bibles this morning to Luke 24:1-49. I want to read to you verses 1-43 mostly by way of preamble and to provide you with the context for a more detailed discussion of verses 44-49.

This is God’s Word:

¹ Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they, [£]and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

³ Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

⁴ And it happened, as they were [£]greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

⁵ Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee,

⁷ saying, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.””

⁸ And they remembered His words.

⁹ Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary *the mother* of James, and the other *women* with them, who told these things to the apostles.

¹¹ And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.

¹² But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths [£]lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

¹³ Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was [£]seven miles from Jerusalem.

¹⁴And they talked together of all these things which had happened.
¹⁵So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.
¹⁶But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.
¹⁷And He said to them, “What kind of conversation *is* this that you have with one another as you [£]walk and are sad?”
¹⁸Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?”
¹⁹And He said to them, “What things?” So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,
²⁰and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.
²¹But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.
²²Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us.
²³When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive.
²⁴And certain of those *who were* with us went to the tomb and found *it* just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.”
²⁵Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!
²⁶Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”
²⁷And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.
²⁸Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther.
²⁹But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.
³⁰Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them.
³¹Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.
³²And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”
³³So they rose up that very hour and **returned to Jerusalem**, and found the eleven and those *who were* with them gathered together,
³⁴saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”
³⁵And they told about the things *that had happened* on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.
³⁶Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “Peace to you.”
³⁷But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.
³⁸And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?
³⁹Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”
⁴⁰[£]When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.
⁴¹But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?”
⁴²So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish [£]and some honeycomb.
⁴³And He took *it* and ate in their presence.

Verses 1-43 give us Luke’s telling of the resurrection narrative. Jesus has risen from the dead and he is making himself known to his disciples! His resurrection is not merely spiritual, it is BODILY – he is eating fish and he is touching and being touched. This is a real, bodily RESURRECTION. That story is incredibly important because many today like to think of the resurrection as spiritual or metaphysical but it wasn’t, it was physical and it was tangible and now Jesus begins to tell us what its all about. I want read verses 44-49 more closely, dividing it by God’s grace as we go through it and then afterwards we’ll spend some time applying the text, asking how the story is intended to impact us and then I want to end out time together this morning by casting out an Easter dream that this passage has been stirring in me. Easter is the

right time for big, hairy impossible dreams and so we'll end with some of that. Let's begin with dividing the text:

⁴⁴Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me."

All things must be fulfilled which were written in Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms concerning me...

Here Jesus introduces what Bible scholars sometimes refer to as the Christological Hermeneutic. Jesus is saying something incredibly radical here, he is saying that everything in the Old Testament, everything in Moses – the first five books of the Bible, everything in the Prophets, which meant the historical and prophetic books and everything in the Psalms which was shorthand for the worship and wisdom literature – EVERYTHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT pointed forward to him. He is the centre and the fulfilment of God's revelation and word. That is a huge statement. If anyone other than the Son of God, the Word of God in the flesh made that claim we would call him a crazy person. Think about that, if even a great man, let's say the Apostle John, if a great man like the Apostle John ever said: "The whole Bible has been about me. Everything God has ever had to say was about me. I am the centre and fulfilment of Divine Revelation" how would you feel about the Apostle John? You would think he was a crazy person and that he needed to be sedated with a horse tranquilizer and rolled up in bubble wrap. Right? People can't say stuff like that and yet Jesus did say stuff like that. He didn't just say it after the resurrection, he said it before, he said all the time. It was a key concept in his Sermon on the Mount which we believe was the centre piece of his earthly preaching ministry. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said:

¹⁷"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. (Matthew 5:17. NRSV)

He uses the Greek word *play-ro-o* there which is translated as "fulfil" and it means "to satisfy", "to fill up", "to finish" or "to accomplish". That is a very odd thing to say. He doesn't say that he has come to keep the law, though he did that, he says that he has come to accomplish it or to do it utterly and finally. He says in essence: "The Old Testament was promise, I am answer. The Old Testament was shadow, I am substance. The Old Testament was trajectory, I am destination. The Old Testament was question, I am answer. The Old Testament was problem, I am solution.

The Old Testament was form, I am FULLNESS.” That is the Christological hermeneutic and it has dominated the way Christians have read the Bible since that very day. Martin Luther said that the task of the Christian preacher is to find Jesus on every page of the Bible. When you read a story in Genesis, you ask how this story prepares you to receive, worship and follow Jesus. When you read about Cain and Abel, the man who was not his brother’s keeper, you should see PROBLEM and you should then be better prepared to worship SOLUTION – JESUS who is his brothers’ keeper. There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother - Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends. When you read in Leviticus about lambs and scapegoats and peace offerings and sin offerings you are supposed to see TRAJECTORY and you are supposed to follow that to the FINAL DESTINATION of the cross and declare with John the Baptist: Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! When you weep with Jeremiah over the people of God in exile because of their sins you are supposed to see QUESTION: how can a sinful people live with a holy God? And then when you see Jesus you are supposed to see ANSWER: He became sin who knew no sin that we might become the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD! And now we may see him and enter into his presence with boldness, praise the Lord. This is the Christological hermeneutic.

The early church preached Jesus from the Old Testament because the Old Testament was the Bible of the early church. We need to get back in that habit. Our view of Jesus is likely more disconnected from reality and from Biblical trajectory in this generation than in any other generation to ever walk the planet earth. Jesus is our homeboy now. He is Santa. He is captain of the football team and leader of the conservative political party, digger of wells in Africa, holder of placard outside of abortion clinic and champion of all manner of social causes and other uniquely western concerns. Some of those things may be well and good but I think we need to get back into the Old Testament so that we begin to draw some straight lines again from promise TO hope and forward into mission. That’s the only way we can know for sure that we are still doing what we are supposed to be doing and that we are still worship the Christ of the Bible. We have to find Jesus in Leviticus and find Jesus in Lamentations and find Jesus in Job and Proverbs, Song of Solomon and the Psalms. I believe he is there, waiting for us, on every page of the Bible.

⁴⁵And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

He opened their understanding...

As I was preparing for this message earlier this week I ran across a margin note in my NRSV Bible that said: “Oh to have been present for that sermon!” Wouldn’t you have loved to have been a fly on that wall and to have heard from Jesus how all the Old Testament Scriptures were uniquely fulfilled in his life, death and resurrection? I would give both of my eyes for that privilege and yet Jesus promised that for those of us not present on that day, we are not to be less blessed than the disciples. Jesus said that after he ascended into heaven he would send the Holy Spirit:

¹³However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. (John 16:13-14. NKJV)

The Holy Spirit will be our go between. He will help us find the glory of Jesus in the Scriptures and he will lead us into all truth. This is why Scripture study can really only be done by born again, Spirit filled Christians. I believe this theologically – I believe it because it is taught in the Bible in numerous places, but I have also come to believe it experientially. I have had a very bizarre educational journey on my way to becoming a pastor. After High School I went to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and then after that I went to York University to study classics, history and religion. Then after that I did my MDiv at the Baptist Seminary in Hamilton. I’ve studied the Bible under atheists, agnostics, Jews, liberal Christians, confused Evangelicals and flaming, born again, Spirit filled Christians and it is amazing how all of these people can see such different things in the same book! We need the Holy Spirit to see how these threads of anticipation and typology come together in glorious fulfilment in the person and life of Jesus Christ. Though I would still love to have been there for this sermon in Luke 24, I rejoice in our present possession of the Holy Spirit who is guiding us deeper and deeper into all truth.

⁴⁶Then He said to them, “Thus **it is written**, and **thus it was necessary** for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

⁴⁷and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Thus it is written and thus it was necessary...

According to Jesus everything that has been written in Scripture **MUST COME TO PASS IN HISTORY**. What this means is that the word of God effects Sovereign control over all the events

of history. That means the study of history is the study of Providence. When Christians study history we can ask questions like: “What purpose was God serving through these events?” “How did these events serve to advance the Gospel?” “What aspects of God’s great twin purposes of wrath and redemption were served by these events?” This is why Christians can study history through the lens of Scripture in a complimentary way. We can read the Scripture and illustrate from Providence. That is part of what Jesus is saying here.

He is also saying that in the same way his own life, death and resurrection were prophesied in the Old Testament and therefore NECESSARY and INESCAPABLE, likewise the proclamation of the Gospel and the witness to the Gospel have been prophesied in Scripture and are therefore likewise NECESSARY AND INESCAPABLE for the church. Now I can’t be sure which Old Testament Scriptures he drew on in this message, that’s why I wish I had been there, but it very well may have been a passage like Psalm 96:

¹ O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.
² Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.
⁴ For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.
⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
⁶ Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.
⁹ Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.
¹⁰ Say among the nations, “The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.” (Psalm 96:1-10. NKJV)

Whatever passage it was, Jesus said that the Scriptures DICTATED that he must live, suffer, die and rise again and that those same Scriptures DICTATE that we tell the story and raise the GLORY of God in Jesus Christ among the far flung nations of the earth! He did not shrink from the duty imposed on him by Scripture and neither must we. We must tell of God’s salvation and declare his glory, his marvellous work among all the peoples. It is not optional, it is the controlling fact of final history. Jesus said so in the Olivet Discourse:

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.
¹⁰And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.
¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.
¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.
¹³But he who endures to the end shall be saved.
¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:9-14. NKJV)

History can end no other way than this. The Gospel work will finish in a season of terrible apostasy and deception. But those who endure to the end shall be saved. The Gospel work will go finish in a season of tribulation and betrayal but this good news of the kingdom will be preached in ALL THE WORLD as a WITNESS TO ALL THE NATIONS and then the end will come. These are the controlling words of Providence and they will drive history forward, and they must drive us forward until each of these words is utterly and entirely fulfilled.

⁴⁸And you are witnesses of these things.

⁴⁹Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city ^fof Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” (Luke 24:1-49. NKJV)

Behold, I send the Promise

God never commands us to do that which he does not equip us to do. I would imagine that as Jesus began to unfold for them the Word of Providence which would govern their future they must have looked at one another and thought to themselves: “It is all well and good for you to fulfil Scripture and to do all the Word of God, but we are mere men. We are only flesh and blood and we cannot do the sorts of things that you do. We will surely falter and fail in our weakness.” But Jesus, knowing their fears and knowing their weaknesses says: “Behold, I send the Promise!” Wait in Jerusalem until you are endured with power from on high.

The promise that Jesus makes is not that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit, that seems to have been done as part of this very discourse. In John’s version of this day he records Jesus as saying:

²²And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22. NKJV)

As saved people they were filled and sealed with the Holy Spirit but Jesus is promising something more. He is promising POWER for mission. He has just told them that they will now be thrust by Providence, by the controlling WORD of God out into a seemingly impossible mission. They must take the Gospel to all the nations in a context of growth and apostasy, harvest and betrayal, advance and tribulation and they must give witness to God’s glory in Jesus among the far flung peoples of the earth. He has just told them this and now he says: wait just a while and you will receive POWER to do the IMPOSSIBLE!

And we see that power given in Acts 2:

¹When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all εwith one accord in one place.

²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them.

⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

⁶And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

⁷Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?”

⁸And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

¹¹Cretans and Arabs—**we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.**” (Acts 2:1-11. NKJV)

Can't you see the kindness of God in these events? Jesus has just given them an impossible mission: “You disciples, mostly poor, largely unschooled, Jewish men, country bumpkins by and large are going to set the world on fire! You are going to fill the earth with the glory of God in Jesus Christ”. And now a few days later TONGUES OF FIRE fall ON EACH OF THEM and they begin preaching the Gospel in all the languages of the world! It is as though God is saying: “You see? This is not impossible. What is impossible for man is possible for God. Look here, we have the job almost in hand on day one. The far flung nations of the earth are declaring already: Behold the wonderful works of God!” God never commands us to do that which he does not equip us to do. This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

Very quickly now I want us to ask the critical application question:

How Should We Be Governed By This Text?

If the Word of God must of necessity govern our lives as indeed it did the life of Jesus, how should this text govern our lives as Christians? Let me quickly suggest two ways:

1. It should impress upon us the need for Spirit-led study of the Old Testament

If we are going to declare the glory of God in Jesus Christ among the nations than we need to understand the glory of God in Jesus Christ and the only way we can do that is by going back into the Old Testament under the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that we can discover the problems to which he is the solution; the questions to which he is the answer, the types to which he is the antitype, the trajectories to which he is the destination and the shadows to which he is the substance. We cannot take a false Christ and a false glory to the nations. We have to get back into the Word of God in Scripture so that we can be properly assured that we are worshipping the Word of God in the flesh, which is Jesus Christ.

Pray that God would open our eyes to see Jesus on every page of his most Holy Word and pray also for me that I might divide God's Word aright and pray also for God to raise up an army of young men who will give their lives to the Gospel ministry and give their strength, their life blood and their best days to the study and declaration of the Scriptures.

2. It should motivate us to press forward with Gospel from wherever we are and outward even unto the ends of the earth

Jesus says in this passage that the Gospel must be preached:

in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47. NKJV)

In his name, TO ALL NATIONS, beginning AT JERUSALEM. We could preach a whole sermon on the phrase: "in his name" couldn't we? There is a preaching of the Gospel today which seems completely disconnected from the character, identity and mission of the Jesus Christ of the Bible. That is a problem and we could shout at that problem profitably for the next 3 hours but I want to talk to you about something else. I want to talk to you about TO ALL NATIONS beginning AT JERUSALEM. What does that mean and what does it impress upon us as Providential necessity?

Certainly there is a historical and a geographical sense to it in that the Christian faith really did begin in Jerusalem and spread, as Jesus said it would, into Judea, Samaria and all the world. In fact many scholars believe that tracing this historical and geographical movement of the Gospel was the controlling factor in how Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles. He wrote to show the

historical and geographical movement of the Gospel outward from Jerusalem and he ends his story by having Paul preaching the Gospel in the very court of Caesar in Rome! And certainly we are right to notice that. But there is another, entirely compatible and in our case even more practical aspect to this command that I want you to notice. Where were the disciples when they received this command? We have no need to wonder because Luke told us already in verse 33:

³³So they rose up that very hour and **returned to Jerusalem**, and found the eleven and those *who were* with them gathered together (Luke 24:33. NKJV)

They are IN JERUSALEM. In a very simple sense Jesus is saying: “You must begin where you are now! Begin fulfilling this commission wherever you are when it falls upon you! Begin where you ARE and press out into all the far flung nations of the world!”

Big Hairy Easter Dreams:

I told you that I wanted to end this morning by dreaming some big hairy Easter dreams. I want to end by spit balling with you, by asking in a non-binding, non AGM kind of way, ‘what would it look like for us to press outwards with this message and this witness right here where we are now and also unto the ends of the earth?’ Some of this is coming into focus already. You’ve been hearing a lot of talk lately about branch plant ministry. Branch planting is really just about pressing out from where you are rooted and taking the message and the witness as far as you can reach from where you are standing now. It is arm’s length mission. Not stone’s throw, not plane ride, but arm’s reach mission. I am happy to tell you that the Board at our last meeting approved the plan for branch planting in Orillia. The favour God is all over this and we’ve had meetings that are so encouraging and things are coming together and I want you to think about whether this Word compels you to get involved in this arm’s length mission. We are going to be branch planting a church from this church into south ward this September. We still need you to approve a budget; your Board makes plans but those plans don’t go so well if you don’t give us the money to pursue them. So pray about that first. And then assuming that goes well, I want you to pray about whether or not the Word of God compels you to join in this project. We are going to begin orientation the last Sunday night in April. Attending the orientation does not obligate you to go. The Spirit of God may obligate you to go, but we’ll seek confirmation of that together. That’s

the first big hairy Easter dream I want to put before you. That's the part about Jerusalem. That's the part about pressing out from where we are.

The other part, the last part is about the far flung nations of the earth. I read an article in MacLean's magazine this week that broke my heart and stirred my spirit. I was going to make 500 copies of it but then I realised that would be a pretty serious copyright infringement and I don't mind going to jail for the Gospel but I don't want to go to jail for copyright infringement, that seems lame to me. So you are going to have to buy the magazine for yourself. In the April 16th edition there is a story in there about the suicide capital of the world. Do you know where it is? It's a native reserve in Northern Ontario. Pikangikum reserve in Northern Ontario is now the suicide capital of the world. Let me quote from the magazine: "In 2011, the community of roughly 2400 had a suicide rate equivalent to 250 per 100,000 – nearly 20 times that of Canada, and far and away the highest in the world¹". The author connects this alarming reality to issues of hopelessness, drug use and the collapse of the family unit. Children are being physically and sexually abused at an early age, they are taking refuge in drugs, becoming hopelessly addicted and then hanging themselves in never before seen numbers. This is a situation that is crying out FOR EASTER HOPE! How can we call ourselves people of the Word if we are not compelled by that Word to take this message and witness of hope to people living at the far flung northern edges of the world in our own COUNTRY? Who better to take it to them than us? I'm sure when the Koreans read of it they will send missionaries but why should they come here from there? Are there no Christians here? Is there no one here whose life is driven by the Providential power of this Gospel Word? I know it sounds impossible, I know that the aboriginal issue has confounded the best and brightest minds in this country for a hundred years and I know that real money – GOVERNMENT SCALE money has been thrown at this issue since Confederation but those are just reasons why this is impossible! Those reasons say nothing about the Promise of the Father that is poured out by Jesus on those who GO! I don't want to believe that it's impossible. I want to believe that the empty grave makes a mockery out of possible and impossible. I want to believe that a little church in Orillia can press out in POWER where we are and indeed into all the earth. Do you believe that church?

¹ Martin Patriquin, "Canada, home to the suicide capital of the world," *MacLean's*, April 16, 2012, 30.

Now, I'm not making policy up here. We have procedures and we have committees and we have AGMs and I respect all of those things. I am not making policy here, but I am hoping to inspire it. All I'm asking you to do is to pray about how this Word compels us to live and to speak and to serve the cause of God's glory in the work of salvation that he has done AND MARVELOUSLY in Jesus Christ. Let's pray together.