

Luke 24:36-53

Our Highly Exalted Savior

Intro: There is a saying about priorities that suggests we need to keep the main thing the main thing. Some of us are prone to small distractions and can forget what is essential. Preachers sometimes quote this to remind Christians not to lose focus and get distracted with lesser things. It's a great concept *if we can agree on what the main thing is.*

The trouble is, scripture does not always make it clear that there is one main thing. Certainly the gospel is a main thing (1 Col 15), but so is the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). What about loving God? Jesus said that is the greatest commandment.

Or take the cross and resurrection. Which one is the main thing? We don't choose one over the other. They are main things.

Or take the church. What is a main thing, being committed to mission, or deep church commitment? Do we choose evangelism over edification? They are main things. *Now we can't make everything a main thing, or we do lose priority. But I do think scripture speaks of *main things.*

As we close out Luke, there are some main things we see—some things to prioritize and shape our lives around and they all point to our highly exalted Savior and his work.

Main thing 1: Presence that brings peace and joy (36-43)

- In v36 disciples are huddled together, discussing the report of the Emmaus Rd disciples (33-35)—doors are locked because of fear (Jn 20:19).
- Jesus invades their space, doubts and fears with his presence. The physical presence is stressed, especially as Jesus eats with his disciples.
- Meals in Luke drive the story along. Jesus is usually either going to a meal or eating one, coming from one, or talking about a banquet.
- So, It's fitting to end with a meal.

He is the good shepherd who prepares a table (Ps 23:5)

- According to Acts 10 there is something about eating with the Resurrected Son of God that fortifies witness (Acts 10:41).
- Before sharing the meal, Jesus makes a point to comfort the disciples' fears and anxieties (v38)
 1. Fear of persecution.
 2. But also fear of Jesus; they had all failed him miserably. No one stood next to him in his trial. All eleven had forsaken, fled, and failed. All were cowards.

The first thing that Jesus speaks graciously is peace.

—Heb: *Shalom* is the standard Jewish greeting.

- It's quite different from our common English greeting: How are you; What's up?
Peace-shalom actually means: May you be well, whole, complete. May you have reconciliation and wholeness.
- Before the cross, he comforted his sheep with peace.
(Jn 14:27) ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

(Jn 16:33)

³³I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

There is a clear connection with knowing Jesus and having a supply of peace for every moment.

(2 Thess 3:16)

¹⁶Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

Notice how the comfort of peace is tied to the Lord being with you. Peace is from his presence.

- Yet this peace was not coming easily. Doubts were still filling their hearts (v38).
- Doubts. What do we do with them?

Doubt is never a virtue; Jesus never encourages it.

But Jesus does meet people in their doubt. He shepherds them in their doubt.

Apply: If in a season of doubt, go to Jesus—he already knows the struggles in your heart; and go to one of your shepherds/elders.

- The other response we see is joy (v41) .
- It's a strange wording in Greek and our translations—they were disbelieving because of joy.

Psalm 126 helps us understand:

(Ps 126:1-2)

¹When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were *like those who dream*.

² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;

It describes a joy that “I can’t believe this is true; it must be like a dream.”

Summary:

It’s critical for us to see that joy is directly related to the *presence of Jesus*. *Jesus’s presence is a place of joy*.

(Ps 16:11) In your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

“Joy is the verified, repeated experience of those involved in what God is doing.” (Eugene Peterson *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*)

Apply: Christian friends, is that true of us? True of you? Is there a verified and repeated experience of joy in our lives because we are involved in what God is doing? That’s what gave these disciples joy. It’s a joy rooted firmly in a past history with an unimaginable abundant future hope. The presence of Jesus brings joy and peace.

It won’t be perfect or complete in this world...the Bible never oversells.

(2 Cor 6:10) “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing”

—but if we have faith there will be a supply there that can say: He is enough for me.

Main thing 2: Words that call for mission (44-49)

- We now shift to Jesus’s words.
- Disciples have a passion for Christ’s Word.
- But that passion for the Word is not an end in itself....it should lead to a life on mission

Mission is a main theme we can’t ignore

All of what Jesus says here gets his followers ready for mission (v48).

- This is the commissioning section. Similar to Mt 28 (Great Commission), but Luke has his own unique flavor.

Mission according to Jesus: 5 aspects

1. Nature of Scripture—Christ centered design (v44)

- Moses, prophets, Psalms references to the 3 main divisions of Hebrew Bible (law, prophets, writings)

Jesus teaches us how to read the OT. It’s about him from beginning to end.

One of the best ways to do evangelism is to know the storyline of the Bible well. To open up the Bible and show someone how the whole storyline points to Christ's redemptive work is a beautiful thing.

(Acts 20:27, Paul) "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" —That Christ from beginning to end.

But in my experience churchgoers don't always see this or do this.

Illus: A few years ago I was given a study Bible as a gift. There are study Bibles for everything under the sun. This particular Bible's niche were study notes that were the Founding Fathers of America. There are some helpful things in there probably for history buffs;...*but it gets wrong the point of Scripture, especially the OT.* The whole counsel of God, the narrative of the Bible points to Jesus, not America's founding.

If we are mission-minded we will see that the whole storyline points to him. It's his story.

2. Natural limits (v45). To understand mission we need to know the limit of the human mind. There is a natural limit on each person's mind that 2 Cor 4 describes. The natural, unbelieving mind is *blind*.

(2 Cor 4:3-4)

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

3. Necessary things (46-47). The gospel addresses the deepest human need, the need to turn to God and be forgiven.

The message for mission is very basic. Repent and believe. There is more doctrine to build on (e.g. Trinity)—but at its core the gospel addresses the basic need to be reconciled to God.

4. Nations (v47b)

- The gospel goes to the ends of the earth.

People sometimes ask me about the most encouraging and discouraging things about being a pastor. There are really encouraging things. Seeing lives changed by Christ; seeing people get a hunger and passion for the Word, discipleship, evangelism— people finding and using their spiritual gifts to advance the kingdom, selfless acts of love.

A main discouragement to me is the *over-saturation of churches we have in the US compared to other parts of the world.*

I'm not saying we shouldn't plant more gospel-centered works in the US, or that I don't care about big vibrant churches. I'd rather live with a church on every corner instead of a casino. But we need to ask: What is mission according to Jesus?

**Mission according to Jesus keeps the unevangelized nations as a priority.

5. Need for empowerment (v49)

- Jesus makes it clear that his mission is only done right with *radical dependence*. *We'll see this next week in Acts 1.*)

Main Thing 3: Blessing that prompts worship (50-53)

- The final scene is the ascension.
- 40 days pass between v49 & 50.
- Notice how the text is worded (v50): "He led them and blessed them"
- It's in the patten of the priestly blessing of the OT (Lev 9:22)

The final picture we have of Jesus is really him as a great priest over his people.

(Heb 4:14)

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

- Just as Luke began with a priest in the temple, it ends with Our Great High Priest exalted to the heavenly temple.

Conclusion:

Apply: That's a good time to insert a final question as I close out this gospel. Hopefully you have enjoyed the journey. It's been unique from a preaching perspective. Rob started us out, I joined in in chapter 8. Rob and I traveled together to chapter 18.

But I hope your journey in Luke has not been about Rob or Ryan preaching. I hope your takeaways are not based on how Rob and I have slightly different styles in the pulpit. I know this because I'm tempted when hearing different speakers to focus on comparisons and miss the main thing: We need to listen to God.

As we finish Luke, I hope you've *heard from God*.

—I hope you've heard him say how great his Son is and how joyful it is to have his salvation and enjoy his grace.

—I hope you've heard that Jesus came to seek and save lost.

—I hope you've heard that discipleship is a way of life, costly and demanding...but eternally worth it.

—I hope your main takeaway from Luke is greater focus, love, appreciation of Jesus.

—I hope you leave Luke longing and eager to worship and live for him.