

# A Sermon for DaySpring

By Burt L. Burleson

**So Simple, So Wonderful**

**Luke 24: 44-53**

**May 23, 2004**

Mr. Luke had to end his story. He'd read some other gospel accounts... done plenty of research. And he had one more piece of papyrus and just enough ink to write a nice conclusion. So he sat down and got to it.

And although in volume two, his story of the Acts of the Apostles, he gives more detail and fleshes things out... Here at the end of his gospel, he uses an economy of words and condenses it...

resurrection...

appearances...

commissioning...

and ascension all in one day.

At the end of his story of Jesus... Luke puts it all down here in one nutshell of a moment. It's what he writes at the end of a great story. And it's a good conclusive statement, so you English teachers need to give Luke an A for his good and creative summation. It is simply . . . and wonderfully done.

Jesus is in a room with his friends, having dinner... This isn't a ghost, it's a resurrected being and body enjoying a nice Sunday night dinner of broiled fish. And after dinner Jesus gives a little speech and puts a period on the incarnation.

Jesus is saying . . .

**This is what I told you... that the scriptures would be fulfilled.**

**The Christ would live, suffer, die, and live again.**

**You witnessed this.**

**I'm sending the spirit to empower you AND...**

**Repentance and forgiveness will be preached all over the world.**

That's the whole wonderful story in a nutshell. Jesus lays it out one last time and Luke writes it down this way. It's so simple and so wonderful.

Jesus is saying . . .

**This isn't new... what has been happening here... in me... isn't new but it is a continuation of what God has always been up to.**

Jesus is saying . . .

**All that has happened shouldn't be surprising to you. I know you had some expectations about what the Messiah would look like and what the Messiah would do... but if you read scripture, you'll see the Messiah was to suffer.**

Jesus is saying . . .

**I had to suffer and I had to die, but I had to rise again . . . this was the plan . . . to bring life.**

Jesus is saying . . .

**You've witnessed . . . you've seen this and I'm going to fill you up with power so you'll be able to share it.**

**And when you do, Jesus is saying, Repentance and forgiveness will be preached to all the nations. People will repent . . . they'll turn, which is what the word means, *they'll turn*, and they'll see and know that God is a forgiving God.**

That's it pretty much . . . in a nutshell here at the end. Jesus and his penman, Luke, just laying it out one more time so we all can see. It's so simple and so wonderful.

Jesus, the lamb upon the throne, is saying . . .

**God has been at work, God is a God who has been intentionally acting throughout time and history. In creation and in us . . . And if you'll look back at the scriptures through me, Jesus is saying, you'll understand that . . . This is the fulfillment of plan A... not plan B. God didn't look down at the world and say, 'Don't make me come down there.' God is revealing progressively, his heart, to His world and in the fullness of time came the fullness of His revelation.**

Jesus, the Lord of life, is saying . . .

**I know it's shocking to see the fullness of God's revelation in suffering and in death but if you'll read the scriptures right, you'll see that God is a compassionate and suffering God, who always hurts for creation and it should come as no surprise to you that the Christ would have to suffer. This is who God is and what God does for you. The Cross shouldn't be so surprising."**

Jesus, the Lord of Love, is saying . . .

**And God is not only compassionate but powerful. God is life and though death is real it is no match for God. And though pain and suffering and sin are real . . . God uses even the worst things . . . the worst day of all gives way to the most beautiful day of all.**

**And you've seen this, Jesus is saying. . . That's what a witness is...one who sees and who says. You've been present to me and because of that you've seen what God has done.**

Jesus is saying . . .

**And the Divine presence that has been with you will now be within you and you won't be alone and you'll be completely clothed in...dressed up in... the power of God.**

**And when that happens, Jesus is saying, this is a story that is going to be told everywhere . . . And the story is about who God is . . . Loving and forgiving and it's**

**a story that will have the power to turn people around and reorient their lives to what is true and right.**

That's what Jesus says here at the end of the story... The summation of the incarnation . . . It's so simple and so wonderful and Luke wrote it down for us.

Jesus, the Christ, is saying . . .

**This isn't new . . . This is the story of all our stories. God works in history, God works in each and every life to reveal and to redeem. God comes to each of us in incarnate ways and most completely in the person of Jesus to complete the story and call us to himself. To end our stories the way in which they should end, in union with our Creator.**

**This isn't new... it's not new at all, Jesus, the Word made flesh, is saying; this is the Story above all our stories. That life involves suffering and pain but that we are not alone in it because God is always most present there. It's the Story interpreting all our stories.**

**God takes suffering and death . . .  
every letting go and every giving up  
and every going down into every darkness  
and can by the power of his love bring new life, if we'll say yes... To death and to life."**

Jesus, God's son, the Divine among us, is saying . . .

**It's His Story and it's the Story of our stories because we've witnessed this. We've seen lives changed . . . and we've seen God take even tragedy and make an Easter thing of it. We've gone to bed with dread and woken up having been gifted with a lighter spirit. We've witnessed new beginnings.**

Jesus is saying, and saying to us . . .

**This isn't new... God's Spirit has been animating and empowering sense day One of this Great Story... breathing into all creation, life and life abundant. So . . . your story is a continuation of the Great Story because you've been empowered along the way.**

**You've found an energy  
or some courage . . .  
you've walked away from moments of worship with God  
empowered . . .**

Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life, is saying . . .

**Repentance and forgiveness will be preached to everyone. This is the larger Story . . . that God's world is turning and turning and being drawn by the Eternal back into relationship.**

**There is forgiveness at the heart of it all.**

**Grace is at the center of it all, and the Nations will hear this.**

**Jesus showed us that in his story, and it's true for you too. We can know it, too; it can be the end of our stories if we open our hearts to it. And if it's touched and transformed you, you'll want to share it... you won't be able to help but share it. This is who God is... it's very good news.**

This is how the Story of Jesus ends. It's all there in a nutshell. So simple... so wonderful.

And after Jesus reminded them of it all...

he led them outside of town

and he lifted up his hands to bless them.

Looked them in the eye, I suspect, and pronounced words of grace and peace upon them. And in their hearts, they knew they were beloved, you know how that is. It is what you need . . . it's all you need. It's your only need.

They had all they needed and with their hearts full of blessing, something amazing happened. A hole . . . a wrinkle in time.

They saw for a moment where the vertical realm intersected with the horizontal. It was a "thin place"... Between this spatial realm... and that spiritual one. It's impossible for us to imagine but they have a transcendent experience where this human Jesus moves beyond this human realm... and they are witnesses of that too.

It's the way the Story of Jesus ends. It happened in history, in a moment in time, just outside of a city called Jerusalem. It was his story but it is the Big Story as well.

God among us, in order to raise up all that is human. And the human and the eternal are one in Christ with God and raised up. Jesus is saying; Jesus came to say; Jesus said . . . "If I be lifted up, I'll draw all humanity with me."

It's the last image of the incarnation. This human being, ascended into eternity. Back to God. Back to paradise. Showing us the way. So simple really. So wonderful. The gospel in a nutshell. It's the story of Jesus and it's your story too... it will be. God is leading you home... God is lifting you up.

**"They worshipped him,"** what else is there to do, **"and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."** And the Gospel of Luke ends where it begins... in the temple... How 'bout that, English teachers, go look at page one—it begins as it ends—in the temple . . . with someone in amazement, anticipating what God is about to do – the temple, the center . . . They returned to the center and waited for what God had promised.

Then Luke put his quill down... and pushed the last conclusive piece of papyrus away from him... and he smiled knowing how the story would continue. How the Church would become an empowered presence of Jesus loving the world back home to God . . . they would lift the world to God. What a story . . . it made.

And I suspect he smiled, knowing that this Great Story had been his story.

And surely he smiled knowing so many others, including you and me, would read what he wrote and find it true in their lives too. Thanks be to God that he did. Amen.

This is our story . . . simple and wonderful.

It's what Jesus is saying to you.

Amen.

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