

Just Too Good To Be True

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[0 : 00] Let's take our Bibles this morning and open them to the Gospel of Luke.

! And our Bible text for this morning will bring us to the end of the Gospel of Luke, and therefore to the end of my series of sermons. Verse by verse, chapter by chapter, throughout this great, great book written by Luke.

So our text for this morning starts with verse 36 and we shall read verses 36 again through to the end of the book. Now as they said these things, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them.

And they, if you remember, hearkens back to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. And so Jesus stood in the midst of them and said to them, Peace to you.

But they were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said to them, Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?

[1 : 25] Behold, 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.

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. But while they still did not believe for joy and marveled, he said to them, Have you any food here?

So they gave him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And he took it and ate in their presence. And 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.

And he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the scriptures. Then he said to them, Thus it is written, Thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

[2 : 48] And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass while he blessed them that he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

Amen. And that's it. End of the book. Now, before we look at this passage, really delve into the passage, let me just point out a few things about the timing, the time, the period of time here.

The passage, of course, starts out on Sunday. It's Sunday as we begin to read here. Sunday, first day of the week.

In this case, very special Sunday, of course. Resurrection Day. Resurrection Day. And it has been Resurrection Day, or that particular Sunday, since the beginning of this chapter, chapter 24.

[3 : 55] So we started right out there in verse 1. On this day, this first day of the week, it began with the women coming to the tomb early, early that Sunday morning and finding the stone rolled away and the tomb empty.

And, you know, most of these women, all but Mary, because Mary cut out of there real quick, the ladies that stayed, they had a visitation from the angels, and the angel told them that he's not here, he's been risen from the dead just as he said, and so forth.

You remember that part of the story. Then after that, sometime after that, Peter and John, they also go to the tomb, and they also find it empty, and Peter leaves, and John sticks around a little while, and he has a visitation also from the angel, the angel telling him basically the same thing that he told the women.

And then sometime very soon after that, Mary comes back to the tomb, and she meets Jesus alive, alive from the dead. And then, of course, right after that, Jesus joins a couple of disciples who are downcast.

They can't be consoled. They're just destroyed. Their whole life has fallen apart, and they're walking back home on the road to Emmaus, and Jesus meets them there, and he opens the Scripture to them, and eventually reveals himself to them, and they see him.

[5 : 19] All of this, and more, really, when you put all the Gospel accounts together, happened on Sunday. On Sunday, and therefore, or really before the day is over, these two disciples that were on their way to Emmaus, they hoof it back to Jerusalem that evening to tell the good news about what they had seen, tell the good news to the apostles.

Now, it's still Sunday. Verse 33 tells us, you can back up there and look at verse 33, they rose up that very hour, the very hour that Jesus was revealed to them.

Remember, he suddenly opened their eyes, and he saw them, and then he vanished. He disappeared. And so they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven, and those who were with them gathered together, probably in the same room where they had the Lord's Supper.

We don't really know, but it could be that very same upper room where Jesus served them the night that he was arrested. All right, so they go back. And by the way, I don't know if you pick up on this, but you can almost feel their disappointment, these two disciples.

I mean, these guys ran all the way from Emmaus back to Jerusalem. That's seven miles, okay? That's a long way to walk or to run.

[6 : 43] They go all the way back to Jerusalem that very night with news that they thought no one else knew but them. They had seen Jesus alive. They couldn't wait to tell.

They couldn't wait to go and tell Peter and James and John and all of the other apostles the exciting news. That they thought they only knew.

That they were the ones who knew. And so they, you can imagine, I think, how they felt when they got to the upper room where the disciples and other, the apostles and other disciples had gathered together.

You can imagine how they felt when they came into the room with their great news and they come in and the room is abuzz with excitement and they hear someone say there in verse 34, the Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon Peter.

You talk about stealing their thunder. But they go on, of course, and begin to relate their news, their great news and they do that in verse 35.

[7 : 44] That's what verse 35 tells us. But before they can even get it out, tell their whole story, their exciting news, what? What happens? Well, verse 36, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them.

I mean, he just materialized right there in the room with them, right before their very eyes. And he had to do it that way because John chapter 20, verse 9 tells us that they had the doors locked.

And so Jesus just walks through a wall or appears, however he did it, and there he is, right there in front of them. All right, so all of this happened on Sunday. And other things, too, that happened on Sunday that we get from the other Gospels.

But from here, really, to the end of the chapter, Luke sort of melds together multiple events.

Really, he leaves out a lot of it that you have to go to other Gospel writers to get. He kind of brings together, melds a couple of events together that span, that really take place over the next 40 days.

[8 : 56] 40 days transpires here. About the middle of this particular text on, we kind of fast forward to 40 days, to the end of 40 days. And Luke explains that in his second volume, which is, of course, the book of Acts.

And in Acts chapter 1, verse 2, Luke wrote, until the day in which he was taken up, his ascension, after he, through the Holy Spirit, had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom he also presented himself alive after his suffering by many infallible proofs.

And that's what we have here in Luke chapter 24, don't we? Being seen by them during 40 days, for 40 days, span of 40 days, seen by them and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

We have a little of that also in Luke chapter 24. And being assembled together with them, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.

We also have that in Luke 24. All right, so our passage here in Luke 24 spans a space of 40 days from Jesus' resurrection that occurred right there at the beginning of chapter 24 all the way to his ascension back to heaven.

[10:17] And really, it goes beyond that. It goes beyond that because verse 53 says, and after Jesus ascended, they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

So it goes on from there. It really kind of leaves it open-ended at the end of the book. We'll get back to that a little bit later. All right, so in what Luke tells us about the 40 days, these 40 days, I want us to see four things this morning.

Four things. Here's the first one. The undeservable peace Jesus rewards his disciples. The undeservable peace he rewards them with, his disciples.

Now I want you to think about this. The disciples have heard the reports that Jesus is alive from the dead. They've all heard this by now.

And it's the talk among all of the disciples. They've heard the news. Even some of the apostles, some of the disciples, Peter, Mary, we know for sure, the two disciples from Emmaus, they've actually seen him alive.

[11:34] they've seen him alive. And even before all of that, Jesus had taught them over and over again that he would be put to death and then raised on the third day.

But they didn't believe it. I mean, you can't read any of the gospel accounts and not get that. Some were closer to believing, some were thinking about it, many of them, it just didn't click.

They didn't believe it. They didn't believe the reports that they had heard. They didn't even believe their own eyes, those who saw Jesus alive. And so here they are, you know, hunkered down, hiding behind locked doors for fear of the Jewish leadership, the Bible tells us.

And suddenly, right before their very eyes, Jesus appears. And what did he say to them? You know, these, by the way, these are the first words Jesus spoke to the collective body of disciples after his resurrection.

These are the first words he spoke. And what did he say? Hey, I told you so. That's what he told them, right? That's what I would have said.

[12:56] Didn't I tell you? And yet you don't believe? That's what I would have said. But no, the first thing out of his mouth is peace to you.

Peace to you. Which is tantamount to I forgive you. I forgive you. Have you ever thought something like this?

That if people really knew me, they might not like me. Have you ever thought those thoughts? I mean, if they really knew me. That is, if they knew my thoughts, all of my thoughts.

If people knew all of my flaws. If people knew all of my secret sins that I've committed that nobody else knows about, if they knew that, they might not want to have anything to do with me.

But Jesus does know, doesn't he? He knows it all. He knows your life better than you know your life. And yet he loves you.

[14:11] He loves you unconditionally. He knows every flaw. He knows every weakness in you. He knows every ugly, ugly thing in your heart.

Every wicked thought in your mind. He knows every faithless fear that you've experienced, that you have. We all have them.

And he knows every unbelieving doubt that you've ever had in your life and you have right now. He knows every prideful, self-conceited boast that you've ever made to others as well as to yourself.

He knows all of it. See, listen, the disciples had miserably failed Jesus. Right? They had failed him. I mean, when he was crucified, they scattered, they abandoned him.

When news started to spread that Jesus was alive from the dead, they didn't believe the news. And when eyewitnesses began to report actually seeing Jesus alive, they doubted those reports.

[15:29] And now, instead of responding in boldness, they cowardly hid out behind locked doors. But Jesus steps right on in to their place of doubts and faithlessness and he, in effect, forgives them.

Peace to you. Now, folks, that's good news. Because that's the kind of forgiving Savior we have. If you don't have him, he's the kind of forgiving Savior you need and can have. He knows everything there is to know about our hearts and our lives.

What does he not know about you? He knows things you've already forgotten. He knows that there is more than enough in every one of us to condemn us.

And yet, instead, he says, peace be to you. And by the way, he says that because of what he accomplished on the cross.

[16:43] That allows you to have peace with God. So, the undeservable peace, Jesus rewards his disciples.

Second, consider the unmistakable proof, proof, Jesus reveals to his disciples. The unmistakable proof. And this is really quite astounding.

After Jesus appears right before their eyes, verse 37 says they were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit, a ghost.

You're kidding me. I mean, that would be kind of our first response. Are you kidding? That's what they would believe. And you look further in verse 41, they still did not believe.

This is amazing. I mean, really. But I don't want you to focus upon that. I'd rather have us focus on this.

[17:45] What's more amazing is that Jesus accommodated them in their unbelief. unbelief. He accommodated their unbelief. I mean, instead of becoming impatient with them, instead of getting cross with them, instead of condemning them and rebuking them, instead of becoming angry with them, what did Jesus do?

He helped them believe. He helped them believe. And so he offers them proof, unmistakable proof, on three levels.

First of all, at the level of their senses. Their human physical senses.

That's the first thing he does, doesn't he? He says, verse 39, behold my hands and my feet. Just look at my hands, look at my feet.

That is, see the proof. the proof that I'm the one who died upon the cross. Look at those holes in my hands and my feet.

[19:00] Just look at them. And he says that it is I myself. Here's the proof. You can see it with your own eyes. Someone has said that the only man-made things that will be in heaven will be those scars on Jesus' body.

Look, look at them. In fact, he goes further. He says, go ahead, handle me. Touch me and see for sure. He said, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.

This is proof he's offering here at the level of their own physical senses, their eyes, their sense of touch and such. You know, there were only ten.

I mean, if this is his first appearance to the collective body of disciples, and I think it is, because he appeared several other times before his ascension, but if this is the first one, then we know that there are only ten apostles there at the time.

Ten of the twelve. I mean, Judas is already dead. He went out and hung himself. And we're not told why, but Thomas was not there. At this first visit.

[20:17] First appearance. And then later, Jesus met with him again, and Thomas was present, and Jesus said to Thomas, remember, in John chapter 20 verse 27, he said, put your finger here.

He's holding out his hand, go ahead and touch that. See that hole there? Go ahead and touch it. And then he's, I can imagine he probably pulled aside his robe, and he said, go ahead and touch my side here.

You feel that? Where the Roman guard drove that spear into my side while I was hanging upon the cross, remember? Go ahead and touch it.

He said, touch, put your hand here, touch my hands, put your hand here, touch my side. God. And then he said, stop doubting and believe.

Appealing to his senses. All right? And so Jesus, that's the first thing he does. That's the first level of proof that he offers them. He's helping them believe here.

[21:27] And yet, verse 40 says, amazingly, when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet, but they still did not believe for joy.

It's kind of unusual. They did not believe for joy. What it means is they're closer, getting closer, but they're not yet there. Not yet there.

Actually, they can't trust their own emotions. That's the idea. This kind of a strange expression, not believe for joy. It means the joy in their hearts, and even the very thought of Jesus being alive and seeing Jesus again, the very joy in their heart, it made them want to believe.

And so they couldn't trust themselves. They can't trust their own eyes because of how they feel in their hearts. I mean, perhaps they're seeing what they just want to see.

Or, you know, they can't, it's just too good to be true. Perhaps this is just an apparition, a ghost of Jesus, a figment of our overactive imagination because of what we really want to see.

[22 : 45] And so Jesus goes a step further, doesn't he? Verse 41, he said to them, have you any food here? And so they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and some honeycomb and he took it and he ate it in their presence.

He could see them eating it. See, ghosts don't eat food. Illusions, illusions created by our own wishful imaginations don't have bodies you can touch and they don't eat food.

see the proof that is given here? You know, some liberal scholars who deny the resurrection have suggested that the disciples saw Jesus because that's what they wanted to see.

And so it's kind of like a mass hysteria or a mass hallucination. And yet, this is unmistakable proof that he's offering here, that he's indeed alive from the dead.

I mean, you know, they could see him. They could touch him. They gave him food. They knew the food was real and they watched as he consumed that food.

[24 : 03] And so, he appealed to their senses, their physical senses. But you know, very rarely is physical proof sufficient.

I mean, it really isn't. Just physical proof, not enough. And so, Jesus offers them proof on a more reliable level.

And so, first, their senses and then second, the scriptures. The scriptures, the word of God, verse 44, look at it. Then he said to them, these are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you.

That is, you know, before the cross, I spoke these things to you. That all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses. That would be the first five books of the Bible.

The prophets, all the prophets, minor, major prophets, and the Psalms. And really, those three categories make up the entire Old Testament scripture.

[25 : 07] And these are the things I taught you from all of the scriptures. And then Jesus did for them what he did for the two guys going to Emmaus. Verse 45, he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the scriptures.

All of them. And then he said in verse 46, thus it is written. So he opened up the scriptures, took them step by step throughout all the law of Moses, the prophets, the Psalms, teaching them basically like he did the two from Emmaus, teaching them the things concerning himself.

And then he says this is what has been written. It is written, thus it was necessary. That is, it was written and so it must be done. It is written and it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.

See, it's a true adage, though it's been applied to, you know, misapplied in our day, but seeing is not believing.

Believing is seeing. So the senses and the scriptures, and then Jesus promises proof on an even higher level, the Spirit.

[26 : 35] The Spirit, this is the Holy Spirit. And so in verse 49 he says, Behold I send the promise of my Father, upon you, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.

And of course this is a reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, upon the church at Pentecost, and he is the promise, with a capital P, promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit.

We could talk all day about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but among the many ministries of the Holy Spirit is simply this, to guide the disciples, guide the believer in all the truth.

This is promise, promise of proof that Jesus is giving to his disciples at every level. The senses, the scriptures, and eventually the Holy Spirit.

Alright, so the undeservable peace Jesus rewards his disciples. The unmistakable proof Jesus reveals to his disciples. And then third, the undeniable priority Jesus requires of his disciples.

[27 : 47] And what we have here at this point is Luke's version of the Great Commission. Verse 47, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, him, and you are witnesses of these things.

This is the Great Commission. Luke's version of that. Now, let me begin with that word remission. You know, we talk about the gospel being good news, and that very word gospel means good news.

And this is good news. The good news to all, the gracious, eternal provision, of the gospel is the forgiveness of sin.

To forgive of sins. And that's the truth that is repeated over and over throughout the gospel of Luke. Go all the way back to the beginning of this book of the gospel of Luke.

Luke chapter 1 verse 77, where Zacharias, who's the father of John the Baptist, he prophesied that God would give to his people salvation and forgiveness of sins.

[29 : 07] And then in chapter 3 verse 3, John the Baptist is preaching, and he's preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. In Luke chapter 5 verse 20, Jesus said to the paralytic, he said, your sins are forgiven.

In Luke chapter 7 verse 48, Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, your sins have been forgiven. In Luke chapter 11 verse 4, Jesus taught believers to pray this way, forgive us our sins. In Luke chapter 23 and verse 34, Jesus prayed from the cross as he was hanging there on the cross, Father, forgive them. The good news of the gospel is the forgiveness of sins.

And then we have the word repentance. forgiveness of sins is available only to those who repent. Who repent. That is, turn from self and self-rule and self-reliance and self-lordship and from sin and turn to and trust Jesus Christ and him alone to forgive you of your sin and to save you.

Very simple concept. But also notice the phrase, very crucial phrase, in his name. That is, forgiveness of sins is available only through Jesus Christ.

[30 : 45] Acts chapter 4 verse 12. Remember Luke's other gospel. Peter preached there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven that has been given to among men by which you must be saved.

Must be saved. This is the message we must bring to all the nations of the world, to all people beginning with those who are living right here in our Jerusalem.

And this is the undeniable priority Jesus requires of all of his disciples. And then one final thing, the unstoppable praise Jesus receives from his disciples, or should receive, praise, worship.

Here's where we fast forward to the end of that period of 40 days that followed the resurrection of Jesus. verse 50, and Luke fleshes this out even more in Acts chapter 1, but in verse 50 he writes, and he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

Verse 51, now it came to pass while he blessed them that he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. This is his ascension back into heaven.

[32 : 10] Again, you can read Acts chapter 1 and get more details about all of that. All right, so he's carried up into heaven, and then what? Verse 52, they worshipped him.

They worshipped him. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were, what? Continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

Amen. You know, Luke leaves his gospel open-ended. You should notice this.

This is on purpose, very deliberate. Kind of leaves it open-ended. That is, he doesn't offer a conclusion. There's no end to it here.

And he does it by using two participles in the verse, and in the Greek grammar there, present tense, which means the continuous, the continuous action.

[33 : 17] So he ends it this way, praising and praising and praising and praising, continuously praising and blessing God. That's how his gospel ends. Kind of open-ended.

That means it's still going on. That means you and I are part of that. Blessing, praising, praising God, worshipping him.

also, I would tell you that Luke leaves his second gospel, book of Acts, open-ended. He ends it with an adverb, which is very unusual, grammatically speaking.

And so the very last verse of Acts, the book of Acts, says this, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding.

There's the adverb. Literally, it's unhinderedly, which is a strange way to end.

[34 : 27] It's open-ended. Unhinderedly. All right, so, see, that's the way it should be for all of Christ's disciples.

Unstoppable praising and praising the God of our salvation. And unstoppable preaching, teaching, proclaiming, sharing, witnessing of his good news to the world.

See? That's what we're all to be a part of. here and there. Here and there.