

Gloriously Ascended

by Anton Bosch

This sermon focuses on the concluding verses of Luke chapter 24, highlighting Jesus' appearance to the disciples, his teachings on the fulfillment of scriptures, the importance of repentance and remission of sins to be preached to all nations, the ascension of Jesus into heaven, and the disciples' response of worship and joy. The sermon emphasizes the need for believers to wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit, to be faithful witnesses, and to be obedient to the call of preaching the gospel.

Scripture: Luke 24:36, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8, Acts 1:8, Acts 1:9, Acts 1:8, Acts 1:12, Hebrews 1:3, James 1:5

Topics: "Witnessing", "Empowerment of the Holy Spirit"

Description

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Transcript

Luke, chapter 24, and we've come to the end of the Gospel of Luke this morning. It's been four years, over four years, 2018, the beginning of July 2018 we started on Luke, and I think it's about 157 studies, obviously we've done other things in between, but 157 studies on the book of Luke, and I'll start a brief series next week on a different subject, we probably won't tackle another book now. So Luke chapter 24 reading from verse 36 through 53, Luke chapter 24 reading 36 through 53, through the end of the book.

Now, as they said these things, Jesus himself 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? 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. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. But while they still did not believe for joy and marvel, he said to them, have you any food here? So they gave him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

Then 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. And then 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.

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witness of these things. Behold I send the promise of my father to you and Batarai in the city of Jerusalem until you are endured with power from on high.

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 they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen. So we concluded last week with verse 45.

He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the scriptures. And of course we need to pray that God would give us understanding, that he would give us wisdom. The book of James promises us that if we ask, he will give us wisdom.

He will give us understanding. And that's what we need above all else. Then it says, 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.

Now what Luke is doing in these next few verses, really ten verses I guess, no, six or so verses, is he's really summing up everything that happened over a period of forty days. Jesus was crucified, he rose again, and then it was a period of forty days that he was with them, and then he ascended. And then ten days after that was the day of Pentecost.

So in those forty days he spent some time in Jerusalem, but he seems to have spent most of the time in Galilee, up in the north. And so what Luke is doing is he's just taking six verses or so and he is summarizing forty days of teachings. Because Jesus is now, for the first time, they're beginning to understand.

He taught them for three and a half years, they didn't get it. Now they're beginning to understand, and he is now going over all of these things again. And so what Luke is giving us is really the summary of everything that he taught over that period of forty days.

Obviously there was a lot more, because when you read the epistles, when you read particularly Peter and John, you get a lot of those teachings out of what they subsequently wrote. But also remember that as we deal with this last section, that Luke is the first volume of a two-volume book. Luke is the first volume of a two-volume book.

The first volume is the Gospel according to Luke, the second part is the Book of Acts. Luke begins the Book of Acts by saying the former treaties, Oseophilus, the former writing of everything Jesus began both to do and to teach. And then he continues.

And so these two books must be read together. This last few verses of Luke, he gives us more information in the first chapter of Acts. So there's an overlap, the same way as I began in the verse that we ended up last week, and I gave you a twenty-second summary of what we said in a long time, and then continued, he does exactly the same thing in the Book of Acts.

Here he has six verses about Jesus' teaching and his ascension. In the Book of Acts, in chapter one, he devotes an entire chapter to everything that Jesus did, not everything, but some of the things that Jesus did at that time as a recap, and then chapter two of Acts continues from there on, from Jesus' ascension, for the ten days they wait in Jerusalem, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and then the work of the church from there through the end of the Book of Acts. So one of the things he was emphasizing, and you remember that the same things appeared in those three pictures—remember that he gives us three pictures of the resurrection, the woman at the tomb, the Rotimaeus, and the disciples in the upper room.

There's a pattern in each one of those. One of the things that happens in each one of those three is here for the fourth time, and that is the emphasis by the angel and by Jesus that Jesus fulfilled the scriptures of the Old Testament. And so here he says the same thing again, thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.

Why was it necessary? Obviously it wasn't necessary for him. He didn't need to go through that, but it was necessary for us. It was necessary for our salvation.

That was the only way we could be saved. As we've been going through the Book of Hebrews, one of the things that I'm sure you should have been picking up as we're going through Hebrews is the weakness of the Old Testament system, its inability to save, and that only Jesus is able to save. All the sacrifices in the Old Testament could never remove sin, but the sin is washed away by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so it was necessary for him to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, not just to fulfill scripture, but to complete the work of salvation. Remember when Paul defines the gospel in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, he defines it by the fact that Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures. Same thing that Luke is writing, as it is written, that he was buried, that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

And so the gospel is defined in the death, burial, resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And so now he says, so verse 46 is what he did. He suffered, died, and rose again.

Verse 47 is now their responsibility. You see, one of the problems we have with modern Christianity is that we have this false teaching that he did everything and that we get to do nothing, that we just get to benefit from what he has done. And obviously there's some truth in that.

We cannot save ourselves. We cannot save ourselves by being religious or by being good people or by giving money or by doing anything. We are saved by what Jesus did at the cross of Calvary.

That's all that saves us. The church cannot save, nothing else saves. It's Jesus alone who saves.

But having been saved, we have a responsibility. There are certain things that we need to do in response to the gospel. So right through the Old Testament, right through the New Testament, there's always this principle, God initiates things.

God sets everything in order. But then he requires a response from us. God makes a covenant with Abraham.

Abraham is put to sleep when God makes the covenant. So it's a unilateral covenant. God makes the covenant.

But having made the covenant with Abraham, Abraham now has to do certain things. And so here we find exactly the same thing. So Jesus died and was risen in verse 47.

We must preach repentance and remission of sins. That is our part in this process. So he's done the job.

He's made salvation available. But we now need to preach that gospel. That is our job.

Now, notice that he puts two aspects. And obviously the gospel is like a diamond or a precious stone. If you look at it from different angles, you see different light.

It's the same beautiful thing. If you have a diamond that's clean, and when you put it in the light and you turn it, you see that there's different colors, and it sparkles, and it's different from every angle. And the same is true of the gospel.

There's different angles to the gospel. It's the same glorious gospel. But here is the part that he is emphasizing, that Luke is emphasizing, repentance and remission of sins.

Again, a two-part process. We cannot wash away sins. We cannot wash away other people's sins, and they cannot wash away their own sins.

They cannot remit or pay the price for their sins. Jesus paid the price for our sin. And so that's, again, the part that he does.

But what is the part we must do? Repent. Those two things are the two aspects of the gospel. What he does is he forgives us.

What we do is we must repent. Now remember, there's a tremendous attack against this idea of repentance in modern Christianity today, because Christians want to say, well, I believe, and so I'm saved, and that's all that matters. I don't have to do anything.

God does everything. I can live the way I want to live. I can continue to do whatever I want to do, because I'm saved, not by what I've done, but what he has done.

That is a lie from the pit of hell. Because we are not—there is a response, there is some reaction, there's something that needs to come from us in response to what he has done. And it is not just believing, because that's the part that's emphasized.

Yeah, just believe. Well, 70 percent, according to the statistics, 70 percent of Americans believe. What percentage of Americans are really saved? I don't know.

Maybe less than 5 percent. Talk about China. We have a bigger problem here, because we have the gospel, but there is no repentance.

The repentance is the evidence of faith. Remember, John begins—the book of Luke begins with John preaching, and John says, Bring forth fruit, meet for repentance. Don't just come and get baptized.

Produce the fruit. Show the evidence. Talk is cheap.

And, you know, we've got a Christianity today which is all about talk. It's all about saying, Well, I believe, and I love you, and, you know, I surrender all. And, you know, we sing those hymns, deeper, deeper, but in fact there's no reality to it.

There's no substance. But the message we are to preach, and that is why I preach the way I do, and that's the way I preach the message I preach, is that we are called—we are to call men to repentance. We are to call people to change, to repent from their sins, to repent from their evil ways.

And unfortunately, we have an easy Christianity today where you just sign the decision card, pray the sinner's prayer, and now you're a Christian, but you continue to live the way you've always lived. That is not repentance. Now I don't want to get sidetracked on repentance.

We need to—we can speak about that for a long time, but here's the message. Repentance and remission of sins. Notice that repentance comes first, and then remission of sins in this list.

And it should be preached in His name, and it is to be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. In Matthew chapter 28, and in Acts chapter 1, it becomes more specific that it's to begin in Jerusalem, Judea—Jerusalem is the city, Judea is the region, the area outside—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, which is beyond that, and which includes Gentiles, and then to the ends of the earth. That is the commission.

When He says to all nations, there is another heresy here, which is becoming very popular in America today, and I'm going to speak on that in two weeks' time. The idea that nations can be saved. When He says preach the gospel to nations, He's not saying preach the gospel to nations so that those nations can be saved.

Salvation very clearly writes through the Scriptures, even in the Old Testament, even when Israel was God's chosen people. Each individual Jew had to make up his own mind as to whether he was going to put his confidence in God. And you remember the warning that Israel came out of Egypt, 600,000 men plus women and children, three million people, and out of those three million people, only two entered into the land.

So they were not saved because they were Israelites. The two were saved because they believed God. And so even in the Old Testament, there is no such thing as a national salvation, that there's a Christian nation or there's a saved nation.

The point He's making here is just to go and preach to all people. The word nations there is ethnos, from which we get the word ethnic or ethnic groups, and so He is saying to all kinds of people, go and preach the gospel. Obviously, beginning at Jerusalem.

And just the point that was made this morning concerning Jasper is that he has come to understand it needs to begin with me. The gospel begins with me. There are many who want to preach the gospel and want to preach the word of God, but it doesn't begin with them.

It's got to begin with me. If the gospel is not real to you, if it's not affected and changed who you are, then you're wasting your time trying to speak to everybody else. So it needs to begin at home, needs to begin with me, needs to extend to my family, it needs to extend to my closer circle, but ultimately it needs to reach the rest of the world.

I know there are some here who resent the fact that I preach in other parts of the world. I do that as a direct, in direct obedience to the word of God. I have a responsibility, and you have a responsibility.

God has blessed this church in many ways, particularly financially, and you have a responsibility to preach the gospel. If you cannot go, then send people who can go to preach the gospel. Because here's the

problem.

This is what Jesus told them, but that's not what they did. What ended up happening is they began in Jerusalem and they had a wonderful church. Maybe 8,000 people, 3,000 saved one day, 5,000 saved the other day, plus other people.

So they had this wonderful church, they had 12 apostles who had walked with Jesus preaching, and they forgot about the fact that he said that you need to go to the nations. And so it just became a bless me club, and God judged them. God came down upon that church, and Luke records this in the book of Acts, persecution came, and that whole church was scattered.

Folks, when we do not obey God, God will deal with us. But God's will will be done. Don't think that you can stand in the way of God's will.

If we do not do what he calls us to do, God will set us aside and find someone else who will do what we need to do. And so that whole church was... There are people who say God will never destroy a church. Well there are warnings to the seven churches in the book of Revelation that God will remove their lampstand.

And the church in Jerusalem, which began in a sense here in these 40 days as Jesus ministers to the 120 in the upper room and 500 in Galilee. God destroyed that church. Because Luke is very clear.

He says at the end of that story, how many were left in that church? Twelve. Of 8,000 people plus, 12 were left, the 12 apostles. The rest were scattered.

And of course, why were they scattered? So that now they were forced to do what he told them to do right here. They were scattered throughout the world and wherever they went, they now preached the gospel. Folks, don't let God judge you personally.

Don't let God's judgment come on this church in order to do what we're supposed to be doing. Let's do what God tells us to do before he puts a gun to our heads. The choice is ours.

And so the gospel must be preached. And I'm grateful for folks like Jasper and the Thompsons and others who are in foreign countries. Some of them living under very difficult circumstances.

Some of them living in jeopardy of prison, like Jasper. But they're obeying the call of God. And folks, at the end of the day, it's not about results.

We can look at Jasper's work and we say, well, how many people has he got? He's got a handful. That's not the point. The point is he's obedient.

He's doing what God's called him to do. And that's the only thing that we need to do. God does not call us to produce results.

He doesn't call us to success. He doesn't call us to numbers. He calls us to faithfulness, to obedience.

And that's the only thing that matters. Now verse 48. We need to rush on.

And you are witnesses of these things. The Greek word mates, from which we get the word mata, and so they are to be witnesses. Now remember in Luke, writing in the book of Acts chapter 1 and verse 8, he

says, and you will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Notice, he does not say you are to witness, but you are witnesses. Folk again, there's just so much in this section, but I need to get through Luke because there are other things on my heart. I said earlier, talk is cheap.

People want to say, well, I witness. No, it's not whether you witness with your mouth. It's whether you witness with your life.

I'm sick and tired of preachers who preach from the pulpit, but their lives are a mess. Their marriages are a mess. Their families are a mess.

The way they relate to the law and to the government is a mess. The way they deal with the word of God is a mess. We need to be witnesses.

People need to note that we have been with Jesus. Don't tell me you're a Christian. Show me you're a Christian.

That's what I'm asking for, and that's what the world is asking for. Be a witness because, folk, here's the reality is that if you've met with Jesus, your life will be changed, and unfortunately, there are too many who adopted Christian values, but their lives remain unchanged. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

The old things are passed away. All things have become new. When you look at the book of Acts, you see people who lived the life and paid the price, but they witnessed to Jesus.

Now, verse 49, 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. Now, remember that in Acts 1, he tells us exactly what this is. I've just quoted Acts 1, verse 8. You will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

Jesus over and over in John chapter 15 and elsewhere, he speaks about the fact that he will send another comforter who will empower them. And here's one of the other problems we have today, is that our witness is powerless. We don't live the life we should be living, because we do not have the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

We're filled with carnality, we're filled with the world, we're filled with television, we're filled with all sorts of other things, but we're not filled with the Spirit. Now, that's a whole other message. But he says, I will send you the promise of my Father upon you, but wait, tarry in Jerusalem, in the city of Jerusalem, until you receive power from on high.

Now I want you to notice again, there's a two-step process. Go and preach, but before you preach, receive the power. There are many who go and preach, but they've not received the power.

They've not received the Holy Spirit to empower them to be those witnesses. And why? Well, some, because they haven't waited. Folks, our prayer life is a two-minute, bless me, help me, bless my wife, help my children, give me money, fix this, amen.

We don't spend time at the throne of grace, and we wonder why our lives are powerless. We don't spend time in the presence of God. They waited for ten days.

During their ten days, they would go and preach in the temple, but they would be in the upper room waiting for God to meet with them. And we know the story, we know that how on the day of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension, the Holy Spirit comes, and they are powerfully transformed. Yes, they were preaching up to that point, but nothing was happening.

But after the Holy Spirit, the same day, 3,000 are saved because of Peter's testimony, Peter's preaching. Folks, there are two problems here, because there's two components to this thing. The one is that we have to wait and receive the power, the other is we have to go.

Now if you go without having waited, you're wasting your time. And if you're waiting without going, you're wasting your time. Because there are some who just emphasize, well, I'm just spending time in God's presence.

No, that's not all that we're called to do. Yes, remember when Jesus called, and this is now the conclusion of his whole ministry. When Jesus called his disciples, it says he called them for two purposes.

One, that they might be with him, and two, that he might send them out. And that has never changed. He didn't call them just to send them out, he called them that they may first spend time with him, and then he would send them out.

Folks, we need to spend time with him, but we also need to go. Verse 50 then, now those were the things that he was teaching in this time, and now we come to the final hours of his life on earth. And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

In Acts chapter 1, he is more specific that it was not just Bethany, Bethany was a district, but it was the Mount of Olives, particularly in Bethany. So he takes them to the Mount of Olives, and he lifts up his hands to bless them, and as he blesses them, it came to pass while he blessed them, that he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. Now there's two things I want to just emphasize here.

The first is that the language is while he continued to bless them, so as he is taken up into heaven, he doesn't poof, disappear. But clearly it says the cloud took him up, so he slowly ascends, but as he ascends he is blessing, he is blessing, he is blessing. What a wonderful privilege, what a wonderful place to be.

I want to be in that place where he is continually blessing me. And then the book of Acts says that he was carried in the cloud. This was not just a cumulus cloud, or a cirrus cloud, or some one of these rain clouds or things that we see around here.

This was the glory of God. Remember that when they came out of the land of Egypt, God led them in the pillar of fire and in the cloud during the day, the presence of God. When they finished building the tabernacle, the cloud came and rested upon the tabernacle, and God's presence descended on the tabernacle.

We spoke somewhat on that on Thursday. Then in building the temple, the same thing happens. Then in Jesus' ministry, and there are many other accounts, but I'm just grabbing a few.

In Jesus' ministry, you remember that he takes the disciples up into the Mount of Transfiguration, and again there's the cloud. Moses goes into the presence of God, just stepping back again, and he's there in the cloud. It's the glory of God.

So this is not just Jesus, the stupid little pictures that we see of Jesus walking on a cloud. No, this is the glory of God, grabbing Jesus and taking him up into the presence of God. This is the final testimony to the disciples that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

He was the Christ, that he has God's blessing upon his life, because in a sense, the Father sends the Holy Spirit, because the cloud represents the Holy Spirit. The Father sends the Holy Spirit to welcome Jesus home. What a picture.

Well done, good and faithful servant. This is my son in whom I am well pleased. Here he is.

So he's carried away up into heaven, and they worshipped him, and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They worshipped him, and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. What a change from ten days before, when they believed he was dead and everything was lost.

Now they understand. Now they don't only see him resurrected, but they're seeing him glorified. The Father receiving him.

The book of Acts tells us that there was an angel. Luke doesn't deal with it in the book of Luke, but the book of Acts says that the angel then said, the same Jesus who's gone is going to come in the same way. And so when we read this passage, we must always be reminded it's not just about him going, but it's about him coming again.

And it's not just about him going, because remember he said, I have to go. But when I go, I will send you another comforter. The comforter, he says, cannot come while I'm here.

Not because there's any conflict, but simply because he now needs to change the way he's dealing with them. He's no longer personally dealing with them, but he's dealing with them through the Holy Spirit, or dealing with us through the Holy Spirit. So we live in a different time.

We don't have Jesus with us, but we have the Holy Spirit. And we have the Holy Spirit, Jesus says, because I've gone to the Father and I've asked him to send you the Spirit. Verse 53, and they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

Amen. And so this verse tells us what they were doing, and we know from other verses that they were spending time in the upper room, waiting on the presence of God. One of the other things they were doing is that they were searching the scriptures, and they were checking their lives against the scriptures.

And in that process, they discovered that the scriptures speak about Judas, who had to fall away, and that someone else had to be appointed in his place. These are the things we ought to be doing. We ought to be spending time in his presence.

We need to spend time worshipping and blessing him. We must be spending time searching the scriptures and making sure that our lives are in order, that God may send the Holy Spirit, and then that we might go and preach the gospel as he has commanded us. Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for this wonderful book, Lord, and four years that we've been able to be in it. Lord, it's been a great blessing to me, and I pray, Lord, that those who have heard will hear, and that we might be doers of everything that is written, not just in the book of Luke, but in all of the scriptures. We thank you for the Lord Jesus, who began his life in such a wonderful way in Bethlehem, went through all of the shame and

the suffering of the cross, but rose again, and has now been ascended on high and is glorified, as we've seen in the book of Hebrews, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Lord, I pray that we may be worthy witnesses of the Lord Jesus. Lord, that as those around us look at us and our lives, the way we do things, Lord, that they may see that we've been with Jesus, that we're different, and that we are endued with power from on high. Lord, I pray that we may be faithful as he was faithful, that we may do what you told us to do, that we might be obedient, and Lord, that we may receive that same glorious welcome home that Jesus received once he finished his work.

Lord, I pray that you'd help us to understand, open our understanding, Lord, that we may know, and Lord, give us grace that we may be obedient and doers of your word, we pray, in Jesus' name. Part us now with your blessing, we pray. Bring us together again safely on Thursday.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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