

It's almost exactly 2 years, or as close as we could get it (and I didn't plan it that way, BTW). On the 22/01/2023, we began our new series on Luke (1:1).

Today is 26/01/2025 (Australia day), and message No.89 in our series, brings it to a close.

Now, at one point, the topic was "the return of Jesus", and we thought, "Well, maybe Jesus might return before we finish this series". He hasn't yet. And if He is going to return before we finish, I will be very glad to see you (with Jesus) in Glory in just a few minutes...

Anyway:

The Gospel of Luke: It begins in the Temple at Jerusalem, with the Angel prophesying the birth of John the Baptist. And it ends in the Temple at Jerusalem. Right on the outskirts of Jerusalem, Jesus ascends into Heaven, and then the Disciples return to the city, and worship at the Temple.

And when it comes to the proclamation of the Good News, it begins with John the Baptist (filled with the Holy Spirit) preaching a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (That's what's being proclaimed). And just before Jesus ascends into Heaven, He tells His disciples that **they** will be clothed in power from on High (Holy Spirit). And the **mission** that Jesus gives them, is to proclaim a message of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" in His Name.

It begins how it ends. And it's been a recurring message, all the way through the Gospel of Luke (A proclamation of a message of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins)...

Seems like it might be important, hey.

Anyway, for today, let's begin with the resurrection. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, is **key** to what we believe, and it is key to the message we proclaim.

So, what's so special about the resurrection? After all, Jesus was not the first to be raised from the dead.

- Elijah raised the widow's son;
- Jesus raised the ruler's daughter;
- Lazarus was raised from the dead;
- There was even a body that was thrown into the grave of Elisha, and as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha, he came alive...

Jesus was not the first to be raised back to physical life. But He **was** the first to be raised, to a new **Spiritual**, resurrection body, that will never die.

But even so, the resurrection of Jesus, was not **only** "Spiritual", it was also **physical**. His body had substance to it. Yes, He could simply appear, behind locked doors, and then disappear at will.

But when the Disciples thought they might be seeing a Phantom, Jesus says, "**Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.**"

And then He ate a piece of fish. If He was just a phantom, the fish would've just dropped straight through onto the floor...

BTW, the fact that Jesus (in His resurrected body) ate fish, I am hopeful that this might be an indicator that when we are raised, we also will eat meat. I sorta can't picture a heavenly banquet without having a good roast...

Anyway, let's come back to it. When Jesus proved He wasn't a phantom, the disciples went from fearful **unbelief**, to **joyful** **unbelief**. Do you know the difference...

- One goes “Oh, no, what's going on???”;
- The other goes
“Wow, I still can't believe it... He's alive!”

Righto, so Jesus is raised from the dead. Jesus lives!!! And this is what we proclaim.

So, let's pick the reading up at vv44&45. That's where Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures

Have you ever noticed, that when 2 different people read the Bible, one of them might be filled with awe and wonder and joy, at the revelation of God that comes through in His word,,, and the other just goes “What???”...

One gains deep spiritual insight and understanding, and the other is left totally in the dark.

Now, sometimes I do feel that it may have a bit to do with “putting in a bit of effort to understand God's Word” (Love

the Lord our God with all of our mind), but **moreso**, it is by the activity of God, that we gain understanding of the Scriptures.

Just as Jesus opened their minds to understand the **Scriptures**, He does it for us. How did He open their minds? Well, He taught them, but it was more than that. He's taught them before, and they didn't get it. It's sorta like, by His Holy Spirit, God removes the veil, so that we can now understand.

For some, the mystery remains hidden. For others, He removes the veil.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the church in Corinth, he taught them that his job as a missionary, was to impart (teach) wisdom. He called it: **interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual**ⁱ. Alright, this is the difference between preaching to/evangelising unbelievers, and **teaching** – teaching those who are spiritual/believers.

And Paul says:

1 Corinthians 2: (ESV) ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

And it seems, the whole time the Disciples were with Jesus, He's been teaching them, and he's been fulfilling prophecy after prophecy after prophecy. In the Gospel of Luke, the Old Testament Scriptures being fulfilled, is a major theme... But did the Disciples "get it"? No, they didn't. They didn't put it

together, until after the resurrection, and Jesus explained it to them.

It is **God**, who gives us understanding of the Scriptures.

And when you become a Christian, all of a sudden, the mysteries of God, begin to gel/make sense. Why? Because when you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your heart. And through His Spirit, Jesus helps us to understand the Scriptures.

Now, when Jesus was talking about “The Scriptures”, was He talking about the Old Testament or the New Testament? The Old Testament (of course). The New Testament hadn’t been written.

And so Jesus referred to the entirety of the Old Testament. He names it:

- The Law of Moses;
- The Prophets;
- The Psalms...

That, is the entirety of our Old Testament...

And when the Lord helps us to understand His Word, we’re going to begin to see, prophecies, right throughout the Old Testament, looking forward to Jesus...

Prophecies that:

- Jesus would suffer;
- He would rise from the dead on the third day;

And that it wouldn’t end there.

- that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Wow!!... Do you realise, that you and I, this very day, are a part of the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy about Jesus... that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

It was prophesied in the book of the Law of Moses (Pentateuch).

Genesis 12:3 (ESV) (Abraham)

³ "..., and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

It was prophesied in the Psalms.

Psalms 22:27 (ESV)

²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the YHWH, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.

It was prophesied in the Prophets

Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)

⁶ he says:

I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

What you and I are doing today:

Proclaiming:

- the Name of Jesus
- the saving work of Jesus on the cross
- that Jesus has been raised from the dead;
- a message of **repentance for the forgiveness of sins**

What we are doing today, is a fulfilment of ancient prophecy.

And every church, who meet in this town today, and who proclaim these things, are a fulfilment of ancient prophecy.

In fact, every church (right across the globe), who proclaim these things, are a fulfilment of ancient prophecy... Wow!!!

You know, our little church, we might be small, and at times we may feel insignificant... but we are part of something bigger. We are a part of something **much** bigger...

Both:

- the fulfilment of ancient prophecy; and
- the embodiment of the mission of Jesus, that He spoke of, right here in this Gospel.

There is a proclamation to be made (in the Name of Jesus), to all nations... Repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, in the Name of Jesus. That's what we have to be on about. And that's why we're planning to run some Christianity Explored courses this year, to help those who do not yet know Jesus, to hear this message...

Now, the message we have, **must** be Christ-centred.

Our purpose as a church, isn't about:

- giving good advice for living;
- how to be successful;
- having a focus on counselling;

and our message isn't about

- being the best version of “you”...

Our purpose, is to be Christ-centred, in how we live, and in what we proclaim.

Now, we live in a culture, where it may seem like the only virtue, or perhaps the highest virtue, is to be “inclusive”... And one of the crazy things of our “inclusive culture”, is the way it **excludes** Christianity... Out of all of the religions of the world, in our culture, Christianity is perhaps the most frowned upon.

Why is that? Well, I believe it's a spiritual thing. Jesus told us, that those who live in darkness, hate the lightⁱⁱ....

But I'll give you another reason: It's because Jesus claims exclusivity. I'm not creating that claim – I'm just telling you what Jesus says. Jesus makes the outrageous claim, that He, is the only way to God. He said, **John 14: (ESV) 6 “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

And so, our message of salvation, **must** be Christ-centred.

That's why "repentance for the forgiveness of sins" should be proclaimed in **His** Name. By no other name, can we be saved.

And there are many, who will go off in search of "enlightenment" or "spirituality" in any number of places, but the only Name, in which true forgiveness and eternal life can be found, is in the Name of Jesus....

And the inclusivity police can jump up and down all they like, but their disapproving protests cannot change the truth. Jesus is the only way to God; Glory; and eternal life.

And He said to the Disciples, ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.**

Witnesses of what? Witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and witnesses of the salvation of Jesus.

Now, the thing with a "witness", we tend to think of a "witness" as someone who sees things. But the **witness** isn't in the "seeing". The **witness** is in the telling of what I have seen. A witness testifies, and tells, what they know.

The disciples were witnesses. We are witnesses.

The tragedy is, way too often, we Christians can be reluctant witnesses.

You know how you watch a TV show – a crime drama, and the witness fears for his life, and so they put him into a witness protection program. And they turn up, and make their court

appearance, they give their evidence – they witness to what they know is true, and then they are whisked away to their new, secret life, where no one knows where they are, and they'll never speak of it again...

How many Christians are like that? We hide away in our secret life, and we don't tell anyone about Jesus.... The witness, isn't in the seeing. The witness, is in the telling.

Why? Are we embarrassed about Jesus? Are we afraid if we might offend someone? Well, there's no maybes about it. We will offend some. We proclaim a message of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins. *“What? Are you telling me, I'm a sinner?”* Yeah... But so was I. The Apostle Paul described Himself as “the worst of sinners”... He obviously hadn't met me...

The Gospel is offensive. It tells me, that I am a sinner in need of a saviour. But it also tells us, that when we repent of sin, and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, He will forgive us. We can be born again...

Where are you at? Do you have a history that you carry? ... Are there things you've done in your past, that you wish you could be free of...

I want you to hear: You can be free. To become a Christian, is something so radical, Jesus referred to it as “being born again”...

- Repent;
- Confess your sin to Jesus; and

- Believe in Him

We can be changed; renewed... All of our evil, washed away...

This is the message we have to tell. This is the message we bear witness to. Can we do it? Well, actually, no we can't (not very well)... And that's why Jesus said to the Disciples:
⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

He was talking about His Holy Spirit.

If I were standing here today, preaching in my own strength – sharing from my own understanding, do you know what you would get? *"Oh, um, well, ,, , Jesus is a good guy.... Yeah, I don't really know what to tell you...."*

I can't do it. If I make any sense to you today, it is not me. It is the Holy Spirit, doing His wondrous work, through someone as lowly as me... What a humbling thing this is...

It is tough, being a witness for Jesus, and we sometimes shake in fear at the prospect of telling an unbeliever, what Jesus has done for them...

That's why Jesus ascended into Heaven, so that He could send to us His Holy Spirit.

This is not only, a promise for the first generation of Disciples. This is for you and me. The promise of God, is to be **clothed with power from on high**.

Being a witness for Jesus isn't easy, but with the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit, God does a miracle. Have we been reluctant witnesses? Let's not be reluctant anymore.

By the power of God, we testify:

- Jesus lives;
- Jesus reigns;
- Jesus suffered and died, to pay the penalty of my/your sins;
- But He rose from the dead;

And by the Power of God, we testify – we proclaim:

- the message of **repentance for the forgiveness of sins**, in the Name of Jesus.

V⁵⁰ And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

It's not until the very last sentence, that Luke records the worship of Jesus.

And that's why we meet together here, every Sunday: To worship Jesus.

So, that's the end of the Gospel of Luke. The sequel is the book of Acts, but we've already covered the book of Acts, so if you want to get a refresher, you can listen to that online.

Questions?

ⁱ 1 Corinthians 2:13

ⁱⁱ John 3:19-21 (ESV)

¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."