

The Promise of My Father Upon You  
Luke 24:36-53  
September 18, 2022  
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CenterPoint Church

Read Luke 24:36-53

*"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."* (Isaiah 40:8)

## Introduction

How many of us have ever said the phrase "I hate goodbyes"? If you've ever moved, you know that it can be hard to say a final farewell to your friends in your old town. We moved several times when I was growing up and it was always hard. Then, as an adult, I lived in a transient area for almost 20 years and had to say goodbye to people who move away often. When I was a kid, when you said goodbye to your childhood friends, you weren't sure you'd ever talk to them again because we didn't have email or cell phones; long-distant calls were expensive and I probably wasn't going to write a letter. Today we keep up with everyone on social media and continue friendships long after we've moved. But goodbyes are still difficult. I remember hearing some of the actors on the TV show, *The Office*, talk about the scenes of them saying goodbye to Steve Carrell's character in the show when he was leaving after seven seasons, and they said that the emotions and the tears on camera were not acting; that's how they really felt about saying goodbye to a close friend. Sometimes we really enjoy a long goodbye, other times we wish we could be like Bilbo Baggins near the beginning of *Fellowship of the Ring*: just give a quick goodbye speech and then put on the ring that makes you invisible and disappear.

Saying goodbye is even harder when someone is dying, isn't it? The finality of death makes it very difficult to think about life without someone we love. Even Christians who know that death is just the beginning of eternal life and that "friends are friends forever if the Lord's the Lord of them" can find it very hard to part for good in this life. Now, this is not an announcement that I'm leaving or dying or anything. This is simply our introduction to Jesus' goodbye to His disciples in our text. The disciples definitely hadn't been ready to say goodbye to Him when He was put to death, but now they had a second chance to be with Him for a short time before seeing Him off for good. Another cliché that we use is "those are famous last words." We'll read some challenging but encouraging last words from Jesus before He left the earth. And while the words were directed to the disciples, every Christian through the ages inherits the faith, the mission, and the comfort that Jesus gave.

Let's get into the text; the first eight verses show the reality of

### **I. His Resurrected Body (vv. 36-43)**

*<sup>36</sup> As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate before them.*

Now, we heard in the last passage that the disciples were starting to believe that Jesus was alive because He had appeared to Mary and Simon Peter and the two disciples in Emmaus. But even so, they weren't quite ready for Him to appear in a room with a locked door (John's gospel tells us that

detail). They were startled and frightened; He freaked them out so much that He needed to prove to them that He wasn't a spirit, that He was alive again. He needed them to truly be convinced that He had risen. He couldn't just appear from a ways off and they all would say, "Oh, I think that's Jesus," but then not be sure in the midst of people's doubts and questions. Jesus had to come near, He had to let them touch His hands and feet; to be absolutely convinced that He was not a mirage or a spirit, that His body was solid and real. Even after examining His wounds, though, verse 40 says that they still couldn't quite believe it. It was too good to be true. They were excited, they were overwhelmed, and they just couldn't quite reconcile it all in their heads.

The first time you read that Jesus showed up with His scars still on His body, did it surprise you? Did you assume that a perfect, resurrected body would be free of those wounds; that they would be completely healed? The scars remind us of the price that He paid for our salvation, for the forgiveness of our sins. They will never go away, Jesus will still bear them in heaven for eternity. Why would He do that? I found an old sermon by Charles Spurgeon, the great British preacher from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where he gave some ideas about why Jesus still has His scars (*my paraphrasing*):

- 1) They were infallible proof that He was the same person after His resurrection.
- 2) He bears the wounds to show that suffering was both honorable and necessary, not shameful or something to hide.
- 3) The wounds of Christ will be a theme of eternal wonder to the angels in heaven; they'll look at Him and be awed that, "He did that for those wretched sinful creatures that He loves!"
- 4) Just as with men who get wounded in battle, there is a story behind every scar and we need to continually be reminded of His story – that He died in our place because He loves us.
- 5) As Jesus fulfills His heavenly duty as our High Priest interceding for us, the marks show that He was the great sacrifice as well.
- 6) When Jesus comes again to judge the world, His wounds will convict His enemies. They will look on Him whom they have pierced and will mourn for their sins.
- 7) Finally, at the times when we feel that we are unworthy of His salvation, that we are wretched, miserable people, we remember that if He took His scars to heaven, He'll take us as well.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from the scars, we learn some things about a resurrected body from this and the other resurrection accounts. We see that Jesus had a solid body that could be touched and that could eat and drink, but it could also appear and disappear. The Gnostic heresy of the early church taught that Jesus only *appeared* to have a raised body; but that is clearly ruled out as He ate and drank with them. As we think about Jesus' resurrection body, we see a picture of what our bodies will be like when we are raised as well. All those who are united to Christ by faith will receive new bodies after our death as well. I Corinthians 15:42-44 is a good explanation of what they will be like:

*"It is the same way for the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. Our bodies now disappoint us, but when they are raised, they will be full of glory. They are weak now, but when they are raised, they will be full of power. They are natural human bodies now, but when they are raised, they will be spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, so also there are spiritual bodies."*

I don't know that we can answer all the questions that getting a heavenly body raise; some of it is speculation. But we can definitely look forward to having bodies that don't have the problems that we have here on earth. You probably know the name, Joni Eareckson Tada, a woman who was paralyzed as a teenager, but has become a writer and speaker who testifies to God's work in her life. She said this about looking forward to her resurrection body:

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<sup>1</sup> C.H. Spurgeon, "The Wounds of Jesus," found at [biblehub.com/sermons/auth/spurgeon/the\\_wounds\\_of\\_jesus.htm](http://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/spurgeon/the_wounds_of_jesus.htm).

“I still can hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness – powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone spinal-cord injured like me? Or someone who is... brain-injured, or who has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic-depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope.”<sup>2</sup>

If you’ve never thought about having a resurrected body full of glory, let that truth sink in deep and give you great joy and hope.

We move from Jesus proving that He was real to teaching His followers what had already happened and giving them a glimpse of what was to come. The next 6 verses show instructions for

## **II. His Commissioned Body (vv. 44-49) (I obviously mean His followers being His body)**

*<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”*

*<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> 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.”*

What do verses 45-46 remind you of? If you were here last week, the text talked about Jesus meeting two followers out on the road, and that He explained to them how all the Scriptures related to Him and the fact that He had to suffer as the Messiah. He basically preached the essentials of the Gospel to them from the Scriptures that existed at the time, what we call the Old Testament. It sounds like He needed to explain a whole lot of that material to His closest disciples too. The Hebrew Bible was divided into three sections: the law of Moses refers to the first five books, the Psalms refers to the Wisdom literature, and the Prophets are all the major and minor prophets as well as the historical books starting with Joshua. The point is that there is no part of the Scripture that does not bear witness to Jesus. And whereas they struggled to understand Jesus earlier in their ministry and sometimes things were hidden from them, here it says that Jesus opened their minds. They now understood it all and would go out into the world with that knowledge.

There’s another lesson here - that you can’t base your theology just on your experience. It’s great and amazing that the disciples met Jesus face-to-face after His resurrection, but unless they could understand and connect that to the Scriptures, others would discount their experience. We have a similar tendency to give our testimonies when we are witnessing about our Christian faith. Testimonies are important, it’s great for people to hear what you went through and how you met Jesus. But people can dismiss your testimony if it’s not connected to God’s word; the Scriptures interpret our experience and explain what happened spiritually in our new birth and life in Christ.

What I see in these verses is a condensed version of the training and calling of pastors and ministry leaders; but maybe it’s a version of every Christian’s call to minister:

- 1) vv. 36-43 – the first thing is that you have to have a life-changing encounter with Jesus,
- 2) vv. 44-46 - you have to get an understanding of the Scriptures, you have to be taught,
- 3) vv. 47-49 - you have to understand your responsibility to be a witness for Him; to help other people come to faith and repentance, receiving the Lord’s strength to accomplish that.

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<sup>2</sup> Joni Eareckson Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), p. 53.

- 4) vv. 47 - you receive your specific call to an area. For them, it was Jerusalem and then different nations, for us, it might be a specific town, a job, a group of people; wherever your ministry is going to happen.

We could use these verbs to describe the progression: You get saved, disciplined, called, and sent. That's how it worked with the first disciples, it's how God still forms and sends us now.

I want us to see two things about what our mission entails in verse 47:

1) Our primary message is one of repentance and forgiveness. We're not telling people to find the best ways to be happy, healthy, and wealthy. We're not just calling people to better relationships and stronger families. What He promises is forgiveness for our sins when we repent and believe in Him. We may get better lives and relationships, all that, but we don't put the cart before the horse. First you must repent and believe as your entrance into the Christian life.

2) The Gospel would need to go out to all people, not stay within one group of people, Israel. The Greek word *ethno* that is translated as nations in verse 47 means all the ethnic groups within a nation. Luke has been telling us all along that Jesus came to bring peace on earth, that His salvation would be for all peoples and a light to the Gentiles. Now, we take that for granted today, we're used to hearing that the Gospel should be preached to all nations, but it was revolutionary at the time. It would take the disciples ten chapters in the book of Acts, many years, before they realized that "the nations" actually meant every tribe and people group in the world.<sup>3</sup>

The last four verses move us to Jesus' final moments on earth.

### **III. His Ascended Body (vv. 50-53)**

*<sup>50</sup> And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup> and were continually in the temple blessing God.*

It's not real clear from this chapter, but we know from Acts that this ascension into heaven happened 40 days after Jesus rose on Easter morning. Ascension Day is celebrated in high church liturgical calendars 40 days after Easter, so it falls on a Thursday. Some European countries give that day off of work, it's definitely not recognized here, even by many churches. The ascension is such a crucial part of the redemption plan of God for His people, but it is often overlooked. It is the marking point of the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and the beginning of His interceding at the right hand of the Father for His people who carry out His gospel work. Luke ended his Gospel here, but when we pick up in his sequel, the book of Acts, he revisits some of this in Acts 1:6-11:

*"<sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." <sup>9</sup> And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, <sup>11</sup> and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*

What does the ascension mean, why is it so significant? 1 Peter 3:22 says that Jesus Christ "*has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers...*" Jesus went home, He went to claim His kingdom. He has been given supreme dominion and authority over heaven

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<sup>3</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 621.

and earth. Hebrews 6:20 says that He has entered heaven *“as a forerunner on our behalf.”* We can be absolutely sure of our destiny in heaven if we are united to Him because He has gone ahead to prepare a place for His followers – *“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places... I go to prepare a place for you”* (John 14:2). And it is the assurance that He will come again: *“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:3). After we die or at Jesus’ second coming, we are assured that we will inherit the kingdom of heaven with Him because of His ascension.

Consider also the teaching of Ephesians 4:8, 11-12:

*“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men... And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”*

In other words, when Jesus ascended to fill the heavens and sit at God the Father’s right hand, He left the work of the kingdom to His followers. He didn’t just leave them to their own abilities, He gifted them for their work. He created various roles in the church and continues to equip and call believers to those roles, bestowing on us the spiritual gifts we need to carry them out. We are the hands and feet of Jesus, ministering in the power that He gives us from heaven.

And finally, we see that we don’t witness to Jesus on our own, we are enabled by the Spirit’s power. John 16:7 – *“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”* The Holy Spirit is the great gift that Jesus left for His followers, to help them live their lives obediently to Him and to fulfill their great mission. That’s what Jesus was referring to in verse 49 – *“the promise of my Father”* and *“power from on high.”* As Phil Ryken says, *“Without the Spirit we would never believe the Bible. Without the Spirit we would never confess our sins. Without the Spirit we would never know Jesus for sure or receive eternal life. Thank God for the gift of His Spirit!”*<sup>4</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Going back to verses 39-40, I was reminded of one more thing in this passage: Just like Jesus invited His disciples to feel His hands and feet, so Christianity invites everyone to investigate it thoroughly. Most people who say they don’t believe have never examined the evidence, even people who have grown up in churches and fallen away as adults. The deeper you dig, the more true the life of Jesus and the testimony of the Bible appears. I mean, we can’t prove that God loves us or that our sins are forgiven in a laboratory truth kind of way. But the historical evidence, the integrity of the Scriptures, the consistency and truth of the Bible is overwhelming when you honestly explore it.

Roger Charles is a world-renowned architect, he grew up in the 1970s in California at a time when the Jesus Movement was exploding all around him. All his friends were getting saved and talking to him about Jesus, but he felt that the Gospel just sounded like a fairy tale. So he started studying the critiques of the Bible, confident that he would be able to poke holes in his friends’ beliefs by showing how wrong their holy book was. He felt that there was no definitive work on why the Bible is unreliable, so he set out to do that and read authors on both sides of the argument. His first surprise was that the Christian authors didn’t sound so stupid, and the second one was that the PhD scholars who wrote books on the contradictions of the Bible weren’t very thorough. In fact, he worked through every one of their alleged contradictions and answered them by the age of 17. He worked through the archeological issues, the scientific issues, the verses that seemed to contradict each other, and concluded (to his own surprise) that *“their criticism turned out to be evidence for*

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<sup>4</sup> Ryken, p. 697.

the Bible.” He read through the Bible three times to make sure he was well-grounded and concluded that he had a mountain of evidence for it and really nothing against it. He summarizes what he found this way: “If you are determined to dig to the bottom, you’ll get your answer, and that answer will blow away your doubts.”<sup>5</sup> And Roger Charles is only one of several people who came to Christ that way – Josh McDowell and Lee Strobel are other men who set out to disprove Christianity and found themselves embracing the faith.

If you are listening this morning and you still think that the Bible is far-fetched, that it seems made up, anti-scientific or full of contradictions, I want to invite you to come in and get a closer look. Ask honest questions and read answers from both sides. Bring your doubts and fears with you, God isn’t afraid of those. Come in and get a closer look at Jesus’ nail-pierced hands and feet, evidence of His love for you and me.

We have come to the end of the Gospel of Luke. I pray that it has been a great blessing to you. I pray that it has done what it set out to do, as Luke announced in the first few verses of the book: “*it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that **you may have certainty** concerning the things you have been taught.*” I too, pray that you have a great certainty about the things you’ve been taught. Knowing all that Jesus did for us, we can respond like the apostles did in the end: “*And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.*” Having studied Jesus’ amazing life, death, resurrection, and ascension, may our faith be strengthened, may we be filled with great joy, and be excited to worship our great God together! Amen.

#### Benediction

Romans 15:5,6 – “*May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

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<sup>5</sup> Kathie Lee Gifford, *The Jesus I Know* (Nashville: W Publishing, 2021), pp. 150-55.