**Taking a Stand: Spirit-Empowered Witness**

**Luke 24:36-53 (ESV)**

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Please grab your Bibles and turn to Luke chapter 24. Where we find ourselves is Jesus has been calling people to follow Him. He has been sharing about His plan to die for the sins of the world. He accomplished that death and then He rose again as promised. But in this chapter, it’s a surprise to His disciples to see Him alive. He is found by some women and disciples. There are two who go walking. We’ll mention that later. He appears to them. They don’t recognize Him at first and then they’re surprised to find Him. They go and they tell the other disciples, “We saw Jesus,” and here’s where we find ourselves in verse 36.

***36*** *As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!”* ***37*** *But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.* ***38*** *And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?* ***39*** *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.”* ***40*** *And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.* ***41*** *And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”* ***42*** *They gave him a piece of broiled fish,* ***43*** *and he took it and ate before them.*

***44*** *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.”* ***45*** *Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,* ***46*** *and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,* ***47*** *and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* ***48*** *You are witnesses of these things.* ***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.”*

***50*** *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.*

Some years ago, I received a packet in the mail. It was like a promotional brochure for a restaurant opening in Peoria. There were a lot of little cards in there. I usually throw those things away. There was one laminated little voucher that said it was good for a free meal with a guest. I took it and set it aside. I wasn’t sure if I was going to visit the place. Eventually, a few weeks later I thought, “I’ll see if that thing works.” I went to this restaurant with someone and I handed this voucher in. They typed something and then they handed it back to me. I said, “No, it’s okay. I just gave it to you.” They said, “No, you can keep it.” I can use it again? “Yes.” I don’t know about this. It’s probably a new person. It’s a new restaurant. It’s okay. So I came back another time and I said, such and such person said I could use it again. It’s probably just my mistake. Here you go. They said, “No, you can use it. You just keep using it.” I was like, there’s no limit on this? “No.” What?! (Laughter!) Now, I won’t tell you how many times I went to that restaurant. I tried to be respectful. I truly did. Every time I gave the card, though, truth be told, I knew the day would finally come. But they would hand it back. Okay, it worked again. But one day, that day did come. It came without any kind of notice. They took it and they put it in the desk and I realized, the game is up! (Laughter!)

That’s how it goes with all human guarantees, right? As good as they can be, they always come to an end. There is always some kind of limit. But there is One who makes guarantees that always come true and transcend every human limit. These are guarantees that to those to whom they are given, they’re often not fully appreciated. Just like with that card, initially, I didn’t know what I had been given. With the guarantees of God, often we don’t actually know what we’ve been given.

The disciples didn’t know what they had been given. They’re surprised at everything that is taking place. You see the surprise in the beginning with the women at the tomb. We see the surprise of the two disciples. It’s one of my favorite stories in the Bible. They’re leaving Jerusalem and walking. You can look at it there in chapter 24. They’re walking on the road to Emmaus, a nearby village. They’re kind of getting out of there. They’re talking about everything that happened, as we do after a major event. As they’re talking, Jesus Himself draws near. He has risen from the dead. He approaches them and their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. They don’t see that it’s Jesus. They keep going.

**Luke 24:17** And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?”

“What are you guys talking about?” They’re talking about Him, but they don’t recognize Him. “What are you talking about?” Then they stop and they’re just sad.

**Luke 24:18** Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“Are you the only guy who doesn’t know what’s going on?” He’s the only one who does!

**Luke 24:19** And he said to them, “What things?”

“Tell me about it.” So they start to unpack that it’s about Jesus, this guy from Nazareth. He is a mighty prophet of God and everybody thought He was amazing and He even was standing up against the chief priests and rulers and they condemned Him to death and then He was crucified.

**Luke 24:21-27** But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

As they’re walking He is explaining the guarantee. Do you remember that guarantee and all of the Scriptures you’ve been given? Do you know what you have? As He unpacks it, they’re walking and they’re getting to the village where they’re going. He’s acting as if He is going to continue and they’re like, “Where are you going? We want to talk more to you.” So He comes in and they’re sitting for a meal and He takes the bread. He blesses it and He breaks it, and at that moment

**Luke 24:31** And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

They’re like, “What just happened? We have to go back!” I remember one time we drove with our kids, I think it was to Wisconsin. We drove all the way and then we got home. When we get out, I was like, “Hey, do you want to go back?” They started crying and saying, “No.” These guys had just gotten through their journey, sat down, and are just sitting to eat the meal, and then they’re like, “Let’s go back. We want to go back and talk to the guys about it.” So they go all the way back to Jerusalem. They get to the disciples and they’re like, “This just happened. Jesus is here.” Now, we’re at our text, and here is Jesus. Again, He is with them.

Now, what we see here is that the disciples had no idea what they had been given. They didn’t really grasp that no one makes guarantees like God. If you leave with anything today, that’s the thought. No one makes guarantees like God. There is no one who makes promises and follows through with more reliability, with more beauty and consistency, than the one who never fails to keep His word. No one makes guarantees like God. His most special guarantees are reserved for those who are followers of His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate source and giver of all the great guarantees. The way He offers these guarantees, the way by which they come, the way that they are uniquely rooted to and through is his Holy Spirit. We’re going to be reminded of that again for the last time of this series, today.

What is it that those in Christ have been guaranteed? What have we been given? There are too many to cover today, but we’ll try to make it through five. There are five guarantees that we can stand on, that we can grab hold of to really think about what we have we been given. First, let’s look at the reality that we’re to face.

**#1 The Reality of God’s Rise (36-43)**

***36*** *As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!”* ***37*** *But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.* ***38*** *And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?* ***39*** *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.”* ***40*** *And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.* ***41*** *And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”* ***42*** *They gave him a piece of broiled fish,* ***43*** *and he took it and ate before them.*

This is the reality of God’s rise. Reality means something that actually happened. It actually took place. It’s a fact. Some realities are harder to face and some are easier. One thing that makes certain realities difficult to face, even if they’re things that we love, is when they come to us as a surprise.

I spent my junior year of high school living in different hemispheres from my parents. They were on the mission field in Africa. I was in California, living with a host home. I would contact them a little bit. We didn’t have as much technology as we do now, but I would email them every once in a while. It had been a couple months I think, that I had been away. I was with this host family. I came back from school one day and I grabbed my basketball. I was going to go shoot some hoops. The family was like, “Hey, don’t you want to go to your room before you go to the court?” I thought that was kind of a weird thing to say. Nope! I’m okay. They’re like, “Hey, can you get that CD that you borrowed, from your room?” You mean right now? “Yes.” Okay. So I go up into the room and they’re all following me. I thought this was weird. As I opened the door, sitting on my bed is my dad from Africa. Now, I was in total shock, so my face just had no emotion. In fact, I stood there and my dad had to come up and he had to walk towards me. He was like, “Are you happy?” (Laughter!) I answered with no emotion, “Yes.” He had to give me a hug. I was so shocked! It was such a surprise. This is amazing! It was too good to be true. My dad is here with me? How did this happen?

The thing about this surprise is that Luke gives us a twist. The real surprise, the real shock is why the disciples would expect anything less. We’re going to unpack that. Let’s make a few observations about the reality of Jesus’ rise, here. You can see the peace that He gives in this miraculous appearance. They’re behind locked doors. They’re there together and just like He vanished, now He appears.

***36*** *As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them,*

You know, when you’re getting in a circle and you’re talking about somebody else? Hopefully this doesn’t happen very often, but you’re talking about them and all of a sudden you’re in the huddle and then you’re like, they’re in the huddle with us. Jesus is there. All of a sudden, He’s like, “Hey, guys. What are we talking about?”

*and said to them, “Peace to you!”*

Whoa! There He is. The peace that He gives, He speaks it, but He is actually fulfilling the peace that He proclaimed and promised to them. Here He is, speaking peace. It’s kind of funny that the panic that He causes is from saying, “Peace.”

***37*** *But they were startled and frightened*

Why? Because they

*thought they saw a spirit.*

They think it’s a ghost. They saw Jesus die. Now it’s like, “Whoa! A spirit! A ghost! He’s not really here.” But look at who He claims to be. Look at the reasoned assurance He offers here. He’s a real person.

***38*** *And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?* ***39*** *See my hands and my feet,*

He’s showing the wounds of what He had received there on the cross. He said

*that it is I myself.*

It’s the same Jesus.

*Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”*

“This is me, resurrected.” This isn’t a spirit, different, as if Jesus’ body is still in the ground. This is His resurrected, transformed body. There is something miraculous, and yet, it is still Jesus. It’s Him.

***40*** *And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.*

He still gets some surprise. You see their stunned excitement.

***41*** *And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling,*

They’re still acting as if He’s not there. He’s like, “I’m here,” and they’re like, “This is crazy!”

*he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”* ***42*** *They gave him a piece of broiled fish,* ***43*** *and he took it and ate before them.*

They’re like, “Whoa! He ate a fish.” What’s amazing though is not that He ate a fish. It’s just the reality of the proof that is offered. It’s tangible evidence. He actually is here! No one makes guarantees like God and God’s guarantees never disappoint, even if our understanding of them does. He is risen! It happened. Even though they’re struggling to accept it, that doesn’t negate anything about the fact that it occurred. This is a historical event. A real man came who proclaimed Himself to be God, who offered Himself for the sins of those who would trust in Him. He rose bodily from the grave. He was resurrected. This is the reality of His rise.

Paul, a later follower of Jesus, in 1 Corinthians 15 he would talk about how important this is. He said

**1 Corinthians 15:1** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,

This is the guarantee.

**1 Corinthians 15:2-3** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance

There is only one thing of first importance, and that’s this.

**1 Corinthians 15:3-6** …what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

Some had died.

**1 Corinthians 15:7-8** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

This is the thing. We serve a Savior who died for us. He was buried and He was raised. That’s importance number one! This is the good news. It’s that Jesus is alive. He says later in that chapter,

**1 Corinthians 15:14** And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

What’s the point?

**1 Corinthians 15:15** We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

He’s saying that if you think that when people die that they don’t have hope of a resurrection of life and Jesus isn’t raised, then what’s the point of all this?

**1 Corinthians 15:16-17** For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

You still have no hope. You’re still looking at death and separation from God.

**1 Corinthians 15:18** Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

Everyone who has died trusting Jesus, they’re just gone.

**1 Corinthians 15:19** If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

All of us who come here, what’s the point? We come Sunday after Sunday. We come funeral after funeral. He says if there is no hope, if Jesus isn’t alive what’s the point? How sad. But He is alive! He is risen!

**1 Corinthians 15:20** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

It’s the budding resurrection that we are to enter into.

**1 Corinthians 15:21-22** For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

This is the reality of His rise. It’s something that we need to think about more often. It’s a physical resurrection that we celebrate not just on Easter, but every Sunday, and we share throughout the week. When we come, we listen to each other sing because we have brothers and sisters who, by faith, are singing the truths of these words even as they’ve buried family members in the past weeks and months and years. They are believing Jesus is alive. Praise God we can be in a family that believes that and knows it to be true. This is a reality that we can face and it’s a certainty that we can trust.

**#2 The Certainty of God’s Word (44)**

It happened like He said.

***44*** *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.”*

Certainty just means it’s a sure thing. It’s true. It’s definite. You can trust it. It can be relied upon.

I remember lots of times in my life where you’re trying to build something or put something together, maybe legos or you’re trying to do a recipe or you’re trying to read a car manual or navigate directions on a map or whether you’re doing math homework. You’re kind of doing it and you’re like, this doesn’t make sense, these instructions, this book. You start to look for something else or you start to improvise, which doesn’t usually work well. You would say, “It doesn’t work. It’s wrong. I need some help.” Now the counsel of wisdom of others would say to go back and read it again. I’m sure you might have missed something. Sure enough, you go and you read and you realize it was right. This is what we have in God’s Word, but it’s far more trustworthy than any other manual or work that is offered to us. It is entirely trustworthy and entirely certain. It’s far more certain than our own intuition. It’s what we have in the ultimate sense. Look at the certainty of God’s Word. You see the priority that it is given. Jesus could talk to anything in verse 44, but He just drives them back.

***44*** *Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you,*

We’re still struggling with the same problem. In Genesis 1, God speaks. That’s what He does in the beginning. He speaks and He gives a word to be trusted. Adam and Eve are given that word to be trusted and Satan comes in and says, “Did God really say?” Here, we find the disciples finding Jesus here in this moment and He’s basically saying, “What did I say?” It comes down to trusting His Word. The priority He gives is to say, “These are my words.” It’s so important that God gives long chapters in the Bible just to His Word and He speaks about the value of His Word. Jesus Himself is called the Word. “These are my words,” He says. You kind of laugh at the redundancy it requires.

***44*** *Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you,*

He’s like, “Remember? What did I say? I’m telling you again.” Here is the particularity of His Word. He says that this is the Scriptures.

*that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms*

These are not just random things, but this is the Scriptures. Those were the three divisions that the Israelites knew to be the Word of God. Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms were the writings. He says, “Remember? I spent my whole time trying to teach you what God says and how it points to me.” He emphasizes at the end what it guarantees, the reliability it possesses. He says all this that was written

*must be fulfilled.”*

No one makes guarantees like God. His guarantees are as good as done. They’re always worth the wait and you can take them to the bank because they always come true. You can trust it. You can trust everything that He said to come true. One of the most precious studies you could do is go through the Old Testament and look at all of the prophecies that are fulfilled in Jesus and how very specific prophecies, God kept. You can trust the Word. The prophets like Daniel or Jeremiah, they trusted the prophecies even in their own day and they saw them fulfilled. You can always bank on God’s Word coming true.

You might say, “I believe the Bible. I trust it. It’s great. It’s a good guarantee.” But think about this. What if your Bible could talk? The Bible that you have, even if it was an App or maybe it’s just a Bible that is sitting in the trunk of the car, if it could talk, what would it say about how much you trust the guarantees within it? How often have you gone to the Word of God and taken it to the bank? How often have you held onto it and clung to it and opened it and read and said, “I need this to be true. I trust this is true.” Believe and trust in the certainty of God’s Word. It’s a guarantee. You can take it to the bank every day of the week.

**#3 The Clarity of God’s Plan (45-47)**

We have a guarantee about His rise, a guarantee about His Word. Here’s a clarity about a guaranteed plan. All of this happened just like He said and it happened for a reason.

***45*** *Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,* ***46*** *and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,* ***47*** *and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

This is the clarity of God’s plan. It is something that is certain. It’s definite. It’s understandable. It makes sense.

From time to time, my kids will get those coloring books or sticker books or those other books called connect the dots. Have you seen those? There are a bunch of little dots spread out and there are numbers. There is a complex pattern that seems mixed up and unrelated. But once you start to connect the dots, at some point, the picture all of a sudden becomes clear. It takes a while for it to be revealed to us, but the truth is that it’s been there all along. That’s what we have in God’s plan. Let’s make a few observations here. First, look at the clear act it requires.

***45*** *Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,*

He opened their minds. If there was anyone who didn’t need some help to see everything for what it was, it would have had to have been them. I mean, they had the teaching of Jesus all the time. They had the Scriptures. They had Him in front of them. They saw Him die. They saw Him rise again. They had Him explaining it right there in front of them. Yet, they still needed help. They needed Him to open their mind. Just like the disciples needed Him to open their eyes to see and recognize Him, they needed Him to open their mind to understand the Scriptures. How the plan of God is known requires an act of God to open blind eyes. That’s what He does with the disciples. You see the clear place the plan is found. It’s in the Scriptures.

***46*** *and said to them, “Thus it is written,*

This is where it’s found. God’s plan is found in God’s Word and He opens our mind to understand the Word. You can see the clear pieces that it involves, the plan that He describes, how it unfolds. First, there is the historical event that we acknowledge. It’s been pointed to and now it has occurred. This historical event involves who He was as the Christ. There is a Savior in this event. Then there is a sacrifice.

*that the Christ should suffer*

Then there is a rise.

*and on the third day rise from the dead,*

There is a Savior and a sacrifice and then a rise. This is the event that took place. Jesus said this is the event that was prophesied. This was all throughout the Old Testament. All of the dots, look at how they connect. There would be one who was Christ, and that word is Anointed One or Messiah. It’s the same one back way in the garden when death entered the world. We recognize that we need to be saved from our sin and death. God made a promise that there would be a child born of a woman. We don’t know how, but we have been waiting for that Chosen One, Anointed One. Over time, the prophecies would unfold and make it more and more clear. Satan was against it all the way, and yet, God would make it clear. One of the most precious is Isaiah 53, where we learn about this chosen one who is going to come. He’s anointed and He will suffer. He will suffer as a substitutionary sacrifice. He will suffer in place of those He would save. He would bear their sins. He would be the one who would make a way to God and that would be affirmed, that would be seen, that power, that life would be shown through Him rising from the dead. These are the dots Jesus is connecting. This is a historical event, and thus, the message, the Gospel message that we’re to accept is that there is forgiveness for all who turn to Him. That is what took place. The central point of the history of the world is that this Savior has now been sacrificed and then risen and all who would turn to Him can be forgiven, saved from their sins.

***47*** *and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins*

It’s a message that is going to be proclaimed. This is the message, the good news. Repentance is the idea of turning. I’ve been choosing my sin. I’ve been living this way and now that I see the glory of Jesus and what He’s done, I trust in Him and I can experience forgiveness. That’s the good news! It’s a message offered. To whom is it offered?

*should be proclaimed in his name to all nations,*

That’s the scope. There is this commission now to embrace, that this message should be proclaimed, and the basis of which is His name, and the scope of which is all nations. That’s where this message is going. It starts in Jerusalem and it’s going to move outward. We know that Luke, the physician, wrote this to Theophilus, a Gentile. Here I am reading and Jesus has risen and He’s saying this message is going to go. The Israelites at the time had a hard time grappling with the fact that this message is for all the nations, that this message is to go to the Gentiles and spread beyond Israel. The apostles struggled to understand it even in the next book of Acts. But here I am as Theophilus and I’m seeing it. I’m in there. It’s coming! The good news reaches the people even like me. The dots are beginning to connect that no one makes guarantees like God. They’re simply communicated, but they’re only supernaturally understood. God’s plan is clear to everyone to whom He reveals it. Ask Him. Ask the Helper to show you so that you can know His plan and stick to His plan. No one makes guarantees like Him.

My parents grew up going to church. This isn’t an automatic thing. They grew up going to church. If my mom were here, she would tell the story of hearing a lot about the Bible and these stories. Sure, it’s a good thing. God is good. She goes to college and she goes to a class and the professor just destroys the Bible. “This isn’t true. These contradict.” She didn’t really have clear understanding of what he was talking about, but she thought, “Oh, I guess I can’t trust the Bible. This is just a bunch of mixed up dots.” Years go by. We have neighbors who are inviting us to come to this place called Bethany. We get there and these people are talking about the Bible. It’s all those dots. Scary! We’re never going back. But God is working in our lives. My grandfather gets sick and we’re there. In a moment, she’s there while he is passing away. She knows he wants to hear the Bible. He can’t talk at that time, but she knows he has this Bible and he’s written all this stuff in it. He likes the hymns, so she decides to sing some hymns and read him some of the Psalms. She’s reading Psalms and all of a sudden, the dots are connecting. God is at work. She comes out and what does she say? She comes to me and she says, “Jesus is real!”

We come back and we come to church. All of a sudden, we go back to that place called Bethany. They’re still talking about the Bible. Now though, mom is crying and they’re sending me to the bathroom to keep getting more tissues and the tissues are piling up. She’s crying at home all the time. It’s like, “Man, church is all about crying.” (Laughter!) And every time, she’s like, “Jesus is awesome!” She’s telling me the story. “Have you ever read the story in the Bible? Look at how amazing Jesus is! This is pointing to Him.” She’s connecting the dots. Then by God’s grace, as our family is coming, all of us are starting to see the dots connect. We want to help other people see the dots connect. We want to be a part of the Holy Spirit helping people see how the dots connect. I pray for everyone that is here, everyone that we’re able to talk to, and our own children, that they would see the dots connect and go, “Whoa! Jesus is amazing!” No one makes guarantees like God.

Paul’s prayer as one for whom the dots connected as Jesus revealed Himself to him, his prayer for the Ephesians and the Gentiles there in Ephesians chapter 1 is him praying for them to

**Ephesians 1:18–23** having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

There is something powerful taking place right here in this chapter. We see the preciousness. We need to be able to see the dots connect to the glory of Jesus in the Scriptures and then be able to help others do the same. We need the Holy Spirit’s help to do so. We need His help!

**#4 The Authority of God’s Call (48-49)**

This is the authority that we can heed. Jesus says “This is what the Scriptures are. This is what they point to. They point to me.” Then He says

***48*** *You are witnesses of these things.* ***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.”*

“I have a task for you. I have a commission for you. But you’re going to need help.” So wait for, if I could say, the air support. Wait for the divine air support that is going to come on the day of Pentecost. There is going to be fire from above. “You need this and it’s going to help you do exactly what I’m calling you to do.” What He says that they are, the identity He calls them to embrace, is that of being a witness. He says

***48*** *You are witnesses of these things.*

The apostles were direct witnesses. They saw this true, risen Savior. In history, this took place and they saw Him. They were able to touch Him. Then He says you are witnesses and you will tell and speak. We have their words here maintained. The Holy Spirit is going to testify through them and then continue on even after they die. He’s going to continue to work and testify through the words of the Scripture and empower His people to testify to who Jesus is. At that point, the Holy Spirit hadn’t come in fullness. Jesus says to wait. “I’m going to send the promise. I told you about this guarantee. Wait for it. Stay in the city until you’re clothed with power from on high.” God’s guarantees don’t come alone. They come with a job to do and the help we need.

Now, the apostles were the direct witnesses, but we still have their words that we’re able to carry forward and proclaim, that we devote ourselves to. But then also, we see the Holy Spirit work and transform in our lives to which we can testify and give witness to this God who saves. This is the call for us. It’s to carry forward this message to people like Theophilus who are waiting, looking, hinting, just peeking over the edge. What is going on over there? And we bring the hope. We need the Helper to help us do that. The best witnesses for Jesus are the ones who truly know what they’ve been given in Jesus. Do you know what you’ve been given? Do you know the guarantee that you have?

In the beginning of Luke, the priest, Zachariah failed to do something that a young, ordinary woman exemplified. You see, he was given this guarantee. Through an angel, the word of God, he was given a guarantee of something that would happen and he said, “How do I know for sure?” This young woman, Mary, she was given a guarantee that One would come and she accepted it. She believed the Word that would come. The most amazing displays of God at work happen not through the impressive greatness of people, but through great trust in an impressive God. It’s not about us. It’s about Him. God knows you’re going to need the Helper and you need to trust in Him. Believe this guarantee. Just like Mary, who was saying, “I don’t even understand how it could take place. I believe it, but I don’t see how it could happen.” She is told, “You will be overshadowed. The Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit.”

Here at the end of Luke, Jesus says the power from on high is going to come. The Holy Spirit is going to come. This is a power, but it’s for a different purpose. We see God accomplishing His purpose through His Spirit. The commission that He is giving to them that is going to be carried forward in the book of Acts and then continued on through the New Testament, this is a call of which we’re a part. We need the Helper to help us.

Who are we witnessing to about Jesus? Who, as we’ve said, is close to us and far from God? What are the names that God would bring to our mind that we would say, “God, help me. They need to hear the good news. They need the dots to connect. They need to see that there was a Savior who had to suffer, a Savior who rose. They need hope that is alive, that is living.” Who would God bring to your mind? Ask for help to be bold and share the good news with them. Ask for God to work. When you truly ask, do not be surprised that He does exactly what He said He would.

The last guarantee is a glory to share in.

**#5 The Glory of God’s Hope (50-53)**

In verse 50, you can see after this moment with them,

***50*** *And he led them out as far as Bethany,*

He’s going toward Bethany, out from Jerusalem. As you would approach Jerusalem from Bethany, you would cross the Mount of Olives. This is a very special place that I wish we had time to talk about. But there He is on the mountain of significant meaning.

*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.*

This is the glory of God’s hope. When I say glory, I mean the beauty, the greatness, the wonder, the splendor, the specialness of this hope.

I think I was in college and my mom said, “Why don’t you take your sister out for her birthday. She likes going to shows.” Like a play? “Yes, she would like to go to a play.” Okay, I don’t do plays. “There is this musical she would like.” Oh, I don’t do musicals. But it’s for my sister. I’ll be a good brother. So we go to this musical. So there we are. We’re at this musical. People are singing and there are animals singing. Okay, this is okay. It was kind of getting good, and it was building toward this moment. Then there was this person and she was trying to run away. If you’re familiar with this musical, she starts to fly and she’s going up and then singing and all these lights are shining and it’s sparkling. Then she hits this note and immediately it gets dark. Everybody goes crazy. I thought that was pretty good. I was surprised myself. I get up and I start to walk out and my sister is like, “Hey, where are you going?” I told her I was just heading back. It’s over. She’s like, “No, it’s intermission.” There’s more?! (Laughter!) It was just getting started.

Think about this moment with Jesus. The glory of some spectacles are so great that we can’t witness them and then be left unchanged. The glory of this hope doesn’t end in and of itself. It also looks ahead. It’s an amazing passage! You see where it’s shared. I wish we had time to talk about the significance of this place. But here they are at the Mount of Olives, this place that had such meaning, where so many significant moments had happened with His disciples. He intentionally went there up high and they’re getting perspective that is going to have meaning in the future, later on. Here they are and you see how it’s offered.

*and lifting up his hands he blessed them.*

It’s a meaningful moment because again, remember how Luke opened. They’re in the temple and Zachariah is going in there. He’s supposed to perform this priestly function and come out and bless the people. However, as soon as he experiences what God is really doing, it’s a surprise that God actually is working the way that He said. God’s real! He’s actually doing stuff. Zachariah is like, “I don’t know. Can I really trust it?” Because of that, he is muted. He comes out and he is supposed to perform a blessing, but he can’t say anything. No blessing is offered. What’s going on? The people are waiting for it. Then there are some people who get it. They’re offering blessing, but a lot of people are confused. What is going on? All of a sudden, here it finally comes. Here is Jesus and He’s actually performing and then He actually, in a sense, is the blessing. They’re recognizing this is what we’ve all been waiting for. Here’s the moment. The sacrifice that the high priests have always been talking about, this is the High Priest. He is holy, innocent, unstained. He is exalted now above the heavens, Hebrews would say. But He’s not like the old priests. He offered up Himself as a single sacrifice for sins of all time and then He sat down at the right hand of God. This is Jesus, and they see what’s happening. It’s a powerful moment of showing us Psalm 67. It’s a psalm that they might have said and recited and thought about. Now all of a sudden, here is Jesus, God speaking it.

**Psalm 67:1** May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,

As you consider that, even Jesus, with His face looking down at them, Psalm 67 would continue

**Psalm 67:2-7** that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

Here is the psalm and they’re seeing Jesus offer blessing and then go up. It’s a special moment. It’s a special moment of blessing offered that is going to bless the earth that reminds them, I think we’re part of something special that happened at the very beginning. God blessed the earth from the beginning, spreading across the globe. Now here all of a sudden, something amazing is happening. Then you see the supernatural ascension, the glory of where He goes.

***51*** *While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.*

One of the commentaries said, “Never has so little been said about so much.” What happened? What did it look like? How did He get up there? We’re not told. Luke was a physician. You know he was careful about so many details and all we’re told is Jesus was carried up into heaven. We don’t know, but He went up and into the realm of heaven. The physical Jesus went and ascended and now He reigns. They were amazed! Acts would tell us that they were looking up like when you’re seeing a balloon go up, and they’re just staring. An angel is like, “Hey, what are you guys looking at? Why are you still looking up? He’s going to come down the same way He came.” They’re just like, “I want this moment to last forever.” The angel is like, “Something better is coming down. It’s going to come. He just said it’s going to come.” They go and they’re waiting.

***52*** *And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,* ***53*** *and were continually in the temple blessing God.*

We end the book where it began, in the temple. No one makes guarantees like God. God’s guarantees are fully confirmed, but not yet wholly realized. They’re great, but they’re not done yet. There is a call for us to heed. Here’s the call that we embrace, that we move forward in. But there is a glory that we share in. It’s a glory of hope.

Zachariah was in the temple praying for blessing. He had no idea what was about to hit him. The people of God had no idea what they had been given and what they were about to be granted. The moment Zachariah gets a hint of it, he is silenced. He’s not able to say anything. If you’re Theophilus, you’re burning inside. Now here again, like in the beginning, in Luke 24 the disciples barely grasp what’s going on. If you’re Theophilus reading this you might be saying, “Oh, don’t you get it? It’s even better than you think. You don’t know what you have.” The book ends where it began. The disciples are now worshiping in the temple, but they’re grasping what they’ve been given. In truth, they don’t even fully realize that God is just getting started. The gift of the Spirit is still on the way and the hope of the Gentiles is about to unfold. We, like Theophilus, are waiting for Part 2.

In a similar way, we’re ending our series where we began. *God on the Move* through the Book of Acts and seeing our need for *The Helper* to continue the story. This narrative, the guarantee, the Spirit, and this call are here even now to all who would grasp just but a hint of the gift from the God that they’ve received. We serve a Savior who isn’t still on a cross. He’s not in a grave. We can see through the window. He’s risen. He’s in the realm of heaven and we wait for Him. The last promise and guarantee we’re given in Revelation is

**Revelation 22:7** “And behold, I am coming soon.

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!