

Luke 9:18-26, 24:1-12, 36-49

Luke 9 ¹⁸ Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" ¹⁹ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

²⁰ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah." ²¹ Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. ²² And he said, "**The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.**"

²³ Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? ²⁶ Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Luke 24 ¹ On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! **Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'**" ⁸ Then they remembered his words. ⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened...

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence. ⁴⁴ He said to them, "**This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.**"

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "**This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**" ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you **what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.**"

Today we're starting the home straight of *Promises kept: the whole story of the Bible*, as we come to the NT looking at the death and resurrection of Jesus, the turning point of our series, and indeed the turning point of history.

We live in an increasingly secular society where fewer and fewer share our Christian faith. 2011 census: 59.3% of the population identified themselves as Christian. (2001: 71.2%)

But actually, less than half the population believe that Jesus is the Son of God - only 40% in 2008 according to one survey (down from 70% in 1955).

This leads to a growing pressure on us who believe and sometimes a nurturing of our doubts: **How can I be sure that Jesus is all he claims to be?** We need to have good reasons and good evidence for our faith.

The first Easter morning found the disciples in a state of extreme doubt.

They had seen their Lord and master, their beloved Jesus die on a cross.

They not only had the terrible grief at the loss of a beloved friend but all their hopes and dreams about who Jesus was and the coming of God's kingdom had been utterly crushed. **Had they been wrong about Jesus all along?** The trouble is that they hadn't remembered what Jesus had told them: *The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.* The gospels tell us that in fact Jesus had told them this not once but on several occasions. The problem was that this was so different from their idea of what God's Messiah would be like, they simply couldn't take it in. Everyone knew that the Messiah was God's long-promised anointed rescuing king and so they expected he would set Israel free from her enemies, which right now were the Romans, utterly and finally defeat them and restore Israel to a state of peace, prosperity, splendour and glory such as had never been seen before. And no doubt that as part of Jesus' inner circle, the disciples thought they would be given some pretty important and highly honoured roles within in this new kingdom. So whenever Jesus started talking about him being

rejected and arrested and then crucified, *it was like they put their hands over their ears and went “La, la, la!”* – they simply didn’t want to hear. And maybe because they didn’t want to hear *that* bit, they didn’t even begin to hear the last bit about Jesus rising from the dead.

So on that first Easter morning, the angels say to the women visiting Jesus’ tomb: *“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”* ⁶ *He is not here;*

he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in alilee: ⁷ *‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified - “Oh yes!”*

And then what else did Jesus say? *“and on the third day be raised again.”* ⁸ *Then they remembered his words “Oh yes!”*

Well, clearly the men weren’t any better than the women, because when the women reported back to them, Luke tells us *their words seemed to the Apostles like nonsense –Many of you will be thinking: Typical men !*

Of course it took Jesus actually appearing to the disciples to convince them. And even then they thought at first that he was a ghost. So he gets them to feel him and touch him and see that he was solid. Even so they are *still* struggling to believe, so in order to convince them Jesus goes to extreme lengths: he eats some broiled fish !

But what does he then say to them? *This is what I told you while I was still with you.* And then he reminds them, it was not just what *he* had told them but actually, as he had previously explained, *these events were in fulfilment of everything that had been written about him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms* – in other words in what we call the Old Testament.

Jesus always keeps his promises – and God always keeps his word

And then Jesus reminds them again of what all those promises and prophecies were, much as what he’d done with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. How I would have loved to have been there and heard what he said;

but *maybe* these were *some* of the scriptures he reminded them of:

Prophecies of Jesus suffering and death:

Genesis 3	Satan will bruise his heel, but he will crush Satan’s head
Genesis 22	Abe embodying God’s people sacrificing only son - God providing
Exodus 12 ff	The whole story of the Passover – where the blood of a lamb is a ransom that saves each firstborn from certain death and enables the rescue of God’s people from slavery in Egypt
Ex and Lev	<i>The whole sacrificial system providing an atonement for sin</i>
Psalms 22	a most graphic foretelling J’s experience of crucifixion
Psalms 41:9	being betrayed by a friend who shares bread with me (<i>Judas</i>)
Isaiah 50:6	I offered my back to those who beat me, mocking and spitting
Isaiah 53	the suffering servant crushed for our iniquities
Daniel 9:26	the “Messiah” will be cut off and have nothing
Amos 8 the sun	disappearing at noon; mourning as for an only son
Zechariah 12	<i>they will look on the one they have pierced and they will mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child</i>
Zech 11:12	being sold for 30 pieces of silver
Zech 13:7	<i>Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered</i>

Prophecies re Jesus’ resurrection-and-ascension

Genesis 22	Abe only son coming back as if “from the dead” after the sacrifice
Psalms 16:10	<i>You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy one see decay (viz. Peter’s sermon in Acts 2)</i>
Psalms 45:6,7	<i>You have loved righteousness...therefore God, your God has set you above your companions (viz. Hebrews 1)</i>
Psalms 110:1	<i>The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet (viz. Hebrews 1)</i>
Psalms 68:16	<i>When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train</i>
Psalms 22:22	<i>I will declare your name to my brothers, in the congregation I will praise you (viz. Hebrews 1)</i>
Isaiah 53:10-12a	<i>He will see his offspring and prolong his days after the suffering he will see the light of life...he will be given a portion among the great and divide the spoils with the strong</i>
Daniel 7:13,14	the son of man being given authority, glory and sovereign power.

But over and above all these individual prophecies and verses is the whole story of God's purposes, plans and promises for his people, for all mankind that we have been looking at in the whole of this series: *Promises kept...*

Repentance will be preached from Jerusalem to all nations

Isaiah 2:2-4a "the mountain of the temple of the Lord (*i.e. Jesus*) being established. All nations streaming to it. He will teach us his ways that we may walk in his paths. (*i.e. repentance see Isaiah 1^{16ff}*)
The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Then Jesus says effectively to the disciples *This is where you come in – you are my witnesses, you are the ones that are going to take my message to all nations. But don't worry, you won't have to do it on your own, because I am going to give you my Holy Spirit (more about this next Sunday).*

However, Jesus had always made very clear that to be a Christian, a follower of Christ meant following in his footsteps: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me"

*Note: must take up **their** cross – not necessarily the cross of Jesus – a literal cross but a specific "cross" for each individual.*

What does this actually mean? If we are going to follow Jesus, then we must recognise that he is our King and Lord. That inevitably means that we must seek to please him rather than ourselves. At times that will mean saying no to our own desires and needs, denying ourselves. When a desire is strong (*e.g. greed, ambition, desire for popularity, lust*), it will mean nailing that desire to the cross and sometimes it will take a long time for it to die ! But unless Jesus is Lord **of** all, he is not Lord **at** all.

*2 Corinthians 1 v.20 says All of God's promises find their "yes" in Christ, and if Jesus has fulfilled all the promises of God in the Scriptures, as we have seen; and if Jesus has kept all **his own** promises – which he clearly has, especially by his resurrection, then*

Jesus is, beyond all shadow of a doubt, all that he claims to be.

He is God's Messiah, God's anointed, rescuing King, he is the only one who can save us from our sins, who can save us from judgement, and he is the only Lord who is worth following, come what may to the ends of the earth and to whom we would be crazy not to entrust our souls and our lives.