Luke Lesson 90 (2021)

**THE GOSPEL OF REPENTANCE FOR THE FORGIVENESS**

Luke 24:33-53

Key Verse: 24:46-47

“And repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Today’s passage concludes Luke’s account of Jesus’ life and ministry on earth. In the previous passage, we learned how the crucified Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to two of his discouraged disciples on the way to their hometown, Emmaus (24:1-32). Luke’s point of this episode is that Christ’s resurrection was a historical fact and Biblical truth, but it’s also a spiritual reality to those who believe in him. The Risen Christ is invisible but real. He is with us now and forever. In today’s passage, the Risen Christ appears to his disciples again, showing them proof of his bodily resurrection. And he also instructs his disciples to preach the gospel of forgiveness of sins to all nations. This morning, let us think about what Jesus’ bodily resurrection means to us and how preaching the gospel of repentance for the forgiveness of sins applies to us.

Look at verses 33-36. “They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’” When the Risen Christ appeared to his assembled disciples in a locked room, he didn’t ring the bell from outside, saying, “*Hey, guys. It’s me, Jesus. Can you unlock the door and let me in?”* He didn’t do that. Instead, the Risen Christ suddenly appeared and stood among them, saying to them, “Peace be with you!” – which in Aramaic “Shalom!” (Pic#1)

Look at verse 37. “They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.” Have you seen a ghost? When I first moved to the apartment I now live in near Queens College, I was not familiar with the building. I had to go to the laundry room in the corner of the building. At first, I didn’t see anybody in the laundry room, so I thought I was alone. But I saw the image of an older adult very briefly, and it soon disappeared. I was puzzled how the man appeared and vanished without a trace. I got scared, thinking that there was a ghost in the building.

The disciples were startled and frightened because they thought that they saw a ghost. In fact, it was not the first time that they were frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. In Matthews 14:22-26, while the disciples were struggling in the waves of the sea, Jesus came to them, walking on water. When they saw him walking on water, they were terrified and screamed, “It’s a ghost!” (Pic#2) They thought that they saw a ghost because no man could walk on water. Of course, Jesus didn’t always walk on water. It was a special occasion to show his divinity to his disciples. I am often surprised by some magicians in the TV program, who do tricks by making particular objects appear and disappear (Pic#3). But it’s just a trick that fools us. But no magician can appear or disappear in front of our eyes, except in science fiction.

What we are informed about the Risen Christ is that he can appear and disappear as he wishes. But how was it possible for him? What kind of body is the resurrection body? Look at verses 38-40. “He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 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.’ When he had said this, he showed them this hands and feet.” (Pic#4) Here, we see Jesus trying to convince his frightened disciples that he is not a ghost but the same Jesus who rose from the dead. Showing his wounded hands and feet, Jesus told them that they could touch his hands and feet to make sure that he was not a ghost.

He even went further to prove his bodily resurrection in verses 41-43. “And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.” At first, his disciples could not believe Christ’s resurrection because of fear and doubt. The resurrection sounded unreal. Now, after touching Jesus’ wounded hands and feet, they still didn’t believe because of joy and amazement. In other words, it’s just too good to be true. So, Jesus asked them to give him something to eat. They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it in their presence. I believe the Risen Christ enjoyed the delicious fish and might have asked them, saying, *“Wow! It’s so delicious. Can I have some more? Who broiled it? ”* Observing how Jesus ate the food they gave, they were no longer scared or doubtful. They now have peace and joy in their hearts, convinced that Christ has indeed risen from the dead.

There were many stories of Christ’s resurrection. But why would Luke choose to share this story? It seems that Luke wanted to highlight the importance of Christ’s bodily resurrection. If Christ’s resurrection was only spiritual, not physical, we could not call it a resurrection. Christ’s bodily resurrection shows that our future resurrection will also be a bodily resurrection.

So what kind of body is the resurrection body? Apostle Paul shared some of the details of our resurrection body in 1 Corinthians 15:35-54. We don’t have enough time to study the whole passage. Apostle Paul starts with questions many of us may have, like *“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”* (1 Cor. 15:35) Paul answers them by saying, “What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.” (1 Cor. 15:36-37) Paul compares our physical body to a seed, which will have to die when it is sown and bring out its intended body, either as beautiful flowers or something else. (Pic#5) Paul said, “What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.” It means that death is not the end but a new beginning of life in the new resurrected body.

So what is resurrection? Well, resurrection is not like reincarnation, which is like recycling in our ecosystem. We don’t become another creature in the next life, like animals, bugs, or plants. Instead, we remain as humans in our resurrection body, which will be no longer perishable, weak, aging, and natural. It will be imperishable, powerful, forever young, and spiritual. (15:42-44)

We don’t know precisely how our resurrection body will be, but we at least know that our resurrection body is not natural but spiritual. Paul says in 15:44-48. “If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual didn’t come first, but the natural, and after that, the spiritual… And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.” (15:44-48)

Life in this world is difficult for everyone. Even living in America, the land of opportunity, freedom, and abundance, is not easy either. These days, people struggle with so much anxiety due to the pandemic and others. So, many people feel that living in the USA is like living in the United States of Anxiety. The sad reality is that we all die, some all of a sudden and others in their old age. The idea of death makes us feel comfortable. Especially if we think that our life ends in death after many struggles, pains and sorrow, what hope do we have? Of course, we learned that the Risen Christ lives in us now and forever. But what will happen to us when we die?

Well, Christ’s resurrection shows that we will also be resurrected in his glory. We will receive a new and spiritual body. Indeed, our resurrection is a profound mystery of God, just as Paul said in 15:51-52, “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

However, not all people, even some Christians, want to believe in the resurrection for some reason. They may want to disappear and don’t exist after they die. Yet, we must know that resurrection is not our choice. The truth is that we will be resurrected someday, whether we want it or not.

So, are we stuck with the resurrection? No. Our resurrection is something we should eagerly look forward to. It’s God’s profound mystery for us. Resurrection is a complete transformation, the ultimate goal of God’s perfect game plan for each of us (Ro. 8:28-30). It’s the living hope of eternal inheritance kept in heaven for us (1 Pe. 1:4). Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruits, the beginning of the resurrection for all of us (1 Cor. 15:20).

In verses 44-46, Jesus reiterated that his suffering and resurrection from the dead are not an accident but fulfilling God’s prophecies in the Scriptures (25). Read verses 46-48. “He told them, ‘This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” According to these verses, we learn that the focal point of Jesus’ suffering and resurrection from the dead is forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the constant theme in Luke’s gospel. For example, in the first chapter of Luke’s gospel, we read about Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, who prophesied that God would give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. (1:77) His son, John the Baptist, also preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He said to the people, “Produce fruit keeping with repentance.”(3:8) Jesus often proclaimed the forgiveness of sins by telling people, “Your sins are forgiven.” (5:20, 7:48) And he also prayed on the cross, “Father, forgive them!” (23:34) The gospel of Christ death and resurrection has to do with the forgiveness of our sins.

But Luke seems to emphasize the necessity of our repentance by saying, “repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached.” The word **“repentance”** has an offensive and negative connotation. So we tend not to talk about repentance. When we over-emphasize repentance, we become a legalistic Christian - indicating that salvation is by strict observance of the law. When we over-emphasize forgiveness, we end up with a cheap grace that distorts the gospel.

But can we be forgiven without repenting of our sins? Of course not. It does not mean that God will not forgive us if we fail to repent even a tiny mistake. So what is repentance? Repentance is the change of our minds and hearts. Repentance is not just confessing our wrongdoings. It’s a lifestyle and the attitude of the heart, which Jesus elaborates in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh...” Based on Jesus’ Sermon on the mount, we learn that repentance is a life-long process. It’s a positive and therapeutic process. Repentance brings us forgiveness and leads us to have a healthy mindset for healing and transforming ourselves. It’s an essential part of the knowledge of salvation for the forgiveness of our sins. Repentance is being honest to yourself before God. We can say that repentance is our part, and forgiveness is God’s part. Jesus said that this gospel has to be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Look at verse 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.” The phrase “What my Father has promised” refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit in a few days. Luke’s Gospel ends with the description of Jesus’ ascension into heaven (50-53). While he lifted his hands and blessed them, he was taken into heaven. Again, we learn that Christ’s resurrected body is not limited in time and space. We will see him again and participate in his glory.

Living in a capitalistic society, the assumption that the more money we have, the happier we can live almost indoctrinates everyone. Is capitalism good news for all people? Is socialism or capitalism good news for all people? No. Nothing except Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can bring us to paradise through the grace of forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Our current body will cease to exist someday. But our true self in God will never die because Christ is the resurrection and the life (Jn. 11:25-26). And we will be transformed into a spiritual and glorious body. What a great hope we have!

In our day-to-day life, we can experience the power of God’s love when we forgive others just as God forgave us. I know I still have to work on forgiveness. I know God forgave me for sure. But I still need to work on forgiveness: I need to forgive others. I often hear people say*, “I cannot forgive you.”* I understand them. But forgiving others is our decision. By forgiving others, we can empower and liberate ourselves. The holiday season is at the corner. God is love, and his love endures us forever. Let’s share God’s best gift of love through the forgiveness of sins. May we continue living a life of repentance for God’s forgiveness and share this gospel with others not just in our words but in our deeds and actions.