Repentance for Forgiveness

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0:00] We are in Luke chapter 24, verses 33 to 53. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand, and we'd love to bring you a pew Bible you can use while you are here.

If you're using one of our blue pew Bibles, this is on page 885. Luke chapter 24, verses 33 to 53. Thanks, Nick. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, we pray in the name of Jesus who has risen, who has ascended, and who is now seated at your right hand. That you speak to us from your Word. That you assure us of the good news of Jesus Christ and the salvation that he won for us.
That you remind us that we have been sealed with your Holy Spirit, whom your Son sent after his ascension.
[1:23] And that your Spirit assures us that we are your adopted children. That your Spirit empowers us for life and service.

And that we are in desperate need of you and your help. So please remind us of all these things this morning.
Impress them upon us deeply, that we might be changed and live in accordance with these truths. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen. Amen. Luke 24, verses 33 to 53. And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon. Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.
[2:29] As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace to you. But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

And he said to them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, Have you anything here to eat?
They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. 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.
Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
[3:46] You are witnesses of these things. 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.

And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.
This is God's holy and authoritative word. Whether it's the last words of a man on his deathbed, or the parting words of a friend that is leaving to a faraway place, parting words are weighty, because they may be the last words you hear from that person in the flesh.
And those parting words often reveal what is most dear to that person that is leaving you with those words. And so here, in Luke's conclusion of his gospel, this is his parting word to us.
We see Jesus' parting words to his disciples. And the main point of this passage is this, that Jesus is the risen and ascended Lord, who empowers us with the Spirit to proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

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[5:07] And we're going to examine that main point in three parts. First, we'll look at the count of the resurrection, verses 33 to 43. And then the proclamation that he calls us to do in verses 44 to 49.

And finally, Jesus' benediction, his blessing to us. So let's first look at the confirmation, this final confirmation of Jesus' resurrection in verses 33 to 43. In the preceding passage we talked about two weeks ago, Jesus appeared to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, presumably their home. And though initially their eyes were kept from recognizing Jesus, after Jesus opened to them the scriptures and broke bread and gave it to them, their eyes were opened and they recognized him. That's what we saw in the preceding passage. But then immediately after that revelation, Jesus vanished from their sight. And it says here in verse 33 that they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.
Remember that they just completed a seven-mile journey on foot from Jerusalem to Emmaus. And they had just told Jesus in verse 29, Stay with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent.
[6:19] So it's late into the day, and they're weary from their journey, but neither of those things can keep them from the excitement of having encountered and recognized the risen Jesus.

And so they feel compelled to report that to the rest of the disciples, and they start marching back to Emmaus that moment. It says that same hour. And when they arrive, it says in verses 33 to 35, They found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.
To the surprise of these two disciples that were on the road to Emmaus, the eleven apostles and the other disciples who are with them are already discussing Jesus' resurrection when they arrive. And they have found out that he had also appeared independently to Simon Peter. And that appearance is not noted anywhere else in the Gospels.
It's mentioned only in 1 Corinthians 15.5. And so this is kind of, it's here to show us that the news of Jesus' resurrection is now starting to go viral.
[7:26] Everybody's seeing it. Everybody's hearing it. One report interrupts another, and the excitement is in the air. It's palpable. It's really happening. The Lord has risen indeed.

And amazingly, it says in verses 36 to 37, As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace to you. But they were startled and frightened, and thought they saw a spirit.
Once again, we see that Jesus' resurrection body is a transformed body. And so he is able to vanish suddenly and appear suddenly in the midst of his disciples. And this sudden appearance startles the disciples, and they think that they're seeing a ghost.
But Jesus says to them, Peace to you. Peace. That's a common Jewish greeting. Shalom. But in the Gospel of Luke, it receives a special meaning, a significance, because the word peace is repeatedly used throughout the Gospel and is connected to the idea of the salvation that the Messiah brings, that Christ brings.
So, for example, in Luke chapter 1, verses 76 to 79, when Zechariah prophesies about the birth of his son, John the Baptist, and what he would do to prepare the way for Jesus, he says this, And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
[9:09] And that's why, often after Jesus heals the sick, he declares to them in the Gospel of Luke, Your faith has saved you.

Go in peace. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, he brings, he secures our redemption from slavery to sin and death, and he gives us peace with God.
And that peace means so much more than just the ceasefire or the absence of conflict. It's restoration to proper, right relationship with God, to our proper place in the created order.
It means spiritual wholeness, no more existential angst. Knowing exactly who you are and what we were created for, knowing that we are in peace with God.
Do you have this peace? Only Christ can offer this peace. Because only Christ has triumphed over sin and death. But at this point, the disciples don't recognize him yet.

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[10:15] They're startled and frightened, so Jesus says to them in verse 38, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? At the beginning of the gospel, Zechariah and Mary were both described as troubled when the angel of the Lord appeared to them to announce to them the arrival of Jesus.

And now at the end of the gospel, the disciples are also troubled. And this is helpful to note because maybe some of you who are not yet followers of Christ feel this way.
You're troubled by what you're encountering. Maybe you have doubts arising in your heart. And that's normal. Divine revelation, when God appears, it always interrupts the status quo.
When God shows up and is present in our lives, it disrupts our lives and we are troubled because we recognize that if God is real and He's present in our lives, that we cannot live as we have always lived.
Something must change. You're being confronted with the reality of God in a way you haven't been before, then it's normal to be troubled.
[11:30] But if doubts arising in your heart, I want to assure you and I want to exhort you, don't stop at being troubled. Move on to faith.

Venture out to believe in Jesus, to give your life to Him, because then your faith and your troubledness, that will turn into joy as we see with the disciples here and as we saw earlier in the beginning of the Gospel of Luke with Mary and Zechariah.
Jesus says in verses 39 to 40, 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.
And when He has said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. Jesus is telling them, I'm a bodily being like you. I partake in the same flesh and bones that you have.
These verses demonstrate beyond doubt that Jesus, His resurrection was a physical resurrection. It's essential to believe in a bodily resurrection of Christ, because if Jesus was not raised bodily, then death will not have been defeated.
[12:37] And the effect of sin would not have been reversed. In the genealogies that we just finished, going through the book of Genesis in our family worship, and there's a refrain, a haunting refrain throughout the entire book.

It says, So and so lived for this many years, and he died. And he died. And he died. Why?
Because in Genesis chapter 2, verses 16 to 17, God had commanded the man not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning him that if he does, he shall surely die.
So you see the implications of that, the outworking of that sin, and that has had its effect in all of humanity. Almost two human beings die every second.
150,000 people die every single day. And the surviving ones, the loved ones, have to live with the pain of separation. The grief.
[13:46] That's the result of original sin. So unless Christ is raised from the dead bodily, death is not undone. And sin, which is the sting of death, is not removed.

It's because Christ was raised bodily that we have forgiveness of sins and assurance of our future bodily resurrection and salvation in Christ when he returns.
So after verifying the resurrection of Jesus with their own eyes and hands, it says in verse 41 that the disciples still disbelieved for joy and were marveling.
Their doubt now turns into disbelief. And this disbelief is not unbelief. It refers to amazement. That's why it says that they disbelief for joy and were marveling.
They were so overwhelmed by the realization that Jesus really is alive that they're speechless. And to banish any remaining doubts that might be there, Jesus asks them, have you anything here to eat?
[14:50] And it says in verses 42 to 43, they gave him a piece of boiled fish and he took it and ate before them. This is not because he's hungry. The Jews believed that ghosts did not eat.

So this is kind of the final decisive demonstration that he is not a phantom. He is a resurrected being. And having borne witness to Jesus' resurrection, Luke turns to the importance of the proclamation of this message in verses 44 to 49.
He says in 44, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me and the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.
Jesus is referring to the fact that on several occasions throughout the gospel, he had already explicitly predicted his suffering, death, and resurrection. And he believes that all of that happened

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in fulfillment of the scriptures.
The law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms. That's a reference to the entire Old Testament. The entire Jewish scriptures. That threefold division of the law, the prophets, and the writing or the Psalms that it's still used by Jews to this day.
[16:02] And this is very similar to what Jesus said earlier in verse 27. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Jesus believed that all the scriptures, not just the prophecies, but also the laws, also the Psalms, they testified about him.
Similarly, when the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus because he was calling God his Father and making himself equal to God, in John 5, Jesus said to them, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness about me.
Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me. For he wrote of me.
But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? Just as the Old Testament all point forward to the personal work of Jesus Christ, all of the New Testament point backward to the personal work of Jesus Christ.
[17:21] And that means whenever you read the scriptures, wherever you might be, whatever point you might be in the whole book, you need to understand, you know, to understand it rightly, you need to see how Christ fulfills it and how it points to Christ.

You have to understand that all of the institutions of scripture, the tabernacle, the temple, the nation of Israel, the covenants, all the offices of scripture, priesthood, the kings, and the prophets, all the main characters of scripture, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, all the rituals of scripture, the sacrifices, the day of atonement, the Passover, and all the commandments of scripture, all of these things foreshadow and point to Jesus.
Jesus is what scripture is all about. There's a story that I'd like to tell.
There's a 19th century British pastor, Charles Spurgeon, once told this story. He told the story about another minister, a Welsh minister, who offered constructive criticism to a younger preacher. He said, very honestly, it was a very poor sermon. He told the young man, well, will you tell me why you think it is a poor sermon?
[18:51] Came the response. Because, said the Welsh minister, there was no Christ in it. Well, said the young man, Christ was not in the text.

We are not to be preaching Christ always. We must preach what is in the text. The exchange continued, don't you know, young man, that from every town and every village and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?
Yes, said the young man. Ah, said the old divine. And so, from every text in scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the scriptures that is Christ. And my dear brother, your business is when you get to a text to say, now, what is the road to Christ?
And then preach a sermon running along the road towards the great metropolis, Christ. And, said he, I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it.
And if I ever define one that is not a road to Christ in it, I will make one. I will go over a hedge and ditch, but I would get at my master. For the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a saver of Christ in it.
[20:09] that's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 2, I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Jesus is the subject of the scriptures. He is the fulfillment of the scriptures. So when you read the scriptures, don't read it like you're just reading another book.
You're encountering the person of Jesus. You're hearing the very words of Jesus. That's why scripture reading is not a chore, but a delight. And then it continues in verse 45, He opened their minds to understand the scriptures.
This follows the pattern that we saw earlier in this chapter on the road to Emmaus. There the two disciples didn't recognize Jesus at first, so He opened the scriptures to them to explain the things about Himself.
And then later He said that their eyes were opened. So here the two disciples don't recognize Jesus at first, but then Jesus opens their minds to understand the scriptures. In verse 31, it was God who opened their eyes to recognize Jesus.

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[21:34] Here it's the Son of God who opens their minds to understand the scriptures. And the verb to open occurs six times in Luke's writings, in the Gospel of Luke, in the book of Acts, and in all of those places it refers to when God reveals Himself to His people.

It teaches us that only God can reveal Himself through the scriptures and that apart from His self-revelation, we can't rightly grasp Him, understand His truth.
And here is the most important thing to understand from all of scriptures, the heart of it all, verses 46 to 47, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.
The main outline of God's salvation plan can be seen in the three main verbs used in these verses. First, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise and that in response to all this we are to proclaim this good news.
First, it was necessary for Jesus to suffer. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 9 says that Jesus had to endure the suffering of death so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.
[23:01] In dying on the cross, Jesus bore the penalty of sin on behalf of all those who put their trust in Him. There is no alternative form of atonement.

There is no other way of salvation. No amount of self-flagellation or penance can atone for our sins. No amount of good works, community service, or charitable giving can atone for our sins because as Romans 6 23 says, the wages of sin is death that is the only penalty that meets the crime, the sin against an eternal infinitely worthy being.
And as sinners on death row, our only hope for salvation is the substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross. That was the first thing.
Second, it was necessary for Jesus to rise. As I mentioned earlier, unless Jesus is raised from the dead, death is not undone and sin is not dealt with.
And so it's Jesus' death and resurrection together that make possible our repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The Greek word that's translated as repentance literally means change of mind.
[24:31] But it also implies the change of life that every true change of mind brings about. That's why in Luke chapter 3 verse 8, John the Baptist exhorts the Jews this way, saying, bear fruits in keeping with repentance.

And that's why in Hebrews 6 verse 1 says, repentance from dead works and faith toward God. To repent is to turn away from your own ways, your own autonomy, your own sovereignty, your own rebellion against God, your own sins, and to turn toward God in faith and say, now He is my King and I will live for Him.
That's repentance and faith. You can think about it this way, imagine that someone on the road asks you for directions and you tell them, well actually you got to go this way.
And then they go, oh thank you so much, I was actually headed the wrong way, if it weren't for you I would have never gotten to my destination, thank you so much. And then, right after you start leaving, they turn around and keep going the wrong way. I mean, at that point it would be fair to ask yourself, was this person just being nice to me and didn't believe me at all?
Or did he not understand when I was pointing and saying you have to go that way? Right? Because if that person really had a change in mind, he would have had a change in direction in the way he was going.
[26:00] So repentance is a change of mind but it's a change of mind that is genuine that leads to a change, a reorientation of your life.

And if your life has not been reoriented around Christ and his purposes and priorities for your life, then you have not truly repented and believed. There are many so-called Christians who say they are Christians but who have not truly repented that bring disrepute to the name of Christ.
And the third thing that's mentioned here is that this good news of Jesus' death and resurrection, the repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed.
The gospel is good news. It is not a good feeling to be experienced or a good work that we have to do. It's a good news that needs to be proclaimed.
Yes, the people of this world need clean water, they need healing, they need medicine, vaccines, they need education and jobs. These are all good, commendable, good work that Jesus himself did much of.

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[27:22] but Jesus never did good works at the expense of proclaiming the good news of Jesus, good news of salvation. Jesus never in scriptures does good works without doing the work of proclaiming the good news.

Never. so what if they have PhDs and health and wealth and long life if they perish forever because their sins are not forgiven.
It's in the proclamation of the gospel that the world's greatest need and our unique ability as God's people meet. Theologian Michael Whitmer puts it this way in one of his books.
Imagine a doctor who enters a hospital room with the cure for his dying patient. But rather than inject the medicine into the patient's intravenous line, he tucks the vial into his cold pocket and attempts to minister holistically.
The doctor asks the man about the stressors that may have contributed to his disease, what his home life is like, how things are going at work and whether he knows how to love himself. Before long, a shaky hand reaches up and clutches the doctor's collar.
[28:48] Listen, doc. Save the chit-chat for some other time. Did you bring the cure? Brothers and sisters, we have the cure.

all of our psychological ills, all of our social ills, all of our physical ills, they are all strange fruits that grow on the tree of sinful humanity.
And Jesus is the only one who can save us from sin, give us forgiveness for sins. Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life.
no one comes to the Father except through him. And people who have not heard the good news never will repent of their sins. You have family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers who need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.
our church, we should be consumed by this seal. That's why we must go.
[30:04] Jesus says that this message should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. In the gospel of Luke, the geographic trajectory of the entire gospel of Jesus and his disciples is toward Jerusalem.

That's where it ends. But then in the book of Acts, Luke's sequel, the geographic trajectory of Jesus' apostles is from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
I've mentioned to you before the research published by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity. They chronicle the shifts in the gravitational center of Christianity from 30 A.D. to the present day.
It began, of course, in Jerusalem 30 A.D. to what is now Istanbul around 1000 A.D. and then to Budapest, Hungary by 1500, Madrid, Spain by 1900, and then now to Niger, Africa.
That's the gravitational center of Christianity today. Today, seven of the top ten countries with the largest Christian populations are in Africa, Asia, and South America.
[31:09] Christianity is not a Jewish religion. It is not a Western religion. It is not an American religion religion. Because our God is God overall. And he commended that this should be proclaimed among all the nations.

And when we go, we don't go in our name for our selfish gain. We don't go in the name of a corporation. We don't go in the name of a country.
We don't go to export our products and to establish our governing structures and cultures. It is written in Scripture that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name.
In the name of Christ. Proclaiming the gospel in Jesus' name is a major theme in the book of Acts. And it points to Christ's authority.
When you act in someone's name, you act as His representative and under His authority. This is why missionaries are not the same as colonists.
[32:21] A colonist serves the interests of an earthly king. A missionary serves the interests of a heavenly king. Colonists go in the name of the British Empire or the Spanish Empire, the French Empire, the American Empire.

But missionaries go in the name of the kingdom of God. The Christians' primary allegiance is not to a country or to a company but to Christ.
And so when their interests contradict the interests of Christ, we must obey God rather than men.
Because we go in Christ's name to proclaim the good news of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and you are witnesses, says in verse 48.

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You are witnesses of these things. Witnesses are not supposed to fabricate anything, conjure up something. They're supposed to report what they have seen and heard and that's the calling of Christians.
To witness to the person and work of Jesus Christ whom we know, whom we have experienced, whom we have heard in the word of God.
[33:37] And as Jesus commissions his disciples, he gives them this promise in verse 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.

This is a promise of the Holy Spirit. That's confirmed by Acts 1.8. Jesus says to his disciples, 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.
This is the fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures. One of the saddest verses in all of scripture is Ezekiel chapter 10, verse 18 and 19, where prophet Ezekiel describes the departure of God's glory from his temple in Jerusalem.
It says, then the glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house and stood over the cherubim and the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my eyes as they went out.
The glory of God, the presence of God, the Spirit of God leaves Jerusalem because of the sin and rebellion of God's people and consequently Jerusalem is overrun by the Babylonian empire and God's name is held in contempt by the Gentiles, by the non-Jews.
[35:04] But later in Ezekiel chapter 36 verses 23-27, God promises of a day when his presence, his Spirit will return to dwell among God's people.

And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name which has been profaned among the nations and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.
I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.
And then after the last prophets there was the 400 years of silence. Jesus is breaking that silence saying that that promise is not becoming fulfilled in my death, resurrection and ascension and I will send this spirit of God to you.
God's glory will again be seen among his people. His power will again be demonstrated among his people and in the old covenant God's spirit came upon only on select individuals for select divinely appointed tasks like building of the tabernacle or the temple to the priests and to the kings, the prophets.
[36:53] But now in the new covenant every single man man and woman of God filled with the spirit of God. Not just pastors, priests.

And that's why Jesus tells his disciples to stay in the city until they are clothed with power from on high. This is really remarkable that Jesus after commissioning them to go and proclaim this repentance for forgiveness of sins doesn't tell them to go immediately instead he tells them to wait. Wait for divine empowerment because apart from it your proclamation is ineffective. We see this connection between spirit's power and the proclamation of the gospel over and over again in Luke's sequel to the book of Acts.
For example it says in Acts 4.31 And when they had prayed the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.
It's being clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit that leads to bold proclamation of the gospel. Especially in the face of persecution. It's when the gospel is proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit that it manifests saving power in the lives of its hearers.
[38:17] We can't, though we might try with all our might, we can't conjure up supernatural boldness by holding powwows and listening to pep talks.

We can't persuade unbelievers to believe the gospel merely by honing our skills of argumentation and eloquence.

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The work of God can only be carried out by the power of God and so it was necessary for the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit.
And then after the promise we witness the actual ascension in verses 50 to 51. It seems that some time have, has elapsed between resurrection Sunday and ascension day because Luke notes in Acts 1-3 that there was a 40 day interval between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension.
So now, what's happening now is some time after. And it says in Luke 20, and Jesus had predicted this of course saying in Luke 22-69, but from now on the Son of Man shall be seated on the right hand of the power of God.
[39:34] And this ascension is a fulfillment of that promise. It means that Jesus is seated reigning at the right hand of God the Father as the great high priest who intercedes on behalf of his people.

It's Jesus' ascension that gives us the confidence to approach the throne of God in prayer. It's his ascension that assures us that we will surely receive God's grace and mercy because Jesus is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us, reigning in that place.
That's what Hebrews 4, 14-16 talks about. Jesus is the risen and ascended Lord who empowers us with the Spirit to proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
But Jesus doesn't leave before he blesses his disciples. That's my third point. Benediction says in verses 50-51, And he led them out as far as Bethany and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. Look at this. Even as he's being carried up into heaven, Jesus is blessing his disciples.
[40:47] And the disciples respond by blessing God in return. Verses 52-53, And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God.

The word blessed is repeated three times here. The word blessed is so overused nowadays. I'm not sure. It's so misused.
I think few Christians actually know what it means. To bless someone is to impart good things from God. In scripture, there are two main types of blessings.
First type is the paternal benediction, which is a blessing that parents bestow on their children. The second type is the ministerial benediction, which God's authorized representatives bless God's people on his behalf.
And when God or his authorized representatives bless God's people, it's a bestowal of blessing. It's an impartation or a communication of blessing.
[41:51] When the people of God bless God, it's an act of worship, an acknowledgement that God is the most blessed one. So a benediction, when we receive it, it's not a prayer.

It's a pronouncement. When a pastor, for example, at the end of a service pronounces his benediction at the end, it's not prayer asking God to do something. Rather, it's a pronouncement imparting what God has already done and promised for his people.
So you receive it with expectation and full fulfillment of that instead of waiting on it, seeking and praying for it. The first thing that God did after creating humanity was to bless them, Genesis 1.28. The very last words of scripture in Revelation 22.21 is a benediction, a blessing. And most of the New Testament letters include at least one benediction.
And here at the end of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus ascends to heaven while blessing his disciples. It really reveals his heart. It's like getting carried away and he's like blessing his disciples.
[43:04] So it reminds me of like a lover that's saying goodbye to like a beloved that's going off on a train. He's like running up to the train saying, I love you or something, you know, because they just haven't had enough time. And say, God, it's Jesus as he's going.

It's a blessing. That's the last thing. The last picture that the disciples have of Jesus, his arms raised, blessing them. That's God's heart for us.
To bless us, not harm us. Romans 8.20 says that for those who love God, all things work together for good.
Not good as we humanly and imperfectly define it, but good as God divinely and perfectly defines it. All that God demands of us in his scriptures is for our good.
Yet too often, we second guess the goodness of what God's word teaches. We question the goodness of God in the circumstances of our lives.
[44:17] Let me encourage you, whenever you find yourself questioning the goodness of what God has said in his word to you, or the goodness of God in the difficult circumstances of your life, picture Jesus with his hands raised high, blessing you.

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That's his heart for you. He's not looking at you with contempt, with wagging fingers or pointed fingers. And the only appropriate response to the risen and ascended Lord is joyful worship.
It says in verses 52 to 53 to 3 that the disciples worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God.
In the gospel of Luke, though several people have fallen before Jesus' feet, prostrate themselves to pay homage to him, no one has up to this point worshipped Jesus.
It is as the risen and ascended Lord that Jesus is finally fully recognized as the Son of God who is worthy of the worship that is due to God alone.
[45:34] So they worship him. This is significant. And just as the birth of Jesus brought joy in Luke chapter 2 verse 10, the departure of Jesus brings great joy in Luke 24 verse 52.

And just as the gospel began with Zechariah and Simeon blessing God in the temple, it ends with Jesus' disciples blessing God in the temple. The gospel has come around full circle because Jesus has fulfilled all that he has set out, he has set out to do.
And now he is the risen and ascended Lord who empowers us with the Spirit to proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
Take a moment to reflect on that and then we're going to respond by praying together as a church. Amen.

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