

## A Thrilling Finish

*Building Core Strength*

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**Bible Text:** Luke 24:36-53

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Well, if you went to bed at half time you missed a thrilling finish. If you know sports at all, you probably know which game from this past week I am talking about. It was Monday night football, the Denver Broncos playing the San Diego Chargers in San Diego. That game matters a little bit more to some of us in this part of the country, because Denver's new quarterback is Payton Manning in case you haven't heard, long time quarterback for the Colts. Of course, Manning had a serious neck injury and while he was out the Colts had a terrible season. Do you remember that? And then because there were questions about whether Manning should be the long term guy, Indianapolis released him after drafting Andrew Luck and Manning then signed with Denver. So we Colt fans are all about Andrew Luck now, aren't we? But it is still interesting to watch how Payton is doing.

So anyway it is Monday night football. It doesn't get any bigger than that in the regular season. And the first half could not have gone any worse for Manning and for Denver. The low point may have been when Manning threw a great pass to a wide open receiver named Eric Decker who caught the ball, had a clear route to the end zone until he literally tripped over his own feet and fell down, seriously. It was like something I would have done, but certainly not a professional football player.

Now some of you are giving me the you are exaggerating pastor Viars. Surely a professional football player would not have fallen over his own feet and missed scoring a touchdown. I know how you are with me. So I am going to prove it. There we go. There is Manning, throws it. Eric Decker, wide open. And {?}. You want to see it again. Yeah, look at it from Decker's perspective. Wide open. Touch down, but... there he goes. Manning was not ... yeah.

You notice we don't have the microphone on that part of the play.

On the next play, by the way, Manning threw an interception and if they went into the locker room at half time down 24 to nothing. You realize a team coming back from that kind of deficit has only happened five times in the entire history of the league. And with all the great comebacks Payton Manning has had over the years, he has never come back

from 24 points down in his entire career. And that had never happened on Monday night football until this past week.

Manning starts the second half with a picture perfect drive, capped with a 29 yard touchdown pass to {?} Thomas. Then San Diego quarterback Philip Rivers—we will keep him out of the story—was dropping back to pass, the ball is stripped from his hands, recovered by Tony Carter who runs it back 65 yards for a touchdown. Then in the fourth quarter Manning hits Eric Decker. It is amazing he would ever throw to this guy again, but he did and that guy manned up if you saw that play. I mean, he plowed it into the end zone for sure for another touchdown. And then four minutes later Manning caps it all off with an unbelievable pass and catch to his old friend Brandon Stokely. When the game is over Denver had scored 35 unanswered points and one by a score of 35 to 24. And Payton Manning walks off the field in triumph yet again.

If you went to bed early what were you thinking? You probably woke up the next day and couldn't believe how that game ended. You missed a thrilling finish for sure.

Well, friend, the same is true if you walked away from the story at the end of Luke 23 where Jesus is hanging on the cross. His friends have deserted him. His enemies are mocking him in what they believe was the triumph of putting him to death. How could the story end in anything but defeat? Well, we know the answer to that question, don't we? Because the last couple of weeks we have been studying from Luke 24. It is all about a thrilling finish.

Let me invite you to one your Bible one last time to that great chapter, Luke chapter 24. It is on page 69 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning. This morning we are actually concluding our verse by verse study of the gospel of Luke. This has been part of our church's annual theme, building core strength, emphasizing verses like Psalm 138:3.

“On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul.”<sup>1</sup>

That is core strength. Our thought was that by studying the life of Christ this year, verse by verse in one of the gospels, that would provide all sorts of opportunities to grow in our relationship with him. And what better way to become stronger in our souls than to develop a more genuine, intimate walk with the rock himself and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is like the psalmist said.

“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”<sup>2</sup>

Developing core strength. For some this year that has meant coming to the place of making a personal decision to admit your need and then place your faith and trust as Christ as Savior and Lord. Do you realize we will have people who are worshipping with

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 138:3.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 18:2.

us today and at the beginning of this year they weren't even attending a church or, if they were, they would say all they had was religion or rules or ritual. But then at some point this year they recognized the weaknesses of those approaches as they came to understand what Luke is talking about in this gospel, the possibility of having a personal relationship with Christ which begins by making a decision. You don't ease into that. You make a decision at a point in time to place your faith in him.

And such persons who have made that decision would now say they are stronger than ever, because Jesus Christ is their rock. He is their fortress. He is their deliverer. In fact, we heard some great testimonies back at our last church family night where people, many of whom were saying that exact same thing and we are very excited about that.

Now we have been trying to emphasize this theme in three primary areas. One, shoring up foundational areas in our walk with Christ and individually and our church ministries corporately that comprise the basis of godliness and effective community service. In other words, we knew there are all sorts of houses and duplexes and apartments being built right around our church and we wanted to be sure that we were evaluating the fundamentals, essentially doing an audit individually and as a church body. To be sure we are trying to help every person around here grow spiritually. We are not just interested in becoming bigger numerically. We want to be stronger as a church family. We also want to do an audit of the way we reach out to those who are moving in around here. And whether we are doing everything we can to make this an easy place to feel and be connected to.

I don't know that any of us realized what a great year this would end up being as far as emphasizing those themes. God has been blessing us with some unusual growth here. In fact, in the last... three of the last four Sundays there have been more than 200 people here in our services than the corresponding Sunday a year ago. And when you understand that the average evangelical church is about 100 persons what that means is God has added two church families to our existing church family in one year. That is a marvelous thing for sure, is it not? It also means that it is just that much more important that we are developing core strength. It also means that the themes that are emphasized at the end of Luke 24, the second half, are really important for all of us. And I am going to try to make a number of specific applications to where we are right now as a church family as a result of all this.

Then there is also the issue of planning and praying for the construction Faith West and all the ministries that will be launched in less than a year from now. And I am happy to tell you that project is right on track. The workmen are making tremendous progress. Have been by there recently? Our church family is giving faithfully to the capital campaign, making all of it possible. And you are going to see the very reason we are doing all this together come screaming out of this text this morning.

Then there is the issue of preparing for the next round of ministry dreaming as we embark on a new strategic planning process next year.

So I hope you have enjoyed this verse by verse study and more importantly I hope you could point to specific areas of growth, steps that you have taken where you can report that you are finding yourself bolder with strength in your soul, because you know Christ like never before.

Well, this morning it is time to read about a thrilling finish that contains truths that make any sporting analogy just pale in comparison. I am in Luke 24. And let's begin in about verse 32. I am picking it up where the disciples on the Emmaus Road—we studied this last week—are coming back to report to their friends. Let's pick it up at verse 32, right in the middle.

They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and \*said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing 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. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them. Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are 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 He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. "You are witnesses of these things. "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 24:32-53

We are talking this morning about a thrilling finish. And with the time we have remaining let's think about three reasons people can find peace and joy in our rock, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let me tell you why we are structuring the outline in that particular way. One reason is on purpose. Luke is concluding his gospel with themes that are very similar to the way he began on Christmas night. In a lot of ways we have come full circle, finishing where we started, because the angels had made certain predictions when they announced the birth of Christ, remember that? Now we are seeing in this chapter on Easter night all of that come to fruition.

You may remember that on the first Christmas night:

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."<sup>4</sup>

Quite a set of promises, huh? That they are bringing good news of great joy which will be to all the people and there is the possibility of peace for those who learn how to please their God. Well, did you notice those are the exact same themes that we read about in the end of the book on Easter Sunday night?

What was the very first thing that Jesus said to them?

“While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and \*said to them, ‘Peace be to you.’”<sup>5</sup>

Then their response to what he was telling them. Well, they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement.

“While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’”<sup>6</sup>

Don't you love how the Word of God all fits together? We have gone from Christmas to Easter in a very straight line.

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 2:8-14.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 24:36.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 24:41.

Now one other observation about the structure of Luke 24 is that it contains what we would call today a triptych. And I am not here just to throw words around, but that is a word which is referring to a work of art or literature that is divided on purpose into three sections. For example, the alleviation of the cross or the raising of the cross by Reubens completed in 16 to 11. It is a triptych and the idea is it presents the subject from three different perspectives. That is what we see in Luke 24 over the past three weeks. It is a triptych, three ways of talking about what happened on Easter Sunday from three unique perspectives. There was the angels appearance to the women at the tomb. We talked about that two weeks ago. And then Jesus' appearance to the disciples in the Emmaus Road. We talked about that last week. And now this morning Jesus' appearance to the disciples gathered together apart from {?}. Each one of these events occurred on Easter Sunday and they have very similar themes. They all start with confusion and then rebuke and then instruction and then witness. And the reason that is so valuable is we often feel the same way, huh? At least the way they did at the beginning, confused, disappointed, discouraged, tired, hopeless. Kind of like the Denver Broncos after the first half and on a much more serious level.

Well, now it is time for the second half. Let's break these verses down and find three reasons people can have the peace and joy that was actually predicted on Christmas night and is now coming to fruition on the evening of Easter. And while you can have peace and joy because of the evidence of the resurrection. Lock on to that word evidence for a few moments.

I really believe this passage illustrates just how patient the Lord is with people like you and me, because remember the context. That is why I read those early verses. You have got the fact that the angel has appeared to the women and they made the report to the disciples. We saw that two weeks ago. You have got the fact that Jesus actually appeared to the disciples on the Emmaus Road and they now came together and they are making their report. Now you have got this particular story as well where they are talking about what they have seen and the verses said that Jesus had appeared to Peter and yet when he appears to them what is his condition? They are startled in verse 37. They are frightened. They are troubled in verse 38. They are still doubting. All of that is fascinating in light of what has already occurred that same day. I mean, how much more evidence do you need?

And the text says that when he appeared to them, they were actually talking about the fact that he was alive.

And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 24:33-35.

And yet when Jesus comes and he appears to them, they are startled, frightened, troubled and doubting. The principle here is just because people are talking about something doesn't mean you really believe it. Some of God's people talk a lot and they do a little. They talk a lot, but if you evaluate their actions, they act like they don't believe what they have been talking about. It is like a group of people sitting around talking about the fact that everybody has a nose. Yes, I have a nose. Yes, I have seen your nose. Yes, his nose is rather large.

And then somebody passes you a mirror and you scream out, "Ah, I have a nose." If you really believed what you had been saying you wouldn't be surprised when you receive additional proof. That is what happened in this text. They were startled. They were frightened. They thought that they were seeing a ghost. Seriously? Jesus had just died for their sin and now he had been raised from the dead just like he said he would. And he had the angel appear to the women. He had appeared to the disciple on the Emmaus Road. He had appeared to Peter. They are all together talking about it and yet when he appears to them, they are startled, frightened, doubting and they believe they are seeing a ghost. And many of us, had we been the Lord, would have said something like, "You know, I am about done with you and your unbelief. I am going to go find some followers who will actually take me at my word."

How much more evidence do you need?

Well, thankfully Jesus is pretty patient with them, huh? And so he gives them comprehensive evidence. It is important to understand that there were at least 10 post resurrection appearances of Christ prior to the ascension that we find recorded for us in the Word of God. That is how intense he was at being sure that people like you and me have plenty of evidence. And so when I mentioned a few moments ago that there is a number of people this year who will be at church today who have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, they are staking their eternal destiny on what he did on the cross for them. They are not doing that on the basis of some fairy tale. They are doing that on the basis of examining the evidence recorded in the Word.

If you picked up your notes you saw that there is all sorts of passages like this. Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene at the tomb according to Mark and John. And then the women on the road according to Matthew 28, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We studied that last week, to Peter himself personally. We saw that this morning in Luke 24:34, to 10 of the 11 disciples. This is the text that we are studying this morning. And while it says it was the 11, that was a generic term talking about the disciples. We believe from comparing this to other Scripture that Thomas was not there, because eight days later Christ appears to them again and Thomas is there. Then to seven disciples, one of my favorite passages in all the Bible, John 21. Then to more than 500 disciples. Paul talks about that in 1 Corinthians 15. And many of them when Paul wrote that were still alive. That is why Paul said of that text, "If you don't believe me, just ask them. They are the ones who are still alive." Some of them are being persecuted for their faith. Why would they be making up a lie and then staking their life on it?

Then he appeared to James his half brother according to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, then to the apostles when he ascended into heaven in Acts chapter one. And after his ascension he even appeared to the apostle Paul. The point here is, my friends, the evidence is overwhelming for the resurrection of Christ.

What about on this occasion? He actually allows them to touch him. Can you believe that?

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."<sup>8</sup>

Can you imagine Jesus allowing them? Here, touch me. If you don't really believe that I have been bodily resurrected from the dead, feel my flesh. Feel my bones. And then this unbelievable question. Do you have anything to eat? Proof that he is not just god, but the God man. Isn't that what a man would ask in that situation? Have you got anything to eat? What is that all about? It is late Sunday night and all the restaurants are closed. Why did he eat a piece of fish?

And the answer is to demonstrate to them that he had been bodily resurrected from the dead. This wasn't just a bunch of smoke and mirrors and he wanted to see. The fish goes in and it doesn't come out. My body has been resurrected.

Well, why is that so important? It is because it proves what Jesus did on the cross was accepted by the Father as satisfying the penalty for our sin. It doesn't get any more important than that. That is why the writer of Hebrews would later say, "Therefore he had to be made like his brethren." We had to have Christmas. He had to be incarnated. He had to take on the form of a man. He had to be bodily resurrected from the dead. Why? So that then he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. Here it is, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. The sin had to be laid on him just like it was laid on the Passover lamb. Propitiation means satisfaction.

That is why if you are here and you are not sure you have ever trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, I would encourage you to admit your need and place your faith and trust in Christ, because the fact that Jesus was resurrected from the dead demonstrates that the price that he paid on the cross was accepted by the Father. He is the propitiation. And, friends, he had given you all the evidence that you need. He has given you all the evidence that you need. Now it is time for you to be sure you are on the right team.

Like last Monday night, the San Diego fans left dejected, but the Bronco fans were cheering. And Jesus' resurrection is only a victory for you if you decide to let it be. If you decide not to, it is not because the Lord did not provide plenty of evidence for you. And I would encourage you, while you have the freedom and you have the opportunity to make a decision to trust Christ, that you do that, because we have seen in this text there is a big difference between people talking about things and actually acting on the truth they

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 24:38-39.

say they believe. And apart from the act, apart from the decisions, apart from the choice, apart from the follow through, talking doesn't accomplish a whole lot, even if you are the one who is doing the talking about a lot of good things.

This part of the story continues to be a blessing throughout our Christian life which is why the writer of Hebrews would go on to say:

“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”<sup>9</sup>

And you might say, “I have really been struggling this week in a particular area.” I hope you came to Christ. I hope you touched him and saw, in the sense that you believe the reports of these eye witnesses. A spirit doesn't have flesh and bones like he does. And the reason that we can have peace and the reason that we can have joy, even if the circumstances around us are about as bad as they can be, is because we have personal high priest. He is in a body. A personal high priest who stands ready to give us grace and help in our time of need. He has been bodily resurrected from the dead and don't let any pagan or don't let any liberal ever tell you otherwise. There is way too much eye witness evidence on God's side of that particular ledger. It is important for our faith.

Secondly, you can have peace and joy because of the foundation of the resurrection. That is why I mentioned a moment ago about this chapter forming a triptych. I am not trying to throw big words around, but Christ's followers in each one of these occasions in this chapter were brought back to the reliability of the Word. So at the beginning of the chapter we looked at this a couple of weeks ago, the women at the tomb.

Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." And they remembered His words...<sup>10</sup>

Many of them words based on the Old Testament Scripture. Or surely last week the disciples on the Emmaus Road, the center portion of the triptych. Jesus said to them:

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.<sup>11</sup>

And then our passage this morning.

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<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 2:18.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 24:6-8.

<sup>11</sup> Luke 24:25-27.

“Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’”<sup>12</sup>

Here is the point. Sure, the ability to feel his hands and his feet was a marvelous experience in watching him eat a piece of fish made an important statement. But the core question was: Were these events prophesied throughout the Word of God? Because if they were, then it is game over. Peace and joy is available to every person building his or her life on the reliable foundation of the Word.

Leon Morris said about this text, “The solemn division of Scripture into the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms, the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible, indicate that there is no part of Scripture that does not bear its witness to Christ.” Don’t you love that? It points to him. It all fits together.

You say, “Well, how so?”

Well, think about it. Think about the law. So much of the sacrificial system pointed to the person and the work of Christ. But hear me. That was the point of the law. And that is why I am always... I just cringe whenever I hear somebody say, “Well, I am a 10 Commandment Christian.” We may have some people attending our services today who think that. And what they mean is, “I am going to earn my way to heaven by keeping the commandments of God. I don’t need a Savior. I don’t need a Lord. I am just a good enough person to enter into heaven by my own righteousness.”

Friends, the law was never given apart from the sacrificial system. The law was never given as means for you to obey it perfectly and therefore enter heaven by yourself. The law was given to point out our own sin. The law was give to demonstrate how different we are than our holy God. That is why you would never have the law apart from sacrifices, because we understand that we could not keep the law on our own merit. Some thing or someone’s blood had to be shed.

That is why the write of Hebrews would later say according to the law... remember, Jesus spoke about the law in that text.

“And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”<sup>13</sup>

That is why if you are a follower of Christ this morning you are not too sophisticated to talk about the blood. And you are not too proud to acknowledge that you had a need. You needed something from God. You needed a gift from him that you could not earn. You had to have somebody do something on your behalf. Apart from that there is no salvation. And I realize that some in our culture are too sophisticated to talk about the

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<sup>12</sup> Luke 24:44.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrews 9:22.

blood or too proud to talk about their own need. I can tell you right now. Peter wasn't. In fact, he said it like this alter.

...knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

Paul would later say:

“...and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.”<sup>15</sup>

What we are talking about this morning, this great victory, this third part of the triptych, this is crucial for our salvation. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is vain and we are still in our sins. The resurrection is what completes the picture started in the Old Testament law and its corresponding sacrificial system. Well, what about the prophets? Jesus said that this was also taught in the prophets. Well, the Bible is filled with examples of this. That is why the Old Testament is so frequently quoted in the New. It all fits together. Isaiah 53:5:

“But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.”<sup>16</sup>

Who would have predicted 700 years before these events actually occurred that the Messiah would somehow have stripes that had to be healed and would, in turn, heal someone else of their sin. And Peter never got over that, which is why he wrote in 1 Peter 2:24:

“...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”<sup>17</sup>

That is part of what made Peter such a confident servant of Christ. See, he was convinced that the ministry that God had given him, the commission that God had given him was based on truth. It had been predicted hundreds and in some cases thousands of years before, the Psalms. This takes your breath away to study the messianic psalms.

I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Peter 1:18-19.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:17.

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 53:5.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Peter 2:24.

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 16:8-10.

The bodily resurrection of Christ was prophesied in the Psalms. And if you have chosen not to trust Christ as Savior and Lord, I would just have to ask you this morning: What in the world are you waiting for? How much more evidence could you possibly need than that?

Jesus' point is it is great to be able to touch me. It is great to watch me consume a piece of fish to prove that it is real, but ultimately your joy and peace need to flow out of the fact that you are building your life on the foundation of the fulfilled Word of God. And if you had a time this week where your desires were taking you one way or your culture was directing you in a particular fashion, but the Word of God said you ought to go that other way and you chose to do what God's Word said anyway, but you didn't feel like it and so the world mocked you when you did, if you chose to do right, you were strong and you were building your life on the rock of truth of the Word of God.

That is why Peter would say:

For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased" — and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.<sup>19</sup>

Amen and amen. That is why a lot of people around here have decided if God's Word says it I am all over it. I am just all over it. Which would make me want to ask you a question or two. And you would want me to, wouldn't you? Yeah, absolutely. If you have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, I am glad you have made that decision. Now I want to ask you this. Have you ever followed him in believer's baptism? God's Word commands that to be the case. In fact, in the Great Commission which is part of this text identified more fully in Matthew 28:19 and 20 what God tells his disciples is that you are to go make disciples and then baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Why? Why is baptism by immersion as believers so important? It is because you are making a statement. You are saying that what I am trusting for my salvation is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. And if God's Word says that is what I do in order to obey Christ, I am all over it. And how long should it be between when God's Word tells you to do something and you get on it? How long should that be? Like two seconds. And if you believe or, remember, this text started with {?}. We believe, we

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<sup>19</sup> 2 Peter 1:16-21.

believe, we believe it. And then when Jesus showed up it was obvious they didn't really believe it. And there will be people who come to this church and they say they believe things. They don't believe things, because you don't really believe something until you get on it. Have we all got that? Until you get on it. And I would just encourage you... Now I am not pushing, because that is not my way. But I would encourage you. If you have never followed the Lord in believer's baptism that you get on that like right now, because you are identifying with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

While we are on that {?} you know, God's Word says very, very clearly if you know Christ then you should identify yourself with a local church. The Bible doesn't know anything about a person who says they are a follower of Christ, but they are not identified with a local church. They have the accountability of the body, the love of the body, the teaching of the body, the fellowship of the body and Martin Luther was right when he said that if you say you have God as your Father, you ought to have the Church as your mother. That is right. If you take the local church out of the New Testament, you do not have a New Testament anymore. And I would encourage you to take steps towards joining this church or another good church. There is plenty of good ones in this town. But if God's Word says it and if it really is as reliable as we are seeing this morning then I would encourage you to get in the habit of if God's Word tells me to do something, I am going to be all over it.

In fact, we are starting an intro to faith class which is a prerequisite for membership around here this coming Wednesday night. I think God may want you to be in it. And if he wants you to be in it, then I want you to be in it, too, because that is my job is to help you do what God wants. And we have a couple of church family nights left this year where you could be baptized or you could become a member and I want to encourage you to do that. The resurrected Christ is worth that kind of a statement by every person who says they are one of his followers.

Now lastly you can have peace and joy because of the power of the resurrection. This passage ends with a marvelous mission that is given to all of us who name the name of the resurrected Christ. This is something that is to be proclaimed. Don't you love that? God wants us to proclaim this. He wants us to be witnesses of this, because it leads to a hopeful message.

What I am talking to you about this morning is known in the Word as the gospel, the good news. We are not going to let other things get in the way of the proclamation of that message.

You say, "Man, I thought you have a little something about politics today."

I don't have time for politics today, because we are talking about the gospel. We will talk about politics some day when we don't have something important to talk about. And we are talking about the proclamation of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. And, friends, it leads to a life changing message. When you trust Christ there is repentance. You turn around and the persons that you are talking to turn around.

I received an email this week from a young girl from another city. She is a teenager now and she was talking to me about how things are going in her life. The reason that story is so important is my first contact with her was when she was three years old in one of the children's ministries here at this church. And she was brought here by her mother who was so drunk that the children's ministry worker could tell it, not just by smelling it on her breath, but watching it in her behavior. And I am not telling you something that that mother has not subsequently reported to this church. She was a person just visiting from the community. And that children's worker had enough love for the little girl and concern for her and love for that woman that she sat down and talked with that mom. And that mom broke down and said, "Yes, she is struggling with that, alcohol." Many times would actually fall over drunk in her own home, passed out with her little three year old. And after some help. And this children's worker asked me, listen. Can you work with this mom, but can I be there, too, because I want to learn how to work with her and I want to provide all sorts of additional accountability and love and I want to see if Jesus Christ really is who he says he is. And God dramatically changed that mom's life and now that three year old is a teenager at a public high school in another city and she was reporting to me that she is now part of a club at her school of young people who have made a public commitment that they are going to be alcohol and drug free throughout their high school experience. And she wanted to talk to me about how well things are going in her life. That this because of a child's worker who believed in the power of the resurrection.

And if what I said earlier this morning... We have so many people who are coming to our church now, that is putting a bit of a stress on some of our children's ministries. That is good, is it not? Absolutely it is. But for some of you that means it is time to step up. God has given you some abilities. You can work with children. You can listen to a verse. You can watch them color. How hard is that?

And I want to encourage you. You say, "Well, I am already in an ABF." Good. I would encourage you to do that, too. I would encourage you to become a three service Christian here. What I mean by that is you come to worship, you are in an ABF and you also serve in one of our children's ministries.

You say, "Three services?"

That ain't nothing compared to the four I am in. So I don't feel too awful badly about asking you to do the exact same. And the day that I decide that Jesus isn't alive is the day I will stop doing my thing and then you can stop doing yours. And I am just asking you to consider opportunities. And I would encourage you to touch base with {?} like now and ask him about some of those opportunities and jump into serving the Lord because you really believe that Jesus Christ is alive. It is a message of forgiveness of sins and it leads to a universal message the text says. And I am so out of time in speaking at that other service, I have to get there. But, friends, aren't you glad that Jesus is alive? Pretty fired up about that. And I hope you have got the right color jersey on and I hope you are going to joyfully play on that team all through the week, because you really believe your Savior is alive.