

Written Copy: Luke 24:44-49-It's All Part of His Story

Ascension Day (Celebrated)

Memorial Day Weekend: Sunday, May 24th, 2020

Text: Luke 24:44-49

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Exegetical Statement

Jesus has fulfilled the salvation plan of God that has been in the works since the Fall. The capstone of this is His resurrection. The disciples have seen the proof, the empty tomb. He has appeared to them, talking with them, showing Himself to them, showing His wounds, inviting them to touch Him so they can be assured He has risen bodily and spiritually. He has breathed on them and given them the Holy Spirit. Through the power and understanding of the Spirit He now opens their eyes to understand and see that all that has happened to Him was necessary for the salvation to be won for mankind. His suffering and death, as awful as they were, were all part of the plan from the beginning, part of the salvation story that are the Scriptures. He opened their minds to see the big picture from the Father's and His point of view. He did this so that they would be prepared to proclaim this story and explain how Jesus suffering and death were all part of the victory shown in His resurrection. They would stand as eyewitnesses of these events whose preaching, and teaching would form the authoritative text by which the Church would do its work. But they would not do this work alone, they would be empowered by the presence of the Spirit who would come upon them in a more powerful way 50 days later. Through that power the ir proclamation-the Gospel Message- hearers would be moved to repent and receive complete forgiveness of their sins as the Spirit came upon them as well. In the past 40 days He had suddenly appeared, and then disappeared just as suddenly. But this time He was leaving them to return to the place from which He had come as God the Son. But he returns before their eyes as the God Man, to rule over all things at the side of the Father. He goes to rule over the work of the Church that is to come. When He left them to go to the cross, His disciples were sorrowful and scared. This time, seeing the bigger picture, they worship Him. And given the promise of His return in the same manner they had seen Him go, they rejoice as they head back to Jerusalem to await His promise of power from on high, to equip them for the work of proclaiming the Gospel that Jesus commanded them to finish.

Focus Statement:

Despite how His suffering and death looked to the disciples, things were never out of God's control. What happened was necessary for the salvation and forgiveness of sins for all mankind. Jesus opened the eyes of His disciples to see that salvation plan spanning throughout the pages of Scripture. He fulfilled that plan. He Has ascended and is ruling on behalf of His Church despite how things may look to us right now. He is still in control

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Our view of COVID-19 is that it's a mistake, something not planned by God, but that He must deal with and correct. He's just barley in control of things. And our lives hang in the balance, all depending on what we do or do not do.

What the hearer should do as a result:

See COVID-19 as a part of Christ's ruling the whole earth on behalf of the Church. See it as fulfilment of prophecy leading up to His promised return. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us proclaim the ascended ruling Christ in the midst of Pandemic

Subject Sentence: We live through the playing out of His Story

Introduction: What is Your Story?

So, what's your story? Ten years from now, as you look back, what are you going to tell your children and grandchildren, those who were not old enough to remember COVID-19 and Shelter at Home? What kind of story might you tell them? Will it be a scary story? An inspirational story? How might that story explain how life changed for everyone 10 years later? What might be the things you mention to those who never experienced COVID-19? How might you finish this sentence: "Back before the Pandemic we used to..."? How might you see life differently in the years to come?

How do you view the Pandemic as part of your story right now? Certainly, as a tragedy. A time when life changed for people all over the world. Something you wish never had to be. Perhaps as a nightmare that you wish you could wake up from and it would be all gone. Perhaps something that was not supposed to happen. A mistake that someone made in a lab in a foreign country, or the results of improper food storage, hygiene, or even diet. Do you see your suffering now as the result of somebody's negligence in both its origination and its spread across the globe?

How is it part of God's story? Do we ever see it that way? Should we? Doubtless you seen the clever phrase that "history" is actually "His Story", meaning God's story. We also like to say, "Everything happens for a reason." We usually say this not only to affirm that what happens in our life is not just random thoughtless chance, but that God is doing something through what we must sometimes suffer. When we wonder "Why God let this happen to me?" we are really contemplating how God's story has been brought to bear and intersected with our story.

God's Story through the Scriptures

That God has a story can certainly be seen in the Scriptures. His story as far as mankind is concerned begins at Creation. His Spirit moved Moses to record the opening chapter showing how carefully He worked at creating all things, breaking it all down so we can see His work, day by day. And at the end of each day, everything was good. Then, on the sixth day, after creating man and women in the image of the Triune God, everything was very good. We see this story move from the perfection of Creation to the ruining of that perfection in the Fall. We see God come and interject Himself into this story to forgive fallen man, and care for His fallen creation. While there are curses to be given, there is the promise of redemption to come. And even though life will now be difficult, we see Him provide the means to carry on.

We see mankind, despite God's love and care, move away from God to serve themselves and their own sinful hearts. When there is only one family left that calls upon Him in faith, He acts to destroy the rest of the world, while at the same time acting to save Noah and His family. This is God's plan to save creation from totally falling away. When the flood subsides, we see Him bless the remaining animals and humans to repopulate the earth, in order to continue His story. Yet mankind in their story wanders away from faith in Him.

While His story and His hand were still at work throughout the world, the Spirit directs Moses to narrow down the record of His story to one man, Abraham, and Abraham's descendants. God's story shows how He miraculously built from one elderly couple, too old to have children, a nation to call His own. He cared for them and promised them the land in which they were living as temporary residents would one day be theirs. A famine came, all part of God's story. He sent them to live in Egypt where their long-lost brother had gone before them, all part of God's plan, God's story. And through Him provided for them, the people of Egypt, and surrounding nations during this severe famine. He showed Himself to be the God who cares and provides for His people, for all people.

They remained there 430 years, eventually becoming enslaved. Life was extremely hard for His people. But this was all part of God's story. He used this enslavement to show Himself as a mighty a Savior and Redeemer. He proved to Israel and Egypt alike that He alone is the only God, protecting His people from the plagues which Egypt had to suffer, including the final plague, death of all the firstborn male children. He moved stubborn unbelieving Pharaoh to acknowledge that the God of Israel must be obeyed, and so commanded they leave, giving them gifts, so that they left not as slaves but as conquering heroes.

Then He moved Pharaoh to change his mind and chase after them, thinking he could bring back his slaves. Israel panicked and accused Moses and God of bringing them out to the wilderness to die. But this was all part of God's plan, God's story. He showed them He is the Mighty Redeeming God as He saved them through the waters of the Red Sea, while using those same waters to kill the Egyptians, so they never again would have to worry about them. Just as with Noah and his family, God showed Himself to be the God who forgives His sinful people, saving them even though they doubt Him.

God led His people to Mt. Sinai and gave them His laws to live by. They promised to do so, but repeatedly failed. He gave them the sacrificial system by which He communicated His grace and forgiveness. He provided Manna in the wilderness, bread from heaven out of love for His people. They returned His love by often complaining and rebelling. Still, He forgave them.

He led them through the wilderness and gave them the Promised Land, providing them with victory over those who were living there. Despite all this they repeatedly disobeyed Him and turned away from Him, from obeying His laws, from His means of grace and the Sacrificial System. He allowed them to be afflicted and attacked by their neighbors so that they, in fear and sorrow, would turn back to Him. All part of His story intersecting with theirs. He forgave them, sending them prophets and judges to call them back to faith and lead them to live as His people again.

When they cried out for a king, He gave them a king. King after king. Most turned away from Him and led the people to follow their own stories that veered away from God. But one stood out: the man after God's own heart, King David. He set the standard for all who would come after him. While King David was not perfect, he was repentant, and through Him God showed what it means to be a man after His own heart. As king after king

struggled and failed to live up to David's example, God sent prophet after prophet to call them back, to bring them back in line with His story, Then finally, when His patience had run out, He allowed their nation to be destroyed and the people taken away as captives. Still, He was at work. It was all part of His story.

After 70 years had passed, He allowed a remnant to return to the Promised Land. He encouraged them and helped them to rebuild the city, it's walls, and the temple. When they began to stray again, He sent the Ezra the priest, Nehemiah the governor, and other prophets to call them back. From that time on, they remained under control of one world superpower or another. But God had promised them that one day, he would send a different kind of king, a descendant of David, who would be given an even greater kingdom than David had, one that would have no end. God had been at work throughout this whole story. He was preparing them for the coming of that Messiah, that Anointed One, the Christ. He was preparing them for the coming of His Son, Jesus.

Jesus Revealed "The Story" to His Disciples

Luke 24:44-46 ⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "**These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**" ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," Jesus opened their minds so they could see that their whole history was God's story playing out, preparing them for His coming. The promise of **Genesis 3:15** "**I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**" was fulfilled in His birth. The sacrifice of the perfect spotless lamb on the night of the first Passover in Egypt, whose blood saved Israel's firstborn from the angel of death looked forward to and found its power in His blood, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. All of the subsequent offerings Israel made as part of the Sacrificial System found their fulfillment in the blood Jesus shed on the cross. All part of God's plan, His story.

The promise given to King David in **2 Samuel 7:12-13** ¹² **When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.** ¹³ **He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.** That promise is fulfilled in Jesus. God playing out His story. As Isaiah foretold: **Isaiah 9:6-7** ⁶ **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** ⁷ **Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.** Jesus is this promised child who is Himself the Mighty God in human form. He is the king who established His eternal kingdom by giving the ultimate sacrifice on the cross to open the door wide for all mankind to enter. To win them from the kingdom of the devil by upholding justice, fulfilling the debt that sin called for. And he earned for them

the right to stand before God and live in His kingdom. He made us good enough by giving us His perfect obedience. All of this part of God's glorious plan. His story.

Jesus had to suffer as Isaiah describes: **(Isaiah 53:4-6) "4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned---every one---to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."** All part of God's story, to save mankind, to save you from your going astray, and bring you back in line with God's story.

Jesus tried to explain to His disciples before He suffered His passion that all that was going to happen, as awful as it would be, is part of God's story. **(Luke 18:31-34) 31 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. 32 For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. 33 And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." 34 But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.** They did not understand, and could not understand, until Jesus (Luke 24:45) **45 ...opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** as they met with Him before His ascension. Then they began to see and to understand. All that Jesus had to suffer, and His death, wasn't a terrible mistake. It was God working out His plan that began in the Garden long ago. His story. His plan of salvation. And it had reached its fulfillment in Jesus' death and resurrection. God kept pressing upon mankind His story because (John 3;16-17) **16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."**

What a mind-blowing event this had to be for these 11 men, to finally see their story in light of God's story. And this revelation changed them. Before, in the upper room when Jesus talked about leaving them, they were scared and sorrowful. Now they watch Him leave and are filled with joy. Now they know and believe that this is all part of God's story, the story of the redemption of all things. Christ had completed all that He came to do (Luke 24:46) **"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead."** Now He is returning to where He came from. And He returns as both the Son of God and the resurrected Son of Man. God still in human form. He returns be the King who rules over the whole earth. And from His exalted position at the right hand of God the Father He will oversee the remainder of God's story. **(Luke 24:47-48) 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.** They will not be alone in carrying out the rest of God's story. Neither are we. The Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus, who's coming is all part of God's story, is the power to keep that story moving, in your life and mine. The story that is the Gospel Message, through which the Spirit works to call all those who hear

and believe to become a part of God's never-ending story of life now and eternal life to come.

Finding Your Story in Jesus' Story

How is God's story intersecting with your story? For most of you it began in baptism and continues throughout the rest of your life. All that has happened to you happens because your story is uniquely and intimately intertwined with God's story through the indwelling Holy Spirit. You may not always see how this may be when bad things happen. We can only see what the Spirit reveals to us. Many times, we are left to trust by faith that He is at work, even when it may not look to be the case. But He is at work to grow your faith, to keep you in faith, and to prepare you as the Church to continue the work He left for us, to proclaim that Gospel.

He doesn't waste anything. And that includes our Shelter at Home time. Even though at times it may seem that this is a mistake, that God has forgotten us in the midst of this Pandemic, or that He is angry with us and punishing us, this is not the case. Look back to His story played out in the Scriptures. See how He has used the difficult times His people suffered through in the past for the good of their future. For the good of their faith. For the playing out of His story. His story that, through your baptism, has become your story

Conclusion

Ten years from now we will have a story to tell. We can explain how the Pandemic of 2020 changed our lives for now and forever. We can reminisce what life was like before it came and how much different it is after. But may the Lord show us how He has used this Pandemic to change us, to grow and strengthen our faith. May He show us how our story has become a part of His story. He is ruling on the throne while our story plays out, His loving us, His guiding us, His forgiving us. Him calling us back from focusing on our story to focus on His. By faith may we never lose sight that our story is always wrapped up in His. And our story has its grand finale in life everlasting. Amen.