

How to Grow Strong in the Faith, Part 2

Luke 9:42-45

April 21, 2019

All that is Grace Church is explained by the resurrection and the resurrection power. It's the power that raised Christ from the dead, conquered the grave, claimed victory over death itself. That's the power that saves people, literally, saves lives, saves and sanctifies, transforms people, making them into something that they never were, never could be by any other human solution.

That's the power of God, and that's what explains our church. It's what explains our church. We hear the power of God every time we read the Scripture. We hear the mind of God unfolded and unpacked. And that's what we want to turn our attention to this morning, is the mind of God revealed in the Scripture. So as we turn our attention to God's Word, I'd like

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to invite you to open your Bibles to Luke, Luke's Gospel, so Luke chapter 9, verses 37-45.

We're talking about resurrection this morning. Resurrection presupposes a death. Resurrection assumes that a death has occurred. Without death there is no resurrection from the dead. I think the logic on that is pretty sound. But while death is something we are all familiar with in our day, just this morning the news came out that over in Sri Lanka a bomber, bombers killed more than 200 people, suicide bombings. Hundreds more, hundreds more are injured. Probably the death toll will rise as they see the, try to clean up the churches and the hotels where people were killed. Death is a part of our world. Seems we can't turn on the news anymore without seeing some horrific act of death and destruction.

Death is something we're all familiar with in our time and our age. But resurrection, resurrection is something that is truly rare. The passage before us today in Luke chapter 9 is set in the world that we know. It's a world that is dominated by death, the fear of death, the sorrow of death.

But emerging from the shadow of death is the power of resurrection, and this passage, in a unique way, prefigures Christ's resurrection. It also highlights the necessary prerequisite to participate in his resurrection, which is faith. Faith. Saving faith is what's required to see and experience and participate in the resurrection. Faith is the key.

But again, you can't have a resurrection without a death, and so we've got to talk about death. That is the setting, actually, for Luke 9:37-45. It's a setting of death. It's the cruel, destructive power at work of the demonic. Look at it, there, in Luke 9:37:

"On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him," met Jesus. "And behold, a man from the crowd," crowd, "cried out, 'Teacher, I beg you, look at my son, for he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and it shatters him, will hardly leave him. And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.'

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Jesus answered, 'Oh, faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?'"

I'm going to ask you to stop there for a moment. At first glance, it appears that what is needed here is exorcism. Cast out the demon, and the problem is solved. But the need, here, goes way beyond that. The need, here, literally, is for life from the dead. This man's one and only son is literally being murdered as they speak by a demon. That's what the father's really describing in verse 39 in graphic detail, and he's using violent language to describe it, which we've studied already.

We learned from Mark's Gospel in addition to what we read here, the boy is also deaf and dumb. He's unable to hear, he's unable to communicate. His young mind is, is completely subdued by this demonic spirit that inhabits him. Matthew and Mark both say "the demon often used to cast him into fire and into water," literally to destroy him. So he's badly burned. He's nearly been drowned on a number of occasions because the demon's intention is to murder him.

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In fact, Jesus said, when he said, "Bring your son here," look at verse 42, it says, "While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit," and as he did, Mark 9:26 tells us that "after crying out, convulsing him terribly, the demon came out, but the boy was like a corpse." Most of the people in the crowd, a large crowd that day, said, "He's dead." "He's dead." Huge crowd of people.

At the time they're living, everyone there is familiar with death. They see it all the time. Death wasn't sanitized and hidden from public view like it is in our day, hidden in mortuaries and funeral homes and the like. People knew what death was. They knew what a corpse looked like. And they said, "He's dead." Notice verse 42 says Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, he healed the boy, and then he gave him back to his father, or as Mark put it, Jesus took that lifeless boy by the hand, he lifted him up, and he arose. That's resurrection language.

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Back in Luke 7, Jesus happened upon a funeral procession in the little village of Nain. There was a widow, there, who had lost her one and only son, and Jesus approached the funeral bier, he stopped the procession, he touched, he reached out, did something that was prohibited for Jews, he reached out and touched the bier and said to the dead son, "Young man, I say to you, arise." Immediately, that young man, that dead man "sat up and he began to speak." His mind is working. He's communicating, and Jesus "then gave him back to his mother."

In the next chapter, Luke chapter 8, Jesus visited the house of Jairus, a synagogue ruler, because his one and only child, a daughter in this case, she was dying. And as they headed toward the house, a huge crowd following them, the report came to Jairus, "Your daughter's dead. Don't trouble the teacher anymore." No hope. "Jesus hearing this answered him, 'Do not fear. Only believe, and all will be made well.'

"When Jesus arrived at the house, he entered into the little girl's room. He took her parents, three of his disciples with him, Peter, John, and James. And Jesus took her by the hand

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and called to her, saying, 'Child, arise.'" The text says, "Her spirit returned, she got up at once. Jesus then told them to give her something to eat. He restored her to her parents," her parents to her.

Again, here in Luke 9, Jesus is in this situation, raised this boy literally from the dead. He has snatched this boy's soul from the jaws of death. And he not only banished the demon, as we can see; he restored the boy's life. Luke tells us in verse 42, "He healed the boy." Fractures from being beaten onto the ground. He was healed. Charred, melted, scarred skin from fire, burns completely restored. Any injury that came from water entering into his lungs through all the spasmodic activity, any trauma, internal and external injuries, whatever damage that demon had caused in trying to kill him, everything's made whole.

But the healing isn't just about his physical body. It includes the restoration of a relationship. Again, Luke is sure to include, and he's the only one who includes this detail, verse 42, "Jesus gave the boy back to his father." He healed the boy's deafness, his muteness. He restored his ability to

communicate so that he could talk to his dad, so he could hear his dad's instruction, so he could learn from him. The son is restored to his father, returned to him. And the father is returned and restored to his son, relationship restored. This is Jesus' power.

And that's why, first part of verse 43, "all were astonished at the majesty of God." They saw the majesty of God. That's all that could explain this, the majesty of God and the authority and the power and the compassion of Jesus Christ to perform what is really a multi-faceted miracle, here. It's a resurrection miracle. This is life from the dead. It's a supernatural act of full and complete restoration.

Now having said that, I don't mean to be a killjoy, here. I don't want to throw a wet blanket on the joy of this resurrection miracle, but can I point something out? The son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus and his wife, the son of the father here in our text, in the course of time, they're all going to die. They're all going to die again.

In other words, resurrection miracles here before Christ's resurrection, only temporary. Restored them to a condition of living again, but it's still life in a fallen world. Death is still in effect. All three of these subjects are going to die again.

That's partly what's got to prompt Jesus' lament there in verse 41, "Oh, faithless and twisted generation. How long am I to be with you and bear with you?" In other words, "I'm not going to be physically present to raise all your sons and daughters from the dead. So if you refuse to be a believing generation, if you turn away from faith, you're doomed to die. Not just dying physically. I'm talking about something more profound. I'm talking about dying spiritually. I'm talking about what comes after this life. I'm talking about your eternity."

Folks, our, our world is having a hard, hard time, denying the immaterial nature of humanity. They can't explain evil in the world. They can't explain what goes on in the heart and the soul of mankind. They can't explain it in material terms. They

are struggling and grasping for answers and coming up with all kinds of ridiculous nonsense to explain what it is to be human.

But you and I know in our heart of hearts, we know for certain that this life is not all there is. We know for certain that there is life beyond the grave. Jesus is coming, not just to raise little boys and girls, as beautiful of a picture as that is of his compassion, his mercy, his power. He's coming to raise people for the rest of eternity, to give them life, to escape death.

And that's why we're seeing in this text that Jesus wants to help us here to see that faith is the key. Believing is the key. Faith is the necessary prerequisite for seeing and experiencing and participating in the power of Christ's resurrection. His is a resurrection that does not avoid the grave. It goes through the grave and conquers the grave and comes out the other side, victor.

And that's why, as you may see there in your outline, in your bulletin, we need to consider the evidence of Christ's

glory in this event, in this resurrection power. But we need to reason through that evidence with a believing heart. We need to think about the proof and the evidence that's given to us with the eyes of faith.

Jesus' authority in rebuking the unclean spirit, his power in healing the boy, his compassion in restoring the boy to his father, all that evidence is only meaningful and confirming about who Jesus actually is to those who believe. If you do not believe, none of that evidence matters to you. Something has to be changed in you.

Also, we need to listen to the testimony to Christ's majesty. Even the unbelievers in the crowd, even the scribes who were there to accuse Jesus, to trip him up, to condemn him, to discredit him, even they couldn't deny his supernatural power. They're all astonished at the majesty of God in Christ. They bowed to the majesty they saw in Christ. But again, that's only going to register for you if you're reading and thinking about this with believing presuppositions.

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There are many today who consider the claims of Scripture. They read this book as if it's a human book only. They read with an anti-supernatural bias. They hear all of this that we're hearing with unbelieving, Christ-rejecting presuppositions. And I'm just telling you, folks, this is exactly what keeps them enslaved to sin, keeps them under the power of demonic influence.

And ultimately, it leads to the eternal pain and indignity of death. If you do not believe, unbelief means death forever. This couldn't be more serious. But belief, faith in God's Word, trusting in him, who he is, what he's communicated, it means life from the dead. It means resurrection forever.

And that takes us to a third point in our outline. If we're going to turn away from this twisted, unbelieving generation, which, as we can see in the world around us, is just filled with death and sorrow and sadness and pain, if we're going to turn away from this unbelieving generation we need to, number three, we need to reflect on the fulfillment of Christ's Gospel. We need to reflect upon the fulfillment of Christ's Gospel.

We need to listen to the plan of divine salvation, hear these Gospel words from Jesus Christ with the ears of faith. Have a look at verses 43-44. It says there, "While all were marveling at everything Jesus was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.'" Stop there.

"Let these words sink into your ears." Jesus is saying, You need to think deeply about this. He wants them to reflect on these words, which is really just a summary statement on the Gospel. The crowd is marveling at everything he's doing, and while they are marveling, while they're all aghast and in awe, Jesus wants to make sure his disciples don't miss the point. So he turns and says this to them.

And the contrast that Luke, the narrator, wants us to see is between what's seen by the crowd and what's heard by the disciples. It's a contrast between what's perceived with the eyes and then what's perceived by the ears, which in the Hebrew way of speaking, hearing refers to what they think about. It's

not just hearing; it's thinking about it. It's, it's what they come to understand. It's, it's then how they live in obedience to it.

The eyes of the crowd are on everything Jesus is doing. They're interested in the spectacle. But Jesus turns to his men, and he speaks the truth to the ears of his disciples. He calls their attention to what they can hear, what they can think about, what they can reflect upon. For "faith comes by hearing." So when Jesus gets a chance to speak to his disciples, when he turns to stabilize and strengthen their faith, a faith that had failed. A faith, they didn't have faith to cast out this demon, and they should have.

Jesus had commissioned them for that very purpose back in the beginning of Luke 9. He empowered them for that purpose. He gave them authority for that purpose. What was the disconnect? Why couldn't they cast out the demon for themselves? Because they didn't believe. They failed in faith.

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So he turns to strengthen their faith, and as he does so, he doesn't point to the public spectacle of that resurrection miracle, as important as it is. He doesn't say, Guys, don't you believe, yet? Didn't you just see? The boy raised from the dead? Look at him! See the power that that takes? I'm mighty.

No, he speaks words to them. He gives them sentences, prophetic words for them to hear, listen to, reflect upon. "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."

First, let's consider these words, words that really do constitute a second prediction of his crucifixion. Luke just gives us the summary, but they do take us back and remind us of what Jesus said the first time he predicted his death. Look at, back at verse 22 in Luke chapter 9. It says, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes."

That's the, basically the entire religious establishment, everybody who was important in that day and was admired and

respected. The elders, the chief priests, the scribes, they were all the people everybody aspired to be like. Jesus says, "The Son of Man must" be rejected by all of them, "and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

So as Luke repeats this in verse 44, he's summarizing those words here in verse 44, but he intends us, the reader, to go back to them in our minds, as we've just done. The other Gospel writers, at this very moment, they tell us that Jesus virtually repeated what he said the first time. Here's, here's what they say: "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and when he is killed, after three days, he will rise." That is virtually a restatement of what he said in verse 22.

So what are these words that Jesus gives them? We've said it's another prediction of his death and resurrection. That's what these words are. That's what he wants them to think about, and think deeply about.

Secondly, why does he want these words to sink into their ears? What is that about? It's an idiom, Hebrew idiom, really, saying, a saying, a, a colloquial expression. Literally, it's written this way: "Put these words into your ears. Place them there. Put them inside there." Or, really, then, Listen carefully, meditatively, reflectively. Think deeply about these words." You say, Well, I'm not a very deep thinker.

Well, you need to change. Jesus is saying, you need to change. You need to think more deeply about stuff. Not about all stuff, this stuff. Just one sentence. Think deeply about it. According to Hendrikson, Jesus is saying, "Pay close attention to what I'm about to tell you." Pay close attention, listen very carefully, store it up in your memory, roll it over in your minds, and take it to heart. That's the idea.

Well, why? Several reasons to reflect deeply upon Jesus' prophecy, here, of his rejection, and death, and resurrection. Let's start with the rejection. Why do we need to think deeply about Jesus' rejection? When Jesus had predicted his coming rejection, the disciples had a really, really hard time

believing it, because every sign had pointed to his widespread acceptance by the common people.

They loved him. He was popular. he was celebrated. People loved listening to him. They loved to see the comeuppance of the religious muckety-mucks as Jesus would embarrass them in public. They especially liked his works of power and mercy. They liked the feeding miracles. Free food is great.

Outwardly, there appears to be acceptance and wonder, but Jesus wants them to stop and understand that inwardly, these unbelieving people are soon going to reject Christ. They're going to call for his death. These are the very ones, actually, who are going to deliver Jesus over to suffering and death, death by crucifixion. What? How can that be? What makes the difference? Ah, the presence or absence of faith, that's what makes the difference.

Within six to nine months of speaking these words, Jesus is going to enter Jerusalem, and the crowds, they're going to greet them, Jesus and his disciples, they're going to greet him with

cheering. They're going to greet them with shouts of joy because they believed he was their Messiah, and in a political sense they really wanted him to rule the world because they are Jews. They wanted to rule with him, finally put their feet on the necks of the Romans for awhile.

They believed he would rule on the throne of his father David, that he would reign as king. Zechariah 9:9 told them what to look for when the Messiah truly came. Says, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you. Righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey." Not charging in on a stallion. No, humble, meek, riding on a donkey, the foal of a donkey, a colt.

According to Matthew 21:7 and following, it's exactly how he entered into Jerusalem. He came in riding on a donkey's colt, and it says, "Most of the crowd," they saw the sign, they recognized it, they "spread their cloaks on the road, others cut branches from the trees and spread them out on the road." That's why we celebrate Palm Sunday. "The crowds that went before him

and that followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" They sound like great Christian people. Less than a week later, those same people who cheered his arrival, praised his coming in the name of the Lord, they now rejected him and called for his blood.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, wanted to release Jesus. He found nothing after trying him, he found nothing to condemn him for, no offense whatsoever. And even Pontius asked the, the crowd, "What shall I do with this Jesus who is called the Christ?" Chief priests, elders, they persuaded the crowd already to ask for Barabbas, the murderer, the insurrectionist, and to destroy Jesus instead.

So they all answered back to Pilate, no doubt to his great surprise, the crowd answered, "Let him be crucified!" And he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" They shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw he's gaining nothing, rather that a riot is forming and beginning, which is anathema to the Roman governors, riots showed that they weren't ruling

well, he took water, washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it to yourselves." You know what the people said? "His blood be on us and on our children." Cover us in his blood. Interesting when you think about the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a covering for sin and sinners.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Jerusalem, with no personal or religious interest in Jesus, tries to persuade the crowds of Jesus' innocence, and the people want nothing to do with the truth. They are willing and eager to commit the greatest travesty of justice ever committed in all of human history, condemnation of the only truly innocent man in all of history.

Peter said, 1 Peter 2:22, "He committed no sin; neither was deceit found in his mouth." "He is," 1 John 2:1, "He is Jesus Christ, the righteous one." Pilate himself said, "I find no guilt in this man." The centurion who crucified Jesus and saw him die said, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

So this crowd in Luke chapter 9, who according to verse 43 are "astonished at the majesty of God," they're marveling at everything he's doing, not long from now they're going to reverse their judgment. They're going to reject Jesus. They're going to deliver him over to be crucified by the Romans, just as Isaiah 53:3 predicted, "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised, and we esteemed him not."

Now, at the very least, Jesus wants his disciples to look beyond the apparent acceptance of the crowds, all of them in awe over the spectacle of casting out demons. And he calls them to think more deeply about this popular rejection that's coming. Popular rejection points to the pervasive reality of what can only be explained by sin, the presence of sin, sin in our thinking, creating, creating such a tremendous inconsistency. Right judgment, on the one hand; unjust, unjust judgment, on the other hand.

Listen, this is, this is evidence, here, and Jesus wants them to think deeply about this. He wants his disciples to see

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that the rejection of the crowds that's coming, this is evidence of the pervasive reality of human depravity, of human sin, of human need. This is the need. This is what creates the death in the world. We have a sin problem, we can reverse, when we can reverse course and collectively condemn an innocent man, and in Jesus' case, he is the only innocent man. He is the only righteous one, holy, perfect before God in every way. We have got a very, very deep sin problem. Something's got to be done about it. So, "Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." He'll be rejected.

Why think deeply about Jesus' rejection? Because it reveals our deepest need. And our deepest need is to be forgiven of our sins. Scientists these days are trying to find all kinds of ways to, and I'm so thankful, you know, for trying to cure cancer and cure AIDS and cure diseases, I'm grateful for modern medicine, aren't you? But they're also just trying to, they're trying to find eternal life through science. Gene cloning, you know, cloning yourself, and, you know, die and then you have yourself, it wakes up in 5-50 years or whatever.

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Do you really want you to be cloned? I mean, when we know ourselves and our heart, really, do you really want that cloned? No. If society advances as we supp, you know, we keep on supposing, and we trust in the god of progress, we think science is going to save us, find us eternal life, the Holy Grail, and all that, if we did wake up in 50 years with a cloned version of ourselves, and if society did progress enough, they'd say, What is wrong with this thing? They'd want it gone, euthanize it.

Listen, science cannot produce eternal life. And even if it does, it's in a, that would be such a curse on the human race, to live forever with sin? To live forever with sin in the heart that keeps on corrupting everything, creating evil, creating bombings, creating torture, creating injustice pervasively throughout the world? Do we really think that that is the solution?

We need to understand this rejection of Jesus reveals our deepest need, to be forgiven of our sins, which brings us to the crucifixion. "Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered, delivered into the hands of men."

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He'll be crucified. He'll be put to death in the most painful, shameful, humiliating, excruciating manner of execution ever devised by the heart of sinful man.

It's a capital punishment that makes a statement. It's a kind of capital punishment that makes an example of the victim. To look upon that person who is shamed by being hung on a cross, and say, Boy, whatever he did, I don't want any part of that!"

Why think deeply about Jesus' crucifixion? Because the prediction of crucifixion points to the saving reality of the atonement. Jesus died to save sinners. Isn't that good news? He died to save sinners like me, like you. He's the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. That lamb imagery refers to his atoning sacrifice, dying as a substitute for the sins of the people.

And his prediction, here, of his atoning death is not new. As far back as Isaiah, writing 700 years before Christ, Isaiah 53:4-6, we've heard it this morning already, these amazing words, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;

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yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every single one of us—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

In the crucifixion, Jesus died to satisfy the just wrath of God. The justice of God is that everybody, if you want justice, if you want what's just and fair, justice means we get what our deeds deserve. You might not think that's bad, a bad deal when you compare man to man. When you compare man to God, you think about all that we've done to violate his holy standard, to violate his character, to offend him. If justice is getting what our deeds deserve, we're actually begging for something else, instead: mercy.

So Christ died to satisfy the wrath of God, the just wrath of God for our sins, to make propitiation for the sins of the people, Hebrews 2:17. That's what that word propitiation means. It means to appease the wrath of. It means to satisfy the

demands of an angry deity, to satisfy the demands of divine justice, to satisfy the demands of divine holiness.

"God put forward his one and only Son as a propitiation by his blood," Romans 3:25. "And in this is love," 1 John 4:10, "not that we've loved God," no, "but that he loved us, and that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This is what's theologians call the Penal Substitutionary Atonement. This is what the Bible teaches. It's, penal, in the sense that it's dealing with issues of justice before a court of law, God's court. It's, substitutionary, in the fact that Christ died in our place. And it's, atonement, in the fact that it's a covering, it's a shield from God's holy wrath.

Paul tells how this happens in 2 Corinthians 5:21, that God made the one who did not know sin, that's Jesus, to be sin for us. What's that? His atoning sacrifice, his substitution. "So that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Not just declared innocent, but to be declared righteous. Peter put it this way, 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to

God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." I love that phrase, "in order that he might bring us to God."

Jesus has been restoring sons to fathers and daughters to fathers. Three times we've seen it in Luke's Gospel, Luke 7, Luke 8, Luke 9. Brings the son back to his mother, brings the daughter back to her parents, brings the boy in our text back to his father. And he wants to die, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, to restore us to our Father. Well, this brings us to resurrection. He's been put to death in the flesh, but he's made alive in the Spirit. This calls for us to talk about resurrection. "Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." They'll kill him. When he's killed, "after three days, he will rise." So he's handed over to crucifixion. He is killed. He dies physically. And after death Jesus will rise from the dead.

So why do we need to think deeply about Jesus' resurrection? Why should those words sink into our ears? Jesus' prediction about the resurrection points to a triumph over

death. And notice it's predicted. This is prophecy. He tells them about it before it happens. Pretty bold, isn't it? He's certain. He rose from the dead to guarantee the hope of eternal life. 1 Peter 3:18, he's put to death in the flesh, but he's made alive in the Spirit.

The fact that he was made alive in the Spirit after three days in the grave, you know what that tells us? We can trust every single word he's spoken, everything he's spoken.

Everything that he affirms we can affirm, Old Testament, New Testament, everything in between. Wicked men who put Jesus to death, Acts 3:15, but God is the one who raised him from the dead. That means that God approved of the sacrifice. "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified," Peter said, Acts 4:10, "God raised from the dead."

Jesus once told Martha, the sister of Lazarus, he told her as she's grieving the death of her brother, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." After he declared that truth to her in John

11:25, Jesus asked Martha, a follow-up, a vitally important question, one that personalizes this for her. He says, "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." That is eternal life, right? "Then he turned to Martha and said, 'Do you believe this?'" "Do you believe this?" That's the question for all of us this morning. "Do you believe this?"

You've heard it said, probably said it for yourself, Seeing is believing, right? Seeing is believing, that is not what the Bible says. Many people saw Jesus, saw his power, saw his works of mercy, but they didn't believe in him. Seeing was not believing. They rejected him. They delivered him to be crucified.

No, the Bible says hearing is believing. "Faith comes from hearing," Romans 10:17, "hearing through the word about Christ." That's a fundamental spiritual principle, and it comes to us directly from Christ, right here. Faith does not come by seeing. It comes by hearing. Faith does not come by experience, but by

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knowing the truth, by understanding what you hear, then trusting the God who revealed that truth.

Let's put it in a way that confronts our, you know, the unbelief of our scientific age. Faith, I'll just say it this way, faith does not come by science. Rather, science comes by faith. Faith doesn't come by science. Science comes by faith. If you start with the words, "In the beginning God," Genesis 1:1, well that, now you have the theistic basis for all scientific investigation.

It is only by presupposing God that we are able to know anything at all. If you deny God, or you create a god in your own image and then, and worship that god, that is not the precondition for understanding anything. The precondition for understanding anything, all scientific investigation, all knowledge, all truth, all the treasures of wisdom and, and knowledge, are hidden in whom? Christ. You have to presuppose God. He, his reality, the reality of God and the essence of God, is the precondition for knowing all things.

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So believe his words are true words. Embrace them for yourself. "Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men. They'll kill him. When he's killed, after three days, he'll rise." So put those words into your ears. Meditate on them. Think about those words. Ponder them. And ask God to give you understanding of all those concepts because he will. He loves to answer that prayer, Yes! Test him in that.

Well, like the rest of the crowd, we, too, can see the evidence of Christ's glory and his authority, his power, his mercy in healing the father's son. We can listen to the testimony about the majesty of God in Christ. But what makes the difference is whether or not we combine our seeing and our listening with faith.

It is a heart of faith that makes all the difference. Which is, which is why we have to reflect on those words, words about the Gospel. And when we do, come to a fourth punt, point in our outline, here. We can, number four, rejoice in the unveiling of

Christ's mystery. We rejoice in the unveiling of Christ's mystery.

Now when I use the word mystery, I'm using it in a strictly biblical sense. Mystery is not talking about something mysterious, spooky, ethereal, unable to be known. Mystery, in a biblical sense, is talking about something that was hidden in the past, but now in Christ it's been made known. *Mysterion* is the Greek word, and it's, it means basically something that's held secret, something that's kept secret for a time.

But God doesn't intend to keep all those things secret forever. He unveils them, he unveils them progressively. There in verse 45, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man's about to be delivered into the hands of men." Then this in verse 45, "But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. They were afraid to ask him about this saying."

There's a repeated emphasis, there on "this saying." First, they didn't understand "this saying," and then they were afraid

to ask him about "this saying," repeated. And the saying is the one in verse 44, which is what Jesus said about the Gospel. It's repeated, then, not only in the statement, but two times: this saying, this saying. That saying is pretty important, okay. Just want, point that out. Keep that saying before your mind.

But they didn't understand this saying, they were afraid to ask him about this saying. They didn't understand the full import and impact of the Gospel, and they were afraid to ask him about the implications of those words in the Gospel.

They understood the words that Jesus used. In the parallel, Matthew 17:23, they were actually very, you know, greatly distressed about these words. They, no confusion about "being delivered into the hands of men," that that's a bad thing. They didn't take Jesus' words here as some kind of a metaphor and mystery of some spiritual reality that had nothing to do with his physical demise. They knew his death is, inament, imminent, and it troubled them.

But they didn't understand it. It didn't make any sense to them. And the problem was, first, it's not that they didn't understand the words themselves. They didn't understand what the words meant as it, in, in terms of a theological reality. They didn't understand what the future was. They didn't understand what he was pointing to. They didn't understand the reason for Jesus' rejection and death and resurrection. For them, they're thinking, We're on an upward trajectory toward glory! This makes no sense! They understand the words, the lexical meanings, but they didn't understand the meaning, the interpretation.

And secondly, the problem is, probably deeper than that, they were afraid to ask about it. They've been walking with Jesus two and half years. They're afraid? That indicates something deeply askew about their trust. The two problems are connected. The ignorance and lack of understanding, it comes from a heart of doubt about Christ. It comes from an insecurity in their relationship with him. Luke uses a verb tense, here, that indicates the confusion; it's a continuous state of mind for these disciples. So Jesus, here, is addressing their frame of mind, which is his deepest concern. Their weakness in believing, the inconsistency and instability of their faith, is

due to an element of unbelief that still affects their disposition even though they're his closest disciples, his closest friends.

The explanation for their failure to understand, the explanation for their fear in getting clarification, notice the explanation in the middle. It says, "It was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it." The question here is: Who or what is doing the concealing? It was concealed from them, so who's doing that? What's doing that? What's to account for it?

Three possibilities. Maybe it's the disciples who are responsible for the concealment of the truth. That is to say, maybe they have their preconceived ideas, their false notions of who the Messiah is, what he would come to do and accomplish. Maybe that's what's blinding them to the truth. Could their own expectations about the Messiah's trajectory toward glory and sitting on the throne of David and conquering the Romans. Did that prevent them from understanding, to cause the truth to be concealed with them, from them so they couldn't perceive it?

Certainly that is true. That is definitely true. But it's not the whole answer. We know that because in the middle of the verse, some grammar clarifies the meaning. It says, where it says, there, "It was concealed," that's more accurately translated, "it had been concealed from them," and then there's a purpose clause. The whole thing can be translated, "It had been concealed from them in order that they might not perceive it."

Listen, this is intentional. Maybe it's Jesus himself who's the concealer. But we can immediately dismiss that. That can't be true. He came to reveal, not to conceal. In fact, he's the one telling them about his rejection and crucifixion, resurrection. And in the final sentence, the onus is back on the disciples for not asking Jesus any further questions about it. It's they who are afraid to ask, not Jesus who's reluctant to tell them about it.

The only other possibility about who's intentional here, about concealing, is that God is the one who has concealed the full meaning of the saying from them in order that they might

not perceive it. Why would he do that? Why would God conceal? Short answer is this: God conceals things at times in the interest of fulfilling his eternal decree, to accomplish his saving purposes, according to his perfect wisdom. God sometimes conceals things. The Bible tells us that, Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever," but "The secret things belong to the Lord our God." There's a distinction, there. Proverbs 25:2, "It is the glory of God to conceal things." "It's the glory of kings to search them out, but it is the glory of God to conceal things."

So, yes, God does withhold things at times. At times he conceals and he covers. But he does so only in the interest of accomplishing the purpose of his, of his eternal decree, in order to reveal the secret, hidden things of old.

So here, in order to fulfill his sovereign purposes of salvation, according to the wise administration of his perfect providence, God chose to keep some things concealed from the disciples, even if only for a time. And at the same time, to

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accomplish his purposes, God used, to accomplish those purposes, the disciples' own wrong expectations about the Messiah. He works through their ignorance to fulfill his saving purpose in the Gospel. He made use of their, their fear. He made use of their distrust, their incomplete, imperfect relationships with Christ. He used all that as a means to accomplish their full restoration, to accomplish their complete salvation, to accomplish their eternal reconciliation to himself.

So God decreed, then God revealed, but not everything at once. God revealed the truth by degree, progressively in ever-increasing brightness according to his will. We see that. If you read from the Old Testament to the New, you see a progressiveness to his revelation, increasing glory, ever-increasing brightness.

But having said that, the disciples' refusal to press further, to ask about what they didn't understand, that's on them. Their fear and distrust is the reason for their own ignorance. Think about it. In light of who Jesus is, in light of who Jesus has shown himself to be so consistently, is there any

good reason for the disciples to be afraid to ask him about anything?

Listen, the fault is in us when we don't draw near to Christ, right? When he tells us, Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden," why do we hesitate? Why do we draw back? Our reluctance to ask questions of the one who describes himself in that context as "gentle and humble in heart," it reveals something about us, not about him. It reveals our sin. It just points to how desperately we need Christ.

The fact that these disciples lacked understanding, verse 45, that the meaning was concealed, that they lacked perception, they declined to ask any further on account of their fear, this is illustrating Luke's point in this whole text. The disciples, then, like all of us now, we need to listen carefully, deeply, often to Jesus Christ, and it needs to come from a listening of faith, of believing, of trusting the one who spoke. We need to gaze upon his majesty. We need to meditate deeply on his words, listen to his sayings. We need to listen predetermined

orientation of belief. And when we do, we're going to find ourselves grow in the knowledge and understanding of the truth.

We will find the meaning of Scripture revealed to us wide open. We'll gain greater spiritual perception, and that will encourage us to keep coming to Christ, to keep asking our questions, to get help with all of our needs because the more we learn about him, the more we see there is no reason to fear, and every reason to run to him. We'll see him as he is, as our Savior and our friend, our merciful High Priest, our gracious Lord.

Now for the disciples, here, they could not discern all that we've just been talking about until after the death, and the burial, and the resurrection, and you know what? For those disciples who believed, they were there to see his resurrection glory. One disciple who heard this at the time was Judas Iscariot. He never believed. He was not there to see Christ's resurrection glory. But the rest were. All the evidence they saw, all the testimony they heard, all the words they didn't understand, everything became clear to them in perfect

congruity, perfect harmony, perfect fulfillment, no contradiction whatsoever.

You know what's interesting? Everyone who witnessed the rejection, the suffering of Christ, everyone witnessed that, believer and unbeliever alike. Everyone saw his crucifixion. Everyone heard what he said on the cross, watched him die, believers and unbelievers alike. Believers and unbelievers alike knew where his body was buried, where they'd laid his dead body in the tomb. Only believers saw the resurrected Christ. Jesus only showed himself to those who believed. God kept his resurrection glory hidden from the unbelieving mind.

We've said this before, but God does not dance to the tune of unbelief. He does not perform for the sake of those who reject and who do not believe. He is under no obligation to reveal anything to anyone. He's God; we're his creatures. He is under no obligation especially to those who doubt and reject and scorn and scoff.

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God has given everyone the creation of the heavens and the earth and the world and all that it contains. Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky above proclaims his handiwork." Paul tells us, "What can be known about God is plain to all people because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made, so that everyone is without excuse."

Listen, when you walk around the mountains, these Rocky Mountains, is there any question that God did that? God has put creation here. Creation makes his power and nature known to mankind. And so many in their pride, in their love of their sin, they suppress that truth in unrighteousness. They know it to be true. They do. They're just playing games. They just won't admit it.

But for those who humble themselves before the manifest glory of God, for those who see all that he has made and who listen to all that he's revealed in Scripture, who hear the

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words, who listen to Christ, well, the evidence confirms his testimony to the truth. They will see, they will hear, they will understand the truth. And the truth, beloved, will set you free.

At the beginning of the service this morning, we heard the testimony of the Apostle Paul from 1 Corinthians 15. He said, "I delivered to you of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures," and then this, make sure this is a part of your Gospel presentation, "that he appeared."

And then it gives a list. "He appeared," number one, "to Cephas, that's Peter. Number two, "he appeared to the twelve." Number three, "he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom," as of Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 15, were "still alive, though some have fallen asleep," meaning they've died in Christ. Number four, "he appeared to James." "Then," number five, "to all the Apostles." And then number six, "last of all to one untimely born," Paul says, "he appeared to me, also."

You know that not one unbeliever is in that list of resurrection appearances? Not one. You can go back through all the Gospel narratives, you can survey the entirety of Scripture, and you can confirm for yourself that Jesus did not demonstrate his resurrection glory to the unbelieving, to those who were not his disciples.

That kind of seems counterintuitive to us, doesn't it? I mean, if you wanted to prove that you were risen from the dead, don't you think you'd walk right up to Pontius Pilate and say, Greetings! Or walk into the Sanhedrin meeting, all those rabbis and scholars and everything else, and say, Hello, there, fellas! Remember me?

Think about the effect of Christ showing up after his death by crucifixion to all those unbelievers, scribes, experts in the religious law, who said, Can't happen. Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, elders of Israel, Pontius Pilate, Roman soldiers, and all the rest, the jeering crowds. Wouldn't his resurrection appearance overcome their unbelief? No, it would not. Jesus

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raised three children from the dead during his earthly ministry, and the crowds who witnessed him do that powerful work and miracle still called for his blood.

Jesus illustrated this principle in the story he told once relating a conversation between father Abraham and a rich man who had died and was now suffering in torment. The moral of the story? More than resurrection proof is required. All evidence requires the eyes of faith and the ears of faith to interpret it correctly.

In the story, the rich man asked Abraham to send poor, a poor believer, a believer named Lazarus, who had died and was now in Abraham's bosom, and this rich man is suffering in torment. And he's worried about his five brothers, who have, like him, rejected Christ, rejected truth, rejected God's way. He says, "'Abraham," send, "send Lazarus down to my brothers so he can," so he can, "warn them lest," they become, "they come into this place of torment.'" And Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.'" You know what Abraham's saying? They've got a Bible. Let them read it. "He said, 'Oh,

no, father Abraham, but if someone goes from the dead, they'll repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

More than resurrection proof is required. There is a more basic, primary, fundamental miracle that must happen first, before you see the miracle of the resurrection. It's the miracle of regeneration. The Holy Spirit must cause you to be born again. He must give you a new nature, so that you have eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart that will believe and understand. It's that miracle of regeneration that leads to your faith, that leads to your justification by faith, that leads to your conversion. That's what has to take place first.

In light of Jesus' resurrection glory, those who do believe, for whom that miracle has taken place, by God's amazing grace, those who believe, they can go back now, they can understand the meaning of his rejection, suffering for sins. They can understand the meaning of his crucifixion and death.

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They can understand the true glory of his resurrected life, as Paul told the Corinthians, "We, when we speak, we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, but as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.' These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit."

Prerequisite condition for seeing, experiencing, and participating in Christ's resurrection, beloved, prerequisite is to believe. You must believe. Faith is the key. And for those who believe in Jesus Christ, it becomes our birthright to investigate everything thoroughly and reflect deeply upon what is revealed to us.

And it becomes our joy. It becomes our bread, our meat to learn fully so we can do everything that Jesus caught, taught and commanded to us. We can walk in the wisdom of God. We can speak about him, show forth the glorious mystery of Christ, talk

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about this saving Gospel. That's what we get to do. That's our privilege, and that's the honor that is bestowed upon us. That's the meaning of Christ's resurrection power and glory, and as Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." The essential question for you, today, on this Resurrection morning, is put to you by Jesus himself. "Do you believe this?" Do you? I pray that you do. Let's bow in prayer.

Our Father, we thank you so much for this day of celebration, reflection, our joy in understanding what you have given us from your truth. We thank you for the beauty of Christ. We thank you for the, the beauty of this saving Gospel. We pray that if there is anybody here who does not know you, that they would see you for who you really are, high and holy and lifted up, that you are the Creator, you are the Law-Giver, and you are the Judge, that they would understand that they themselves have never kept your law, they have not obeyed your truth.

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They've broken your Ten Commandments in thought, word, and deed. They've not loved the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. They've not loved their neighbor as themselves. And that makes them guilty sinners before you, deserving of your wrath and judgment and punishment.

But we pray, Lord, that you would not leave them there, in the terror of your wrath, just and holy as it is. We pray, then, that you would follow through with saving grace, that you would lead them with clear, believing vision to Jesus Christ, to see him for who he really is, to hear his teachings, his sayings, his truth, his Gospel, that they might combine hearing with faith and so be saved.

We pray that you would lead them into faith in Christ and repentance from all of their sins, that you would wash them clean and set them before you, reconciled to you, Father, with Jesus Christ their brother leading them into fellowship, into relationships with you. We thank you for this resurrection truth, this Gospel of resurrection and the power of the resurrection, demonstrating your approval of Christ's sacrifice

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for all those who believe. We pray that you would save and sanctify many. In Jesus' name, amen.