

I've provided two things to help you benefit from this Sunday's message. First, a summary of the sermon and then after that, several discussion questions. I hope they are helpful!

### **Sermon Digest**

January 10, 2021

*Reasons for Confidence*

We are looking at Luke 24:44-49.

This text comes at the end of a long argument Luke is making. Throughout this gospel, Luke has been demonstrating that God has a plan to save and that He has acted in time to provide that salvation through Jesus, and he's been telling us all that, because he really wants us to believe it.

Underline believe it.

Because Luke not only wants you to know the gospel, that's not enough, he wants you to be confident about it, to be certain.

The problem is, of course, that's the hard part. It's easy to know the facts of the gospel, but sometimes it feels hard to be certain about because the world we are living in is a mess. In fact looking at this world, people might ask us, how can we be certain God's acted through Jesus and is going to act through Jesus. The truth is maybe we even ask ourselves, what reasons do we have for confidence when the world looks the way it does right now?

**Today I want you to see three reasons you can be confident God has acted through Jesus so that you will be motivated to proclaim and make great sacrifices to take the gospel out.** And the third reason is really the key. As we look at this text, they are all important, but in terms of this text, the third is really the main point. The first two are just to set you up so you can feel its impact.

First, you can be confident because of the resurrection. This is the context for these verses. In chapter 24, Luke's explaining why you can be sure about Jesus in spite of the fact he died on the cross. Yes, he made great claims. And then yes, he died a terrible death. But then he got up. And, if someone defeats death, that's a pretty good reason for believing their claims no matter how impossible they might seem at first, which is why the world has to fight so hard against the resurrection. They come up with all sorts of objections. But, if you look at what Luke says happened after Jesus died, you know one thing for sure, there is no way Jesus' followers were making this up. They weren't expecting it. They didn't believe it at first even after it happened. And they didn't understand the significance when they did realize it had happened. The only explanation for the disciples preaching the resurrection is the resurrection.

In fact, that leads us to a second reason you can be confident about God's plan, the birth of the church. We sometimes take the church for granted. But, while the resurrection seems impossible to us, you know what also seemed impossible? The

apostles actually going out and preaching the gospel to the nations. At the end of Luke, Jesus is calling them to a huge job, to be witnesses, and yet like Israel before them, up to this point they seem like they are going to be deaf and blind witnesses. We really have no reason to think they can do this. But in these verses Jesus prophesies that they will go out and take the gospel to the nations, and you know what? They did. It happened just like He said it would and what's more, it all happened the way God in Scripture said it would happen .

And this is the third reason for confidence. And in terms of Luke 24:44-49, this is the key to the whole passage. The resurrection is a reason for confidence, the birth of the church is a reason for confidence, and **Scripture itself** is a reason for confidence. What gives us confidence is that Jesus didn't just come and die and rise again and do all this stuff, what gives us confidence about God's plan is that God in every part of the Old Testament told us what He was going to do through Jesus before He did it.

We might feel like our situation right now is more confusing than that of the apostles, but really? The cross was pretty confusing for them while it was happening. But should it have been? No. Why? In Scripture, God told them what was going to happen before it happened. In Luke 24, you know what else was confusing for the disciples, the resurrection. But should it have been? No, because God told them what was going to happen before it happened. And you know what else was confusing for the disciples, the birth of the church. But should it have been? Again, no! Because God told them what was going to happen before it happened.

Do you get the point? The disciples weren't struggling with uncertainty and confusion because of their circumstances. It was because they weren't understanding the Scriptures and they weren't really listening to Jesus. And so often the same is true for us. If we are struggling with certainty about God and His plan, it's not simply because our circumstances are so confusing right now. Ultimately, it's because we're not believing or understanding the plan of salvation God's laid out in Scripture, and so what do we need to do?

We need to go to Jesus. Jesus is the solution in this text. He opened their eyes. How do we go to Jesus today for certainty? You go to Jesus by going back to His Word and asking Him to open your heart so that you can understand the plan of salvation that's described there, and then you work at learning the story of Jesus as it's described in the Bible, and then you stop making excuses and exercise your faith.

And we need faith!

We really need confident faith.

As we look at the year ahead I'm praying, God will give us the ability not just to know and understand God's plan of salvation but to believe and be certain about what he's doing through Jesus. We have reasons for confidence in God's plan. And we need to be confident.

To paraphrase something Spurgeon once said, “nothing but faith can save this twenty first century; nothing but faith can save Orange County: nothing but faith can save the present unbelieving church: nothing but firm faith in the grand old doctrines of grace, and in the ever-living and unchanging God can bring back to the church again a full tide of prosperity, and make her to be the deliverer of the nations for Christ: nothing but faith in the Lord Jesus can save you or me. The Lord give you, my brothers, to believe to the utmost degree, for his name’s sake! Amen.”

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. We are looking at a passage that comes at the end of Luke which is kind of a conclusion to the whole book and an introduction to Acts. That means it helps to remember what Luke is about as we consider this particular text. What three big truths did we say Luke wants us to know and what is his goal or purpose in sharing all that with us?
2. In other words, you might say Luke wants us to leave this book changed how, specifically?
3. One word you could use to describe the particular quality he wants to produce in us is the word certain or confident. Why is that quality so important for us as Christians? How would you describe what it means to be confident or certain about God’s plan of salvation through Jesus?
4. We might feel like we have many reasons for being uncertain about God’s plan. But what are some reasons the people to whom Luke is writing might have possibly given for their uncertainty? Specifically, what happens in chapter 23 that would have caused them to wonder and why?
5. What three reasons did we discuss that we have for being certain God is accomplishing His plan through Jesus in spite of the way things might appear? Can you explain each one in your own words? Why should each of those reasons produce confidence? What was the most significant reason in terms of this particular text?
6. I want you to take a moment and think about the birth of the church. In what way does the fact that there is even a church demonstrate God’s ability to fulfill His plan in spite of how things appear?
7. What connection does Jesus make between his life and the Old Testament in this passage? Preach that a little. Why is that amazing? What does that tell you about the mystery that has been revealed to us in the gospel? According to Jesus, what was the reason for any uncertainty in the apostles about the cross and what God was doing through Him?
8. We can get so focused on the things we are confused about that we fail to step back and appreciate what God’s given us. God has revealed His plan for solving the problems of the universe and we know it. It’s awesome! For thousands of

years God has been slowly but surely revealing more and more about how He is going to accomplish salvation through Jesus, and while we are not at the end yet, in heaven, looking back, we are extremely privileged in that we have seen so much and so much has been revealed to us about exactly how God is accomplishing His plan through Jesus. What difference do you think really believing that will make on the way we think, feel and act as a church?