

The Prescription for Life: The Message of the Empty Tomb

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[0 : 00] Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they prepared.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

As they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen. Remember how he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of God must be delivered to the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and on the third day will rise.

And they remembered his words. And returning from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.

But these words seemed to them like an idle tale. They did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb, stooping and looking in.

[1 : 17] He saw the linen cloths by themselves. And he went home marveling at what had happened. That very day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

And they were talking with each other about all the things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, that's a very weak word there, the word should really be translated disputing.

They were having an argument, these two. While they were disputing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, What is this conversation that you're holding with each other as you walk? They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them named Cleopas answered him, Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?

He said to them, What things? And they said to him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, mighty indeed, and were before God and all the people.

[2 : 25] And how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Yes, and besides all this, it's now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning. When they didn't find his body, they came back, saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.

Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it, just as the woman had said, but him they did not see. And he said to them, Oh, foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in the scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he was going further, but they urged him strongly, saying, Stay with us, for it's towards evening and the day is now far spent.

[3 : 34] So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?

And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, The Lord has risen indeed. He has appeared to Simon. Then they told what had happened on the road.

And how he was known to them in the breaking of bread. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them. And he said to them, Peace to you.

But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, Why are you troubled? And why did doubts arise in your hearts?

[4 : 38] See my hands and my feet. That it is I myself. Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, Have you anything there to eat? They gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate it before them.

Then he said to them, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you. That everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. And he led them out as far as Bethany.

[5 : 53] Lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple, blessing God.

Do keep your Bibles open. Let me ask you two questions. Can totally skeptical unbelievers be transformed into zealous followers of Jesus Christ?

And can depressed and discouraged Christian disciples really become flaming heralds of the gospel to the very ends of the earth? Those are real questions for us today, aren't they, as we face a sea of unbelief in our culture all around.

And as we also face a very sad tide of lethargy in the Christian church. Well, the answer is yes. Yes, we can see both of these things.

And of that we can be certain and confident. And so we must step out in faith to bring that transformation to the church and through the church to the whole wide world.

[7 : 09] That's Luke's message right here before us in this resurrection chapter this morning. The message of the empty tomb, of the risen Lord Jesus. That is the transforming power which will do these things.

That and that alone is Luke the physician's prescription for life. New life and mission for the church of Jesus Christ.

And new life forever in the whole new creation that Jesus' resurrection from the dead begins for this world. If you were here on Good Friday with us, we saw that Luke's account of Jesus' death focused very specially on Jesus' own words from the cross that explain the cross.

That shouldn't surprise you if you know Luke's gospel because all the way through his gospel he tells us that he is highlighting the word of God at work. He tells us right at the very start of his book that he is written to give certainty to what has been taught to his readers about Jesus.

Well, the same word about the cross is absolutely at the center of this chapter about the resurrection. Three times in each of these main three sections that we've read here.

[8 : 26] Three times is the affirmation that the Christ had to suffer and fulfill all the purposes of God. You saw it in verse 7. He must be crucified and on the third day rise again.

It's there in verse 26 and in verse 46. The Christ must suffer and then rise. And it's in understanding that word of the cross in the light of Christ's resurrection that transforms everything in this chapter.

Brings transformation from tragic grieving to triumphant gladness for those first disciples. And Luke is telling us it is this message which will also bring transformation from the grief of death into the gladness of life.

Life everlasting for the whole wide world. It's the message of Christ crucified and risen. Which is the message of the whole Bible interpreted by Jesus.

That is the prescription for life. For everlasting life. For new creation life. And that's Luke's message to us this Easter Sunday morning. We can have confidence in the transforming life changing power of the word of the gospel.

[9 : 45] Of Christ crucified. Luke's account as you notice focuses on just one day. One day alone. After the Sabbath rest that ends chapter 23.

The first day of the week. The first day of a new era. The first day of new creation. A day of transformation. When absolutely everything is made new.

By the living word of the risen Lord. And Luke shows us the morning in the tomb. This late afternoon walk on the road. And finally the evening in the upper room.

And in each case his focus is on the clear evidence of the resurrection. Luke is very taken up with evidence. He's an evidence based physician.

But even more than that. He wants us to understand the explanation of the events. Because that is what transforms the truth about the cross.

[10 : 44] From something that is mere history about the past. Into something that is filled with glorious hope for the future. In each episode. Look at it. They follow exactly the same pattern.

Don't they? In each the disciples begin with bewilderment. With frank unbelief. So verse 4. The women are perplexed and frightened at the tomb. And then verse 17.

These men on the road. They're sad. They're dispirited. Verse 17. Then in verse 37. In the evening the disciples. They also. They're startled. They're frightened. They think they've seen a ghost.

And so in each case. Jesus himself brings words of rebuke. And words of instruction. And that leads them to transformation.

And the result. In every one of these cases. Is missionary gladness. It's a telling forth of the great good news. Verse 7. The women told these things. Verse 35. These disciples told all these things.

[11 : 45] And finally in verse 48. You'll see Jesus. Says that they are witnesses. And all of them will go into all the world. And tell all these things. And that's what you see in Luke's second volume.

He wrote a second book. We call it the Acts of the Apostles. And it's full of people who cannot help but tell. Of the things that they have seen and heard. So Luke is telling us something very clearly in this chapter.

Isn't he? He's saying do not doubt. We can have certainty. About the things that we've been taught. And believed about Jesus. And don't despair either. Because we can have confidence.

In the transforming power. Of the message of the gospel. The message of Christ crucified and risen. That message will transform.

Even this world's greatest skeptics. In fact he tells us. Doesn't he? That the very first disciples were skeptics themselves. Look at verse 11. The woman came in and spoke to him.

[12 : 48] And told him what they'd seen. And it seemed to them like an idle tale. It's a very weak word actually. It's a medical term. Luke uses it deliberately. He's a physician.

He knows. It's a word that means delusion. From delirium. He is saying exactly what Richard Dawkins says. About Christians who believe in the resurrection. He's saying they're all mad. That's what the disciples thought.

That's what the apostles thought. These women are mad. Deluded. Deluded. But in the end. They were convinced. Why? Because there was overwhelming evidence.

Look at verse 40. They saw his hands and his feet. They heard his voice. They even saw him eating a supper of fish.

And ultimately they could not any longer deny that reality. The weight of clear evidence. That's something that's vital to note. In Luke's account. In every other account of the gospels.

[13 : 46] But Luke wants us to see something even more important than that. And that is the transforming power. That alone can change. A hardened skeptic. To be able to see the evidence.

And stop resisting the clear and plain truth. And that is the authentic explanation of all of these Easter events. Which is something that comes, Luke tells us, through the words of scripture.

Through understanding the Bible. And in each of these three episodes, the pattern is exactly the same. And what Luke shows us is that people are transformed to see the evidence. To understand the truth about new creation life.

Through the message of the gospel proclaimed in the Christian scriptures. In the Bible. That's how the first disciples were transformed from grief to gladness.

From the grief of death to the gladness of life. Of that you can be utterly certain, Luke's telling us. And that too is how people today.

[14 : 52] Your friends, your loved ones. That's how they will be transformed. From the grievous tragedy of death to the glorious triumph of life everlasting.

And of that, Luke is telling us, we can be utterly confident. It's so important that we are, isn't it? So we're going to look at this journey from grief to gladness for these first disciples.

We're going to focus on the middle section, verses 13 to 35.

This extraordinary story, which actually is unique to Luke's gospel. Although, as I've said, every one of the three stories shows exactly the same pattern. But here we zoom in on two very ordinary disciples.

And we see so clearly the wonderful transformation of the gospel taking place. As quite literally, they journey with Jesus from miserable grief to missionary gladness.

[15 : 57] Now, the key verse in this story, in fact, the key verse in the whole chapter is verse 32. Because it shows us so clearly the word of the risen Lord, what it is and what it does.

Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road? While he opened to us the scriptures? Let's look at the three scenes that Luke unfolds for us.

First of all, in verses 13 through to 24, he shows us a scene of the disciples' grief. Luke wants us to see their terrible misery. Here we have very depressed disciples on this first Easter morning.

And their faces, verse 17, were obviously sad. And that is because their hearts were sad. They were grieving. Verse 21 tells us they'd lost their great hope that Jesus was indeed the Redeemer of Israel.

But now he was dead. And so they're left just pondering the tragic death. Of course, it's heavy with irony, isn't it? Because we know that when this stranger approaches them and starts speaking to them, they're in the presence of the risen Lord Jesus.

[17 : 12] And yet the two of them are utterly miserable. And yet it's perhaps not quite so unbelievable because there will be many people in church this very Easter morning who instead of rejoicing are actually like these disciples.

They've got sad hearts. Because perhaps their hopes of what Jesus would do for them have been left disappointed. Jesus hasn't given them the job that they wanted, the career they hoped for, the marriage they longed for, the children they wanted, the health that they've now lost, whatever it might be.

We had hoped he would be the one to redeem us. But no, Jesus had disappointed us. People like that will never be missionary Christians, will they?

When this stranger stopped these two folk who are walking along, it wasn't to say to them, tell me what is the reason for the great hope that's within you. I can see it on your face. I can hear it in what you're saying.

You must have something wonderful to tell. No, it was to ask them, why are you so miserable? Why are your faces so sad? They're not missionary Christians, are they? They're miserable Christians.

[18 : 28] And what are they doing? Well, as I said, verse 15 there, that word translated discussing, is really the word that means disputing. They were arguing. They were doing what miserable Christians always do, whinging.

Focusing totally on themselves, their own problems, their own disappointments, what hadn't happened. And that too is such a common thing still, isn't it? When the risen Lord Jesus draws near his disciples in his church, all too often he doesn't find missionary Christians telling forth the great glories.

But miserable Christians telling about their grumbles, disputing among themselves. Disciples of Jesus taken up with themselves, with their own unfulfilled hopes and desires, with their problems.

That's a turning inwards and disputing with one another. That's what Christians do, isn't it? So often, all sorts of things. Matters about church practice, matters of money, matters about music, matters about fringe issues of theology, whatever it is.

And that's the truth, isn't it? Churches are often full of sad faces, not happy faces. Low spirits, despair. So many churches, here's the truth.

[19 : 48] They're places of misery, not of mission. Well, certainly, there was no missionary gladness here, just plenty of miserable grief. Why are people like that?

People who are disciples of Jesus Christ? Well, verses 18 to 24 here tell us the answer, certainly, about these two disciples. Cleopas himself tells us that he knows the whole story of Jesus and Easter.

In fact, he knows every detail about Jesus' life and Jesus' death, and even, look at verse 23, he even has the account of Jesus' resurrection. But they haven't yet grasped what it really all means.

And so they've got no message, have they? They've got no gospel. They don't understand at all what the cross of Jesus was really about. And so at best to them, it seemed to be a tragic death, seemed to be something to mourn.

All their hope, you see, was in Jesus' earthly life, in Jesus' words, in the things he did. They wanted that life to go on and not to end in death. They didn't want Jesus' death.

[21 : 01] To them, Jesus' death spoke only about the wicked purpose of men. It spoke nothing about the wonderful purpose of God. And so there was no good news for them in the cross of Christ.

And that's why the resurrection news meant absolutely nothing to them. And that's why they were miserable. They had no true gospel of the cross of Christ. It's possible to have all the story of Jesus, even to talk about Jesus' death, even to talk about Jesus' resurrection, and yet still to have no message, no gospel, and therefore no mission.

And that is why, alas, even today, in our country, all around us, that's why today churches are so often places of misery, not of mission, full of miserable religious people covered in the pall of death instead of liberated missionary people filled with the joy of real life.

But you see, if you view the cross of Jesus as just tragic, or if, like many liberal Christians today, you describe it as a repulsive thing, if you reject utterly the idea that Jesus' death was a sacrifice for sins, was a punishment for God's wrath that rightly ought to fall upon us, if you reject that, then the church will never be full of missionary joy and life.

Because you only have a story, you don't have a message, you have no gospel, you have no good news at all, nothing that will bring hope for life, for life everlasting. So Jesus' death might be noble, it might be poignant, it might be moving, but ultimately, it's just a terrible tragedy, a terrible disappointment, like the death of that French soldier who stood in the place of those captives last week.

[23 : 02] Something to elicit emotional tears, something deeply moving, but certainly not something to be rejoiced in with gladness and joy. Well, that was these two disciples, wasn't it?

And Luke wants us to see their grief, their terrible misery. Because that is what the cross of Jesus will bring, if you're ignorant and blind to what it really means.

Well, look down to verses 33 to 35, the third scene that Luke shows us here. And what a staggering difference. He shows us now the disciples' gladness.

And he wants us to see their triumphant mission. Two disciples who were pondering a tragic death now, now they're proclaiming a triumphant death.

And their sad faces are gone because their sad hearts are gone. Look at verse 32. Their hearts, their hearts are burning now. They're on fire. And because their hearts are burning, their lips are bursting with the news.

[24 : 11] They have to tell others. They can't keep this good news in. They're missionary Christians now. And so, verse 29 says, although it was late, the day was far spent.

They're up and off immediately to walk that seven miles all the way back to Jerusalem. Verse 33, that same hour. Those roads weren't safe roads, especially at night.

Remember the story of the Good Samaritan. The man who was on these roads got beaten up and robbed. They were mad, surely, to take such huge risks to go and carry that message to others.

I'm sure that's what their family and friends would have said to them. Calm down. No need to go overboard. Goodness gracious. Don't get all fundamentalist on us. Calm down. Wait till it wears off. That's what many a decent and even church-going family will say to their son or their daughter when they say to them, I'm going off to that dangerous country far away to tell people the news about Jesus.

Isn't it? Or even when they say, I'm going to give up a good income and a stable future to spend all my time in this work of telling people about the Lord Jesus Christ who's risen indeed.

[25 : 32] Crazy. It's fanatical. It's madness to the world. But no, it's just the genuine missionary gladness of the true disciple who has grasped the meaning of the cross and the empty tomb of Jesus.

What a difference in these two disciples. Now, they've been absolutely transformed, haven't they? Just like the women were in verse 9. Just like all of them were in verse 52.

Filled with joy and a message to proclaim. No longer taking up themselves. No longer thinking about all their wrong expectations.

No longer complaining, disputing, miserable. No, now, only one thing matters for these folk. And it's sharing that great good news.

Sharing the truth of the message that had changed them. The message that changes absolutely everything. What is that message that turned miserable grief to missionary gladness?

[26 : 37] Well, that is precisely what I want you to understand, says Luke. That's why I've written about this whole day three times over so you get it into your heads forever and ever.

That miserable grief is transformed into missionary gladness through the message of the gospel. Look at the middle scene here, verses 25 to 32, where Luke shows us so clearly, doesn't he, the disciples' gospel.

He wants us to understand fully that transforming message. Don't be mistaken, Luke says. Don't say, oh, they had an extraordinary mystical experience of Jesus in front of them.

That's what transformed them. Give me that. Give anybody that. That'll transform them. No, says Luke. Look at what he says, verse 32. He records their own testimony.

The key thing that they realized. What was it that made their hearts change? What was it that made their hearts burn instead of being sad? Not the sight of the risen Lord.

[27 : 41] The very moment he recognized them, he vanished. No, what transformed them? What made their heart burn? Look, it was his words to them. Did he not, did our hearts not burn within us while he talked with us?

And what was that talk? And you remember it came to them from a complete stranger as far as they were concerned. Look, it was the opening up of the scriptures in their hearing so that they understood the message of Jesus.

The transforming, miraculous message is right there in verses 26 and 27. Do you see? Just as it was in verse 7, just as it is also in verse 45 and verse 46.

It's the message of the whole Bible. The Bible opened up and explained as finding its climax, its whole meaning in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It's the scriptures that explain the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the plan and purpose of God. And it's the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that ultimately explain all the scriptures.

[28 : 52] That's what he's saying. Now, I think that's quite a surprise, don't you? Wouldn't you have expected Jesus to just appear right in front of those people recognizably, gloriously, and said, I'm here, I'm alive.

Look at me. But he didn't do that, did he? In every one of these three episodes, they're kept from recognizing him. And they're pointed instead to the scriptures.

scriptures. And it's there that they experience transforming power. That's their real power.

Look at verse 25. That's their real problem. They're slow of heart to believe the scriptures. Same again in verse 6 and 7. Same again in verse 44 and 45.

Notice what Jesus says there in verse 44. That while he was alive with them, his words to them were all about teaching them what the Bible really says. That's so important, isn't it?

[30 : 03] There's some Christians today who want all sorts of special words from Jesus all the time through the Holy Spirit to guide them in their life. But look, Jesus says even when he was bodily present with his followers on the earth, he guided them how?

By teaching them how to understand the Bible. That's how Jesus guides his followers. That's how he guides us still today. So do you get Luke's message?

It's absolutely loud and clear. The first disciples were transformed from grief to gladness, from misery to mission through the message of the gospel.

The words of the cross and the empty tomb explained from all the scriptures. Through nothing more than talk.

Luke, teaching them, opening their minds to understand the Bible in the light of the cross of Christ and to understand the cross of Christ in the light of the whole Bible.

[31 : 06] That's what transformed them. Of that you can be certain, says Luke. The journey from the terrible misery of grief to the triumphant mission of gladness for those very first believers was through the transforming message of the biblical gospel.

And because of that, friends, you see, we also can be confident today that the journey from grief to gladness for the whole world is through that same gospel.

The gospel of Christ's death and resurrection as explained and as proclaimed in all the scriptures. Nothing less, but nothing more is needed.

Turn back with me one more time to Luke 24. I want us to think about the journey from grief to gladness for the whole world. Luke wrote this resurrection chapter so that we can be certain, so that we can be confident that people will be transformed from unbelieving skepticism to believing joy.

And from miserable argumentative Christianity to real joyful missionary zeal as the Bible is opened, as Christ is proclaimed. Look at verses 25 to 27 closely.

[32 : 36] Let's see what this involves. First is rebuke, isn't there? Rebuke of ignorance and unbelief. Oh foolish one, slow to believe. all that the prophets have spoken.

Jesus says here that people are miserable, that their hearts are cold, that they disbelieve God's word, even in the face of clear evidence about the resurrection. Now faith is built on clear evidence.

And it's abundant. They had that already here, as verse 24 says. But you see, the issue is that sin blinds people to the truth. It makes us resistant to what is absolutely plain and obvious to the unbiased eye.

And that is why we need the word of the living God to lift the veil, to unblind our eyes, to unblock our ears, so that we can see what has always been true, but which we have hidden beneath our sinful pride, beneath our prejudice and our refusal to believe.

These disciples were miserable because they were wrong about Jesus. And they were wrong about Jesus because they were wrong about the whole Bible. See, they wanted a Jesus who fitted into their expectations about life, their understanding of a Savior, someone to change this world.

[34 : 05] For them, that meant getting rid of the Romans. That meant promoting their own culture, their own religion, and so on. And because he hadn't done that, Jesus let them down. And that is just the same today.

Very, very often, people have wrong expectations of Jesus because they haven't believed and understood the true Jesus, the true gospel of all the scriptures.

They believe the bits they want to believe, but they ignore the bits, that they don't like, and they reject the rest of it. So, the liberal theologians for more than a century have taught us in the West that Jesus was only a social redeemer.

He came to make the world a better place. So, they love some bits of the Bible, bits about justice, bits about the poor, and so on. But they've rejected vast tracts of the Bible.

Everything that's miraculous, everything that's prophetic, the bodily resurrection of Jesus. And above all, of course, anything to do with the need of forgiveness of sins, the need of rescue from the wrath of God.

[35 : 14] Everything about the real transforming power of the forgiving gospel of Jesus. Well, what kind of church has that understanding of the cross given us in the Western world?

world. Well, look around. Empty churches full of disillusion and despair. Even today, on Easter Sunday, there'll be many, many churches with just a few old people gathered together trying to cheer themselves up, but actually full of misery.

No mission, no life. And Jesus says, O foolish one, slow of heart to believe all that the scriptures have taught.

Or you'll get other people who call themselves evangelical Christians. They're not liberals at all, but really, all they're seeking is just a prosperity gospel. A redeemer for this world.

A redeemer for my world. To make me healthy. To make me prosperous. To make me feel good. To make me find the fulfillment in my life that I want Jesus to give me. Well, that kind of message can bring zeal for a while.

[36 : 25] well, but in the end too, that also will bring disillusion. That also will bring only despair, won't it? When you're not healed as you hope to be healed.

When some other tragedy blights your life, as tragedy will blight your life in this fallen world. And Jesus says, O foolish ones, and slow to believe what the words of the prophets have really spoken.

my kingdom is far more than that. It's not just about this world. My kingdom is about a whole new creation beyond the curse of sin.

That's what I came to usher in. Look at verse 47. He's absolutely plain there, isn't he? It's about forgiveness of sins in my name to be proclaimed to the whole world, to every nation.

That's what I taught you when I was among you from the scriptures and with my resurrection. Today, that new age, that new creation has been born.

[37 : 29] And so from rebuke, you see, Jesus turns to revelation to bring understanding. Verse 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Notice, not new revelation, but just showing them how to read the Bible properly. He shows them that it isn't ever a book about just fitting Jesus into our expectations.

That's so often even how Christians want to read the Bible. What does Jesus have to say to me in my life today? Where does Jesus fit into my plan for my life?

What are you going to do, Jesus, to help me fulfill myself? No, no, no, no, no. It's not about us fitting our human expectations into our plan for life and having Jesus magically put a spell on that.

It's about fitting all our human expectations into the eternal plan and purpose of God. That it's all about the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole Bible he's telling us is about him.

[38 : 37] It's not about us. The whole of time and eternity centers on him. Everything that matters in this whole universe matters only in so far as it relates to the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the beginning. He is the end. He is the center of all time, all history, indeed, of all eternity. And the climax of the story, the center of it all, is in his death and resurrection and ascension to glory, his saving work at last complete.

And it's because of that alone that we will find a place in his story. Look down to verse 46 where again we see Jesus telling us the whole Bible's message.

That through his death and resurrection there can be repentance, forgiveness of sins, for rebels, rebellious sinners from every single nation, people who are under his wrath.

Through him there can be hope of life for all eternity. And it's grasping that that is to be gripped and changed forever by an utterly transforming message.

[39 : 53] That's a message that can transform even miserable, grumbling, dispirited people into glad, joyful, missionary people. People with hearts on fire, people with lips set on fire for Jesus.

That's Luke's prescription for life. life to embrace and to be transformed by the message of the whole Bible about Jesus Christ. And that's what happened to the disciples in this chapter.

At last they understood the message of the cross in the message of the empty tomb as explained to them in all the scriptures. believers. And so Jesus' rebuke and his revelation, that is what leads at last verse 31 to recognition, isn't it, to their eyes being opened.

It was just as Jesus had promised during his ministry. The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

But Luke is saying to us, don't miss how that happened. It happened as this unknown stranger, as far as they were concerned, opened to them the meaning of the scriptures.

[41 : 06] That's the prescription, says Luke, if you want hearts that are set on fire. That's the prescription, if you want to find abundant life and joy. And that's Luke's Easter message to us all here this morning.

Have you got friends, have you got loved ones who are still blind to the truth about Jesus Christ, who are skeptical? Or perhaps who are just vague, have a vague grasp of things, but they're still really in the dark.

That's why they're basically miserable. They don't have the real joy. of the Christian life. They don't understand new creation life. Well, what they need to hear, friends, is the transforming voice of the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

And they can hear that. And they will hear that. As the Bible is open to them. So that they understand the majestic gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ. As the biblical gospel is proclaimed, even the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. That's what you see in the whole of Luke's second book.

[42 : 16] It's called the Acts of the Apostles. From the multitudes on the day of Pentecost, who heard Peter preaching and believed, to the individual Ethiopian eunuch out in the desert, all on his own in his chariot.

And Philip opened to him the scriptures so he understood and believed. The household of Cornelius, the Roman soldier. Likewise, he opened the scriptures and they believed. All through that book, all through history, all through the world.

That's been happening ever since. You can have certainty and confidence about the transforming power of the biblical gospel. That when you share the Bible's message, the living, transforming voice of the risen Lord Jesus will be heard.

You can bring your friends, your skeptical friends, to hear the Bible being proclaimed and explained. Whether it's Moses or the prophets or the Psalms or the Gospels.

Because wherever the Bible is opened and taught in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, his transforming message will be at work. It will. To bring the dead to new life in Christ.

[43 : 25] Christ. And also to transform miserable grumbling Christians into missionary evangelists who will take that message to the world. Maybe this Easter day actually finds you rather miserable inside.

Maybe your heart is sad. Maybe not showing in your face. You're hiding it. But perhaps inside you are dejected. Because you're disappointed with God. You're disappointed with the Lord Jesus.

Maybe you've been disputing, arguing with your fellow disciples. Maybe you've been arguing with Jesus himself because you feel he's let you down. Perhaps Jesus is saying to you and to me this morning, O foolish one, slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

you've been picking and choosing the bits of the Bible that you want to keep. Getting rid of those other bits that you don't like that are much more challenging about what the life and death and resurrection of Jesus really means and what it means for you and the call upon your life to follow him.

Picking and choosing, leaving out. That's the root cause, you know, of every single dysfunction in the life of faith.

[44 : 49] everyone. You need to stop trying to fit Jesus into your expectation of life and you need to listen instead to the risen Lord Jesus speaking to you as he spoke to those followers on that first day all those years ago in all the scriptures.

Let him help you to see the greatness of his true story, of his death for your sins, of what that has accomplished forever and ever for you so that you will share in the joy of his resurrection life.

The only way, the only way to move more and more away from miserable grieving about your own life and circumstances and into more and more missionary gladness that will enrich others' lives and actually will enrich your life.

The only way to that is to live more and more in the majestic gospel as it's proclaimed in all the scriptures.

That's the only way to burning hearts and bursting lips for Jesus. That's the only road from misery to mission to the church of Jesus Christ today.

[46 : 08] And it's the only road from the grief of death to the gladness of everlasting life for this whole world. Of that, says Luke, you can be absolutely certain.

That's the message of the empty tomb. And that's the prescription for life in all its fullness, for life everlasting, for life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let's pray. The reign of sin and death is done. And all may live from sin set free.

Satan and his pretended throne are swallowed up in victory. Saved from the curse of God I am. My Savior hangs upon a tree.

See there the meek and silent lamb. His final breath. He breathes for me. That I might share his life.

[47 : 15] Lord, open our eyes, we pray this Easter morning. That we may see. And open our hearts so that they will burn with this wonderful truth, which is the balm of life, which is the cure of all woe in our lives.

Fill us, we pray, with Easter joy. For the sake of our great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is risen indeed.

Hallelujah. Amen.