

Luke 24

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[0 : 00] Well, this is the third in our series of what I'm calling Resurrection Colors, as we look at the resurrection of Jesus and different things that the Bible teaches us about it.

And you might be tempted to think, just come off it, which is not still talking about the resurrection, are we? Easter feels like ages ago, at least. It was only just less than a month ago. But it feels like quite a while ago. But yes, I am still going on about it.

Partly because Easter isn't that significant in itself, really. The resurrection isn't something that Christians celebrate once a year. Actually, the resurrection is the whole rationale for Christians meeting every single Sunday.

The resurrection is something that Christians celebrate every week. And that regularity of celebration, week by week, it totally matters just how deeply impactful the resurrection really is. Which is why I'm still going on about it. And as we've been seeing, or at least what I hope has been clear, is just how radically impactful the resurrection of Jesus is.

[1 : 07] And we've been looking at each of these four Gospels to see who this risen Jesus is. Jesus is now a man who is alive. And so who is he? And we've seen that it impacts two things primarily.

It impacts what we are. And it impacts what we know. What we are and what we know. So what we've seen from Matthew, that Jesus is the risen King.

He has all authority in heaven and on earth. Which means on the one hand that we exist for him.

Our lives are about him. And so I asked you, who are you living for, if not for him?

And in terms of what we know, as the King, he is the one who tells us what is good and what is evil.

We are commanded to obey him. And he is the one who defines for us good and evil. Last week from Mark's Gospel we saw Jesus is the risen Prophet.

Which means his should be the loudest voice in your ears. In a world that does everything it can to distract you from him with lots of alternative gods, in a sense.

[2 : 15] And he's a unique Prophet because he's not just a messenger, but he is the divine Prophet. The Prophet who is God. And he's the one who actually defines for us what true and false are.

So he's a King who defines good and evil. And a Prophet who defines true and false. Now if you've ever read any kind of theology, or if you've just read the beginning of the sheet actually.

You might be able to guess where we're going next. We've seen Jesus as King and as Prophet.

And they're part of a trio of roles that if you've read any theology you'll know that the next one is Priest.

King and Prophet and Priest are three roles that go together. We see them all throughout the Old Testament. And we see them in each of the Gospels. We saw Matthew's Gospel beginning talking about kings and ending talking about authority.

We saw Mark's Gospel beginning with mention of prophets. And then Jesus then commissioning his disciples and lots of prophetic references looking at his transfiguration.

[3 : 16] And then here in Luke's Gospel, the first main character we meet in Luke's Gospel is a priest called Zechariah. And priest is one of those religious words.

It's one of those jargony words we come across. It's even more religious sounding than prophet, isn't it? And certainly much more than king. So very simply today, we'll just think briefly what a priest is and how Jesus is a priest and what that means for us.

So that's what we'll be thinking about today. What is a priest? How is the risen Jesus a priest? And what does that mean for us? So what do we mean by priest?

Well, of these three roles, king and prophet and priest, the priests were the most involved in the daily lives of the people they served.

They were in their lives day to day. They would be the ones you went to, to offer your sacrifices for you in the temple. They would be the ones to pray for you.

[4 : 18] They would be the arbiters in deciding whether that illness that you had that made you richly impure has cleared well enough for you to be declared pure and come back in.

They were the ones who were in charge of keeping the temple and the whole community pure in a ceremonial way. They were the ones who would lead the worship services.

They would arrange the music, all the singing. They would be in charge of taking the scriptures that the prophets, like Moses and others, had given. And it was their job to then explain it and teach it to people.

It was their job to bless the people in God's name. That blessing assuring them of God's favour and of his presence with them.

They were mediators of God's presence. They were the connection between themselves and God. And so they were a constant reminder for the whole community of God's presence in their midst.

[5 : 20] So that's what a priest is. That's what they did in the Old Testament. So what does it mean for Jesus to be the risen priest? Well, crucially, the key of his priestly work was everything leading up to the resurrection.

That was his ultimate priest work. On that cross where Jesus died, he was both the ultimate priest and the ultimate sacrifice at the same time.

As he offered up himself once for all on behalf of his people. That was the key of his priest work.

But that connects to the main bulk of what we see him doing here in our passage.

It doesn't stand out. We don't necessarily see the word priest. But everything Jesus is doing in this passage is very deeply priestly. So if you look at verses 26 and 27.

And then over on the page in verses 44 to 49 especially. What is Jesus doing? He's doing what all priests do. He's teaching and explaining the Bible to them.

[6 : 26] He's explaining the scriptures. And here is his main point of explanation in verse 46. This is his explanation of the Bible.

Thus, meaning in this way. Saying this is the way that it was written. That the Christ should suffer and rise from the dead. So this suffering and rising of the Messiah is what the whole Bible is about.

From Genesis 1 verse 1 right until the end. He's not saying the Bible occasionally mentions something about the Messiah suffering and rising. And sometimes it is more explicit than others.

But he is saying that the main point of the whole of the Old Testament. That had been written up until then. And the main point of the whole Bible is the suffering and the glory of the Messiah.

This suffering to death and rising to glory of the Messiah is the main point. The whole of the message. Everything you read in the Bible is in some way teaching you about that.

[7 : 30] And so there's no point in anyone saying, well that's just your interpretation Jesus.

Because his answer is, yes it is my interpretation. And I have the authority to say what it means.

It's not just what I think it means. I'm telling you, this is what was meant when it was written. This is the definitive interpretation. So there's never actually any space for anyone to come along and say, yes this is God's word.

But you really also need me to explain it to you. You really need this extra book. You really need this extra group of people. You really need this particular translation so that you can really understand it.

Yes you have God's word. But you really, really need somebody extra to explain it to you. They are misguided at best. And charlatans at worst who try to tell you that.

So whether that's the Pope and the Catholic Magisterium. Or Joseph Smith and his Book of Mormon. Or Jehovah's Witnesses and their New World Translation. Jesus is very clear.

[8 : 37] I'm the teacher. I will explain to you what it means. And what it means is the suffering of Christ and his glories that follow. So that's the key of his priestly work is his teaching the Bible.

And then notice what he does right at the end. In verses 50 to 53. What is the thing that it's repeated that he does? He blesses them. And as he's departing, as he's ascending, Jesus blesses them.

That again was a key work of a priest. He's assuring them of God's favour. Of his own favour as God. And his continued presence with them.

That's what blessing is. It is words. But they are powerful words. They're words that guarantee favour. And a commitment of love.

And presence. As I heard one minister put it. The truth is that sticks and stones do break my bones. But words will actually make or break my whole soul.

[9 : 45] And Jesus is the one who has procured God's blessing for us. And he speaks that blessing over his people. And so that brings us to think finally about what it means for Jesus to be priest.

What it means for us. That's our final thing. What does it mean for us, for Jesus, to be the priest? Well, we desperately need blessing.

We need that promise of favour. And we need that comfort. We need that assurance that everything will work out for the good. And that specifically the one blessing us will be working it out for good.

Because think of the alternative of blessing. If you know the story of Jacob wrestling the angel at all. Then you'll see what the alternative is. The alternative is struggle.

Jacob was wrestling the angel and said, I will not let you go until God blesses me. And he's saying to the angel, Until you bless me as God. And so if you don't have the blessing, What you have is struggle.

[10 : 53] That struggle of, I don't know if I'm good enough. I don't know if he loves me. I don't know if he cares for me. I don't know if he's with me. I don't know if he cares about all the troubles I'm seeing around me.

I just don't know. It's all struggle. It's all wrestling. The writer Susan Jacobi wrote in the New York Times about five years ago.

About what she calls the blessings of atheism. And she offers yet another alternative. She writes of seeing her friends who believed in God in one way or another.

All struggling with all kinds of questions and difficulties as they saw the plight of human suffering. I think she was writing specifically in the wake of another school shooting they've had in America.

And she says the blessings of atheism is that I don't have to struggle with those questions. I don't have to wonder about what God is doing. I just, it's not a question.

[11 : 47] I don't believe God is there. And so, you don't need to think of hope beyond death. She just thinks of death as rest and that's it. But what she probably wouldn't acknowledge, to be fair to her, Is actually that's just going the other way of the alternative.

It's blessing or struggle or just give up. Just don't bother struggling. Get in the ring and just stand there. And call that winning. But actually, that's not a viable alternative.

That's not, that's no way to live. Just give up. There are no answers. And then call that a blessing. But we deeply need this blessing from God.

So what does it mean for us, for Jesus to be the priest? Well, who's explaining things to you now, if it's not Jesus? Explaining the Bible, but also explaining your whole life.

Who explains it to you? Is it the BBC? Is it Sky? Is it the Sun or the Times? Is it your friends? Is it films you watch?

[12 : 57] Books you read? Or is it Jesus? Who's explaining things to you? If not him. And crucially, where are you finding blessing if not from him?

We all deeply need that blessing. We need to know that we are accepted. We need to know that we have favour. But who are you looking to for that blessing? And if it's not God, can you honestly say that it's enough?

Can you honestly say that blessing is good enough for you? It might be your family. Just looking for that approval and assurance that everything will be fine from family.

And others know that we'll never find it in their family. It might be your boss or your colleagues. It might be from your church and your pastor. You might think that you can get it from yourself.

I don't care what anyone else thinks. I can just approve of myself. And it's a terribly lonely way to live. But Jesus here is offering the blessing. Not telling you how to work towards the blessing.

[13 : 57] He has procured it for you. As the priest, he has offered himself. And he has earned the blessing for you. And he is the one who gives us God's presence.

And a presence for favour. A presence for good. A presence for comfort. You'll notice throughout the passage, Jesus is often eating with people. And actually throughout Luke's Gospel, he's either eating with people, on his way to eat with people, or on his way from eating with people.

Because he is in the lives of the people that he's ministering to. It's another priestly thing that he's doing. Being involved in their lives and giving God's favour and presence.

Giving God's blessing. So that's the three things we've seen so far. Who are you living for if not for him? Who are you listening to if not to him? And where are you looking for blessing if not from him? And next week we'll see one more thing. One more colour of the risen Jesus. Let's pray.
[14 : 59] Let's pray.