

The Gospel Mandate – Luke 24:44-53

Main Idea: God does not have a mission for His church, rather He has a church for His mission.

I. The Plan | Luke 24:44-47

Jesus instructed His disciples from the time He called them at the beginning of His earthly ministry to His last moment on earth. In His final instruction to His disciples, Jesus explained to them that their faith should not rest on the miracles He performed or even on His resurrection alone but on the massive testimony of all Scripture, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (v.44). *The Law of Moses*, *The Prophets*, and *The Psalms* make reference to the threefold division of the OT (Tanakh, Hebrew Bible). The Law of Moses was the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy); the Prophets included both former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets); the Psalms (Writings) included all wisdom literature (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Songs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles). In commenting on this passage, Leon Morris said, “The solemn division of Scripture into the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms affirms that there is no part of the OT that does not bear its witness to Jesus.”¹ **Jesus wanted his disciples to ground their faith not merely on the miracles He performed but on the massive and trustworthy testimony of all Scripture regarding their Savior.** The disciples for the first time understood the messianic meaning of the entire OT. Many can know about Scripture, quote different passages of Scripture, and yet not understand the real meaning of Scripture (Matthew 9:9-13; 12:1-37; Mark 7:9-13; John 3:1-21).

Jesus’ teaching was enhanced by divine illumination: “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (v.45). Though the disciples had been His devoted followers, a spiritual veil had covered their understanding (Luke 9:45; 18:34; 2 Cor. 3:13-16). **But on the day Jesus ascended to heaven, the blinders were removed as the Holy Spirit opened their minds! What they learned from that day on became the Biblical substance for the apostolic preaching of the Gospel seen throughout the New Testament.** It wasn’t until Jesus instructed the disciples from the OT that the New Testament began to be written. From this we understand **that the apostolic preaching of the Gospel was always framed by the rich background of OT exposition (Acts 2:14-41; 3:11-26; 4:1-22; 7; 1 Cor.15:1-4).**

The end of Luke’s Gospel also presents us with a parallel text to Matthew 28:19-20. After opening the disciples’ eyes to understand that all the OT refers to and finds its fulfillment in Him (v.44-45), **Jesus mandates His people to proclaim the saving truth** of what Paul later described as the “glorious Gospel of the blessed God” (1 Tim.1:11). The Gospel mandate described at the end of Luke’s Gospel was not only for the eleven disciples but for all believers throughout all history. **Everyone who comes to know Christ as their Savior and Lord is responsible for proclaiming the truth of the Gospel till their last day on earth.** Since the ascension of Christ, the baton has been passed down from generation to generation of believers, and it is our responsibility to pass it on to the next generation. **To fulfill the Lord’s command to spread the Gospel to all nations is the overarching, all-consuming mission of the church.** Understanding and teaching sound doctrine, fellowship, worship, pursuing holiness, and prayer are essential and necessary. However, they are not the goal but rather the means to proclaim the Gospel to those who do not yet know Christ. To do all those things and not proclaim the Gospel is to reject the purpose for which those spiritual disciplines exist. **The goal of church history is to proclaim the truth of the Gospel to all nations.**

To Ponder:

1. What needs to happen for people to understand Scripture?
2. What is your responsibility as a believer in God’s mission?
3. What comes to your mind when you think about evangelism? When was the last time you personally engaged in sharing the Gospel with a lost person?

¹ Leon Morris, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 365.

II. The Purpose | Luke 24:48-49

The ability to understand the OT was not exclusive to the disciples but rather extends to whoever the Holy Spirit convicts of sin and righteousness (John 16:8-11). As Christ ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven to permanently indwell those who believe, giving them eyes to see and ears to hear what Scripture says. Apart from having our eyes opened by the Spirit, all we can understand from Scripture is syntax, grammar, and historical context. All are important, but none of that results in a life-changing way unless the Holy Spirit acts supernaturally, helping those who were once spiritually blind to see Christ's glory in every page of Scripture. On the day Jesus rose from the dead, after appearing to Mary Magdalene, Jesus appeared to His disciples in the upper room, and standing amongst them, He said to them, "Peace be with you as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when He said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld'" (John 20:21-23). What Jesus pictured in the upper room was finally about to happen. The purpose of spiritual illumination is to prepare believers to live on mission. The pattern of disobedience seen in the OT finally began to shift as the Spirit began to produce obedience in the lives of believers. **God does not save people merely to keep them from spending eternity in hell; He saves people so that those who are reached by His grace will join His mission and bring glory to Him as they live out the Gospel.** As the Apostle Paul Testified to the Thessalonians, "Our Gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess.1:5). May we be Gospel people, devoted to God's mission in the power and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

To Ponder:

1. What is God's mission in the world?
2. Where do you fit in God's mission as a believer?
3. What areas in your life do you plan on being directly involved in the purpose of God for Kingsville in 2024?

III. The Provision | Luke 24:50-53

Christ's glorious ascension concludes the Gospel of Luke and provides a bridge to Luke's sequel (The Book of Acts). Luke 24:50,51 and Acts 1:9 tell us what the eleven disciples saw at the ascension. The ascension links Jesus' ministry with the ministry of His church. In Luke's Gospel, we see the Lord Jesus Christ's ministry of accomplishing salvation; in the book of Acts, we see the ministry of believers proclaiming the message of salvation to the world. Luke's Gospel tells us the story of Christ on earth; Acts tells us the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit, empowering believers to participate in the Great Commission. Luke's Gospel testifies of Christ's finished work of redemption; the book of Acts urges us toward the unfinished work of making disciples of all nations. Now that the disciples knew God in Christ, it was time for them to proclaim what they knew. This is the first time in the NT that we see the disciples beginning to obey Christ's commands. After three years of often being confused, anxious, and uncertain about Jesus' words, the disciples finally began to obey His commands confidently. As Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high (v.49), "they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God" (v.52-53). Jesus not only sends us the Holy Spirit, but He supplies power to His church. At the Father's right hand, all power is His (John 14:12). Not many days later, the disciples saw the truth of God's provision at Pentecost (Acts 2).

God's greatest work is the salvation of souls, considering the poor vessels God uses to preach His saving Word. The apostolic preaching shows us that God does not have a mission for His church, but rather has a church for His mission.

To Ponder:

1. How has God shown you more of Himself in your study of Scripture?
2. How can you use what you know about God in your work of sharing the Gospel with others?