

“He Is There,” Luke 24:44-53
Tom Johnson, May 13, 2010

In our Gospel reading, Jesus is still talking plainly. No more parables and riddles. He is telling it as it is. He gives the same Bible lesson as he did on the road to Emmaus.

He begins with Genesis, Exodus, and all the historical books of the Old Testament. He continues with all the prophetic books such as Isaiah and Daniel. And then he concludes with Psalms and Proverbs to show that everything is—in one way or another—about him.

And to ensure that his disciples understood that the whole of Scripture is about Jesus, **“he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”** Understanding the Scriptures is not about how smart we are but about how gracious he is.

He sends his Holy Spirit and his Word to open our minds so that we view our world with sober and clear eyes—so that we have a correct understanding of the flow of human history—so that we see ourselves rightly in God’s plan.

And even more importantly, Jesus wants us to know that from the very beginning of human history, he is there.

Jesus—the promised Messiah—is there speaking creation into existence. He is there walking in the Garden after Adam and Eve fell. Jesus is there through the storm of what we call human history. Ever since Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there has been a storm of sin raging on the earth.

He is there in the promise that the serpent’s head will finally be crushed. He is there as the promised Son who will restore all things.

Jesus is there in the blood of the lamb painted on the doorposts in Egypt that make death pass over. He is there in the Bread of Heaven—the Manna—that sustain God’s people for 40 years. He is there in the rock that became a spring of living water. Jesus is there through the Babylon captivity.

Jesus is giving us a satellite view of human history. Just as he will ascend into the cloud—so he wants to lift us up and have his bird’s eye view of our human experience.

He shows us the storm pattern that began at the fall, grew stronger at the flood, and then built up to a raging storm that caused Jesus to suffer and die. But through the whole storm, God is in control. These things must happen. The Scriptures predicted that they would happen.

“Thus it is written,” Jesus says, **“that the Christ is to suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations.”**

Jesus has us look at this great storm of human history and points out that his suffering, death, and resurrection is the eye of the storm. Everything we have experienced and will experience revolves around the cross and empty grave.

The storm of human history looks like chaos and mayhem. But Jesus is in the midst of the storm. God is in control and he has a plan. And Jesus, his person, his life revealing the Kingdom, his death, and his resurrection are the eye of the storm.

After the resurrection, the ascension, and the Day of Pentecost, it will seem like the church is finally going to explode in growth and have earthly peace. But like the eye of any storm, it is a peace that won't last.

The disciples will be arrested. Steven will be martyred. The church will be scattered. Beginning in Jerusalem, the eye of the storm will pass; they will go into all Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

And even though the last two thousand years and years ahead may look like more chaos and mayhem, Jesus is in the midst of the storm. Jesus is there. Jesus is here. And the storm still revolves around the cross and empty tomb.

“Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in Jesus' name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.” It is not just a forecast. It is a promise. Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to clothe his people with power from on high.

Jesus must ascend. It cannot appear that he is just in one place at a time. When he ascends to the right hand of the Father, he is present and active everywhere. Just as the hand of God and Holy Spirit are in everyplace, so is Jesus.

Jesus raises his hands in blessing as he ascends out of physical sight. We don't know what he said in his blessing. But we do know where to find those hands that bless.

Those hands opened the Scriptures. Those hands open minds to understand the Scriptures. Those hands baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Those hands broke bread and passed the cup of his Body and Blood. Those hands healed. Those hands nurture and care for the lonely and outcast and orphans.

And just as everything in the Old Testament was ultimately pointing to Jesus as the center of the Scriptures and Jesus as the eye of the storm of human history. So the Scriptures continue to point to Jesus as the core and center. He is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the beginning and the end. He will be with us in the storm. He will bring us through. He is there. He is here.