

## The Power of the Promise

Luke 24:44-52

Today we are halfway through a series called **Reach the World**. This is home plate in our baseball diamond pathway. We gather people to love God in a personal relationship. We help them get connected in the church and growing in Christ. We encourage them to find a way to serve in the church. And we send them out to reach the world with the Gospel.



“Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:20 [include baseball diamond on slide w verse]

Our verse of the month reminds us that “**we are** ambassadors for Christ.” **That is our identity**. We are representatives for God Himself and He is making His appeal through us as He works to reconcile the world to Himself through Christ.

Last week we focused on the Great Commission and the command to make disciples of all nations by going, preaching the Gospel, calling for commitment to Christ and training believers to obey all of Jesus’ commands. That is **our mission** here at Oakwood - **to transform ordinary people into fully devoted followers of Christ**. It is a mission of personal transformation. We come alongside ordinary people with everyday struggles and watch God turn them into joyful, bold, confident ambassadors for Jesus.

Last week we studied the Great Commission in Matthew and Mark. Today we will work on **Jesus’ final words in the Gospel of Luke**. As I studied the end of Luke’s Gospel and the beginning of his second volume, the book of Acts, I was struck by two prominent themes: **God’s promises and God’s power**. Those will be the two parts of the message this morning.

### God’s Promises Give Us Confidence

“Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms **must be fulfilled**.” Luke 24:44

There was a **divine necessity** to what Jesus did. The whole Old Testament pointed ahead to a coming Messiah - and all of those prophecies *had to be fulfilled*. God was faithful to keep His promises by sending the Savior. This gives us tremendous confidence in the character of God. Since He kept all of those promises we can trust Him to fulfill the other ones!

Then we'll see how:

### **God's Spirit Gives Us Boldness**

*“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.**” Luke 24:49*

In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit was poured out on all of the disciples and they were supernaturally enabled to preach the gospel. Throughout the book of acts this promise of Jesus in Luke 24 was fulfilled as believers were clothed with power and filled with boldness.

So that is my twofold prayer this morning. First that God's promises will strengthen our confidence in Him and what He has called us to do. And second that we will **go out with boldness**, knowing that the all surpassing power of the Holy Spirit is with us.

First let's get a confidence booster as we look at God's promises for the **past, present and future**. As we look to the past, we see the hundreds of promises God made and how so many of them were fulfilled in Christ.

### **God's Promises Give Us Confidence**

- **Past** - Jesus Fulfilled Hundreds of Prophecies

*“Did not the Messiah **have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?**’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said **in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**” Luke 24:26-27*

**Jesus HAD TO SUFFER.** It was a divine necessity, based on God's plan from the beginning. By creating free moral agents, our Triune God knew that people would fall into sin. So God knew that the price of creation as He made it would be the life of the Son. The Messiah **HAD TO SUFFER. It was necessary for the plan of salvation to work. And it was necessary because God had promised to do it.**

There are **over 300 specific prophecies** in the Old Testament that were fulfilled by Jesus. Check out the blog for a great article on this from Josh McDowell and the staggering odds against one person fulfilling all of them.

<http://www.oakwoodfl.org/2018/08/15/prophecy/> [Plz include this link in YouVersion]

Here are just three key prophecies Jesus fulfilled:

### **Jesus Fulfilled Hundreds of Prophecies**

- 1. He was born of a virgin**

*“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: **The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**” Isaiah 7:14*

700 years before Jesus was born, Isaiah foretold the sign of Messiah's coming - that he would be born of a virgin and would be called Immanuel - God with us. #2 -

### Jesus Fulfilled Hundreds of Prophecies

#### **2. He Suffered and Died**

*"But he was **pierced for our transgressions**, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."* Isaiah 53:5

**Isaiah 53** is one of the most important chapters in the Bible - and one of the best proofs that Christianity is true. 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah saw a crystal clear vision of a Savior who would be pierced for our transgressions - whose suffering would somehow pay for sin and bring wayward sinners peace with God, healing to our souls.

One more: Psalm 16.

### Jesus Fulfilled Hundreds of Prophecies

#### **3. He Rose from the Dead**

*"You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay."* Psalm 16:10

1,000 years before Jesus was born, **King David** was given this wonderful comfort - that God would not abandon His children to the grave. But this prophecy specifically mentions "your faithful one." David believed this for himself and believed this for **the coming Messiah** who would reign on his throne forever.

Three times in his own life, Jesus promised that he would suffer and die but then rise from the dead. This is the final and ultimate proof of everything Jesus said and did. **He predicted that he would be the One to conquer sin and death and hell.** And on the third day, just as he said - and just as David foretold 1,000 years before - Jesus walked out of the tomb and met up with his disciples at the appointed place.

As we look to the past and see **God's faithfulness to keep His promises it should fill us with confidence** - with a deep and abiding trust in our heavenly Father whose word is supremely reliable. Now let's look at the present.

### **God's Promises Give Us Confidence**

- Past - Jesus Fulfilled Hundreds of Prophecies
- Present - We are Fulfilling Jesus' Last Prophecy

*"This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and **repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.**"* Luke 24:46-47

According to Jesus, **certain things HAD TO BE FULFILLED** - they had to happen, according to the divine plan of the Godhead. He had to suffer. He had to rise from the dead. And now - this is what is WRITTEN - "repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached... to all nations."

Feel the certainty of that: repentance WILL BE PREACHED in Jesus' name to all nations. ***This will happen.*** Take a closer look:

### **We are Fulfilling Jesus' Last Prophecy**

*"Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **You are witnesses of these things.**"* Luke 24:47-48

*"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**"* Acts 1:8

To all nations. To the ends of the earth. To the apostles Jesus said, "You ARE witnesses of these things." To all the disciples Jesus promised, "You WILL BE my witnesses to the ends of the earth." ***That promise applies directly to us.***

Notice he doesn't command them to be witnesses. **He promises that they will be witnesses.** Again, this is tied to our identity. We are ambassadors for Christ. God IS making His appeal to us. We WILL BE witnesses for Christ, called to testify to what we have seen and heard and experienced.

This should fill us with **confident faith**. ***God Himself has promised that we will succeed in this mission.*** HIS reputation is at stake and HIS power is in play. "This Gospel of the kingdom WILL BE PREACHED in the whole world... and then the end will come." Matt. 24:14

In the past, Jesus fulfilled hundreds of prophecies, In the present, we are the fulfillment of Jesus' last prophecy. And in the future, Jesus will return - very soon - to fulfill the remaining prophecies.

### ***God's Promises Give Us Confidence***

- Past - Jesus Fulfilled Hundreds of Prophecies
- Present - We are Fulfilling Jesus' Last Prophecy
- Future - Jesus will Return Soon to Fulfill the Remaining Prophecies

*"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.**"* Acts 1:11

This is our blessed hope - our Lord and Savior is coming back soon! Come quickly, Lord, we pray! ***When the last trumpet sounds Jesus will break through the clouds*** and the whole sky will roll up like a scroll. Every eye will see Him and every knee will bow before Him. All of His enemies will be defeated with just a word from His mouth - something like, "Enough!" or "It is Done."

Phhht. Bad guys - squashed. Thrown into the lake of burning sulphur. Done. Gone. Forever. Jesus will lead the host of heaven in triumphant and glorious procession. He won't be on a donkey this time - but on a shining white war horse - for **He is the conquering King**.

At that moment, **all of your imperfections** (every single one!) **will suddenly be replaced** with a body that if you saw it today you would be tempted to worship. Believers will be **GLORIFIED** - the mortal clothed with immortality. In the twinkling of an eye. Shazaam.

Listen, brothers and sisters, to 1 Thessalonians 4:

*“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so **we will be with the Lord forever**. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

That is how history ends. (Unless it's a surprising interlude before the great tribulation. But honestly, it doesn't matter whether that moment of being caught up in the clouds - being raptured by the Lord - will be before or after the tribulation, before or after the millennium. It doesn't matter. What matters is that Jesus is coming back and he will set everything right.)

We can disagree about how to interpret tricky prophecies like those in the book of Revelation. But we can all take great comfort in the indisputable **fact that Jesus is coming back soon**, and when he does he will defeat all of his enemies completely and permanently. Sin will be fully and finally removed. Death will be no more. The devil and all of his agents will be thrown into the lake of fire. God's promises should fill us with **confidence**.

### ***God's Promises Give Us Confidence***

- Past - Jesus Fulfilled Hundreds of Prophecies
- Present - We are Fulfilling Jesus' Last Prophecy
- Future - Jesus will Return Soon to Fulfill the Remaining Prophecies

***I hope this has bolstered your faith.*** The more you **know God** - the more you know His character and heart, the more confident you will be in Him, the more you will trust Him. If you don't trust God very much, I urge you to study Scripture to get to know Him more. Our comfort and confidence as God's people is built directly on our knowledge of God. We KNOW who God is. ***We know that we can trust Him completely.***

God has spoken. He is on record with hundreds of specific promises. Many of them have already been fulfilled, demonstrating that **God is faithful and always does what He says he will do**. So hold on to God's promises - and especially that central one in the present - that

we are the fulfillment of Jesus' final prophecy on earth. We ARE His witnesses. And we will be a part of bringing the gospel to the nations before the end comes.

Jesus is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against us. **We are not guaranteed safety. But we are guaranteed VICTORY.** And that should give us tremendous confidence as we devote ourselves to our mission to make disciples of all nations.

Now on to part two. God's promises give us confidence; and God's Spirit gives us boldness. Four facts about the Holy Spirit.

### **God's Spirit Gives Us Boldness**

- The Holy Spirit fills us with the **Life of God**
- The Holy Spirit gives us **Direction**
- The Holy Spirit gives us **Clarity**
- The Holy Spirit gives us **Power**

The Holy Spirit has rightly been called "**The Forgotten God.**" We sing and pray to the Father. We are all about Jesus. But we don't talk or study or think very much about the Holy Spirit. Yet we know from Scripture that **the Holy Spirit is fully God**, just as Jesus is. We know that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit so our relationship with God is entirely dependent on our relationship with the Holy Spirit. And we know that the Holy Spirit is God's greatest gift to us, through whom we have access to all of God's other gifts.

After teaching his disciples to pray the Lord's Prayer and ask for things from their Father in heaven, Jesus concluded with this line:

### **The Holy Spirit is God's Greatest Gift to Us**

*"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven **give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**" Luke 11:13*

We ask God for all kinds of things, but there is **only one thing that we need** - a closer walk with the Holy Spirit; a deeper knowledge of the God who dwells in our hearts. Much more could be said, but here are four facts about the Holy Spirit. First,

#### **1. The Holy Spirit Fills Us with the Life of God**

*"I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been **clothed with power from on high.**" Luke 24:49*

*"For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.**" Acts 1:5*

Notice the two words used here - **clothed and baptized**. To be clothed is to be fully enwrapped, enveloped and enclosed. The believer is clothed with the power of God at the

moment that he or she is baptized with the Holy Spirit. That happens at the moment of salvation.

The instant you put your faith in Jesus, **your sins were washed away** and you were born again - a righteous and holy child of God, **prepared to become the temple of the Holy Spirit**.

**Baptism means immersion**. At that very moment of saving faith you were immersed in the Holy Spirit. It's why the great commission talks about being "baptized INTO THE NAME" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Water baptism is a visual representation of the spiritual reality. Just as you are fully immersed in water, so **you are fully immersed in the Holy Spirit**. And it actually goes further than that - we are not just clothed by or immersed in the Spirit - we are indwelt by Him! The Spirit of the living God moves into your soul.

### **1. The Holy Spirit Fills Us with the Life of God**

*"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that **God's Spirit dwells in you?**" 1 Corinthians 3:16*

Think about that for a minute. The shekinah glory of God that once dwelt in the Jerusalem Temple - and was so blindingly spectacular that you couldn't even get near it - **that glory now lives in US**. WE - the gathered people of God - are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Each of us a stone in the great global temple made of of all of God's children everywhere.

Listen to how Paul prays for believers in Ephesians 3 -

### **1. The Holy Spirit Fills Us with the Life of God**

*"That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power **through his Spirit in your inner being**, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith... to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**." Ephesians 3:16-19*

That is a mind-blowing prayer, pleading for faith to believe this unbelievable truth: we have been **filled with the fullness of God!** The Holy Spirit is not less than God but is fully God - and the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts. Hold on to that truth. It is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise in the Great Commission - "I will be with you always, to the end of the age."

Here's a second fact about the Holy Spirit.

### **2. The Holy Spirit Gives us Direction**

*“And the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over and join this chariot.’ ...And when they came up out of the water, **the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away**, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.” Acts 8:29,39*

The Holy Spirit leads us on **the when and where of preaching the gospel**. Two examples. In **Acts 8**, **the apostle Philip** was directly led by the Spirit to preach the Gospel to an Ethiopian Eunuch by explaining an Old Testament Text that scholarly official was reading. Of all the passages he could have read, the man was studying Isaiah chapter 53!

Now, these were exceptional days when the Holy Spirit was first poured out. Today it's not usually quite this dramatic - with the Spirit explicitly telling us, “Go over to that guy's chariot” and then whisking us away to who knows where. But the principle still applies. **The Spirit leads us, prompts us, nudges us** - so that you know when and where to go and talk with someone.

Here's another example in **Acts 16** with **Paul** and his missionary team:

*“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been **forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia**. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them**. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.” Acts 16:6-8*

Notice first how the Spirit led the team so specifically. Notice that **timing is everything**. A couple of years later Paul would go to Asia and plant a bunch of churches including the one in Ephesus. But early on the time wasn't right.

Also notice the name of the Holy Spirit - **“The Spirit of Jesus.”** Here we see the unity of the Godhead. The Spirit is one with Jesus just as Jesus is one with the Father. God in three person - One God, three persons. Continuing in Acts 16:

*“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that **God had called us to preach the gospel to them**.” Acts 16:9-10*

How did the Spirit block them from going into Asia? Not sure. Was it emotional? Or was it practical? Maybe travel or weather or some local legal policy prevented them - they couldn't get a religious visa... When one door closes, another opens - and the call comes to go to Macedonia.

I had an intern in Chicago **we'll call Tim**. He has a remarkable story. He grew up in Kosovo in the '90s, a Muslim. In '98 he and his family had to evacuate, becoming refugees. At the age of 8, his mother died. His family was Muslim but only nominally so, like most in Albania



(the country that surrounds Kosovo). So he started going to a community center run by a Christian woman named Nadine.

[Insert Tim's family picture here in PPT - excluded from manuscript for privacy / online safety reasons]

Over the next several years, Nadine spent time with Tim - caring for him, teaching him English and eventually teaching him about Jesus. As a young teenager, Tim joyfully gave his heart and life to the Lord Jesus - but this put him in a difficult place in his family - who were still Muslims. When he was old enough, Nadine encouraged him to **go to Moody Bible Institute** in Chicago for college, which he did. As he was getting ready to graduate from Moody four years later, unsure of what to do next, he ran into a speaker at Moody's Founder's Week - a preacher by the name of Colin Smith.

Colin was intrigued by his story, asked about his plans to go back to Kosovo as a missionary and encouraged him to continue his studies at Trinity and do an **internship at The Orchard** - which is how I was blessed to get to know him. Tim completed his masters at Trinity and his internship at The Orchard. And around two years ago he moved with his wife and children **back to Albania as a missionary**.

Now Tim is part of a movement that is seeking to **multiply disciples and churches eastward** along the route Paul once followed west to plant churches. It's called **the Via Egnatia**. Starting in Durres, Albania in the west, traveling through Thessalonica and Philippi en route all the way to Istanbul.



Tim followed the Spirit's leading to study in Chicago. Then he followed the Spirit's leading to do an internship at The Orchard. Now he has followed the Spirit's leading to go back to his homeland with the Gospel. Even more remarkably, his wife has followed the Spirit's leading to move from her homeland in Michigan, with their three small children, to Albania!

This is what the Holy Spirit does - **he gives us clear direction on when and where to preach the good news**. When the time is right, you'll feel an unmistakable prompting from the Holy Spirit to move. Go! You're getting your mail, you see a neighbor you haven't spoken with for a while - and you feel this strange urge to go. That could well be the Holy Spirit moving you to have a conversation.

**We need to measure our success not in CONVERSIONS but in CONVERSATIONS**. The timing of someone's salvation is between them and God. But engaging people in conversation is part of our God-given mission to make disciples of all nations. Remember, to preach the Gospel it's necessary to use words. And the Holy Spirit will lead you on the when and the where.

**I dare you to pray for an opportunity** to share with someone this week. I dare you. Pray every day, "Lord, lead me to someone I can share my faith with." Watch for opportunities - and then be like a football running back - when the opening is there, GO!

Third way the Spirit helps us - He gives us clarity when we preach. Luke chapter 12 -

### **3. The Holy Spirit Gives Us Clarity**

***"When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."*** Luke 12:11-12

Notice the Spirit doesn't promise to give us all the words two weeks in advance. "In that very hour," is when the words will be provided. Remember when the nation of Israel was at the edge of the Jordan River? They had come back to the Promised Land after their 40 year Time Out and it was in flood stage. God said, "It's time - cross the river."

Imagine if you were one of the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant... Especially if you were one of those first two guys who had to take that first step into a fast moving river. Listen to how it worked in Joshua 3 -

### **3. The Holy Spirit Gives Us Clarity**

***"And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap."*** Joshua 3:13

The rushing river water didn't stop flowing until the soles of their feet rested in the waters. **You've got to GO before you KNOW**. They couldn't wait for the water to stop - it never would have stopped. They had to **step forward in faith** like Indiana Jones in the Last Crusade. And AFTER they stepped into the rushing river - THEN it stopped. Back to Luke 12.

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“In that very hour” the Spirit will teach us what to say. Not before. **Just in time.** God loves to build our faith by challenging us and then showing us how He will come through.

I accepted this arrangement years ago, saying, **“Lord, if you give me the words, I will say them.”** Sometimes, I’m telling you, it’s like my opening line is emblazoned on the inside of my eyeballs. I can see it like Iron Man’s heads up display. And usually it’s very simple. We were at a theme park a month or so ago and it was, “Can I take your picture?” followed by this PhD level question, “So where are y’all from?”

I know I’m an extrovert and not everyone likes to have conversations with strangers like I do. But God has promised to give us words when we need them. Again - I dare you to try it. Ask for words. When the Spirit leads you with that Green Light - “Go!” trust Him to give you the words to say. One more way the Spirit helps us:

### 4. The Holy Spirit Gives Us Power

*“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been **clothed with power** from on high.” Luke 24:49*

Jesus had previously taught his followers, “I am the vine, you are the branches... apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:8). That looked ahead to our relationship with the Holy Spirit. **Apart from Him we can do NOTHING.** The first command of the Great Commission was STAY. WAIT. You’re not ready until you have the Holy Spirit.

Now we HAVE the Spirit, so **our command is GO!** We don’t need so much the “stay” “wait” “hold on.” These days we need more of the urging to faith and obedience. Believe the truth that the Holy Spirit lives in you - and step out in His power to preach the Gospel. Hear God’s Word in Acts 1:8

### 4. The Holy Spirit Gives Us Power

*“**You will receive power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

This ties our message together for today: **God’s promises give us confidence.** He promised to give us power by filling us with His Spirit. God has delivered on that promise. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is always with us in the person of the Holy Spirit. He will never leave us or forsake us. And **God’s Spirit gives us boldness.**

Brothers and sisters, we cannot fail. We cannot lose. We WILL BE HIS WITNESSES. And when the opportunity comes for you to testify this week, the Holy Spirit will give you the words to say!