

Luke Chapter 24

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[0 : 00] God has indeed done great things for us and let us come to him in prayer and continue to give him our thanks and praise.

Let us pray together. Oh Lord, you are so very good and everything you do is good and everything you do is great. Oh Lord, we thank you that you are the God who does great things for us, for the people that you have made.

Even if we don't know you or recognize you, you're the God who's given us life. You're the God who's given us health and strength to be here today. You're the God who's provided for us food and clothing and housing, families and friends.

You're the God who gives all good things. But we thank you that those of us who know you, who know that great love of yours, that great grace of yours, we've got so much more to thank you for.

Lord, you've given the greatest gift in the whole of the universe. You gave the gift of your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, God himself. You gave him up for us, gave him to come to us, to make yourself known to us.

[1 : 08] But more than that, you yourself, Lord Jesus, the very son of God, gave yourself up to suffer and to die in our place. You gave yourself as a sacrifice for our sins, to provide payment for the debts, for the penalty, for the judgment, Lord, that is upon us because of our sin.

We thank you that you purchased full and complete forgiveness so that just as we've sang the vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Lord, we all are sinners. There's none of us here who is good enough for you. None of us here who has done what is right, even to our own lives, even to our own hearts and consciences.

Never mind to your word, your truth and your law. But we thank you that Jesus came for sinners. He didn't come for good people, for there are none of us but good.

But Lord, we thank you that he came for sinners, came to rescue us. Rescue us, Lord, from our sin. Rescue us from the consequences of it, the penalty of it, Lord, which is eternal judgment from you.

[2 : 15] But to rescue us too from the bitterness of it, Lord, in this life, from the consequences of our sin, in its brokenness of marriages and relationships and families and homes and lives, which we see all around about us.

You came to rescue us and bring us into the peace of God, the love of God, the joy of God. Thank you, you yourself, Lord Jesus, declared. I've come that they might have life and have it in abundance, have it to the fullest extent.

Oh, Lord, our God, to know you is life. To not know you is not life. It's just an existence, just a treadmill. It's just getting through the week and getting through the day.

But thank you that when we know you, we have purpose and reason. When we know you as the God who not only made us but loves us and saved us and brought us into his family, then, Lord, we have so much to live for, so many benefits.

And, Lord, we ask that we might not be forgetful of them. But even in this time together, we may be reminded of all the good things you've done to us. And that, Lord, in our hearts, there may be that re-echo, that response which says, Lord, we love you.

[3 : 24] And we want to live for you, to follow you, to trust you, and to make your goodness known. Help us then in this time. Grant your blessing upon us, we pray.

That your Holy Spirit may be at work in our minds and hearts and lives, making more of your grace and love known to us. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We're going to turn now in our Bibles and to Luke and chapter 24. Gospel of Luke, chapter 24.

And if you've got one of the red church Bibles, that's page 1061.

Page 1061 in the church Bible. We're going to pick up from verse 13 and read through to verse 32.

[4 : 24] Verse 13. This is on Easter Sunday, the very first Easter Sunday. After Christ had been risen from the dead, but still many of his disciples were unaware of that. And were still grieving over his death.

So verse 13 picks up what happens to two of them. That same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them. But they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, What are you discussing together as you walk along?

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them named Cleopas asked him, Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?

What things? He asked. About Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed, before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.

[5 : 36] But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. What is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us.

They went to the tomb early this morning, but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the woman had said.

But they did not see Jesus. He said to them, How foolish you are. And how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

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.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he was going further. But they urged him strongly, Stay with us, for it is nearly evening.

[6 : 36] The day is almost over. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

And he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, Were not our hearts burning within us? While he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us.

Well, it was the year 1522. The city was Zurich in Switzerland. And most importantly, it was during Lent.

According to the law of the church, at the time only fruit and vegetables were to be eaten throughout Lent. Zwingli, Ulrich Zwingli, was a pastor in Zurich.

He wrote a leaflet in defense of the sausage-eating friends. In his widely read leaflet, he argued that the Bible does not say anything about eating sausages in Lent.

[7 : 35] But from that inauspicious start, the Reformation began in Switzerland. Zwingli had come through the reading of the books of Martin Luther to this conclusion that the Bible, not the church, was the supreme authority about what we should or shouldn't do in faith and practice.

As I said earlier on when we were looking at those slides, 2017 is the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation when Martin Luther, this teacher monk, placed a notice that raised questions about the church's teaching and practice.

That notice is often called the 95 Theses. Its effect was to turn the whole of the Western world upside down. So over the next several mornings, what I intend to do, God willing, is to be thinking about how that event 500 years ago affects us today and looking at five key truths that Luther and the other Reformers rediscovered in their day.

Although this Reformation led to sweeping changes politically, socially, across Europe, the Reformation was primarily about God, knowing him and his salvation and forgiveness.

Luther and those who were later attached to him, known as Protestants, firmly believed that the greatest need in the world and in the church was a return to the source of Christianity.

[9 : 09] They were not looking to bring new ideas. The Reformation was not about something new, something different, something revolutionary. But instead, they saw that the only way forward was to actually go back, to go back to the sources.

And that, of course, meant going back to the Bible. The Catholic Church did believe in the Bible. They believed it was God's word, but they didn't consider it to contain all that God wants us to know, all of God's will.

Alongside the Bible, the Catholic Church held there was equal authority in the traditions, in the declarations, of councils and of the Pope. And therefore then, as even today, what the Catholic Church believed and practiced was based not on the Bible, but on human ideas and human traditions.

And so the first thing, really, that the Reformers declared and reasserted was this, and they used this Latin phrase, because Latin was the language, sola scriptura, only the Bible, or scripture only.

Now, at this point, you may be sitting there thinking, what on earth has this got to do with me? What has a Latin phrase from 500 years ago got to do with my life today?

[10 : 32] Or you may be thinking, well, I came to church this morning to hear what God has to say in the Bible, to hear from his word. I haven't come here for history. Let me show you that the relevance of the truths of the Reformation are as contemporary and up-to-date today as they were then.

And those truths are as vital to our walk with God and our faith and our living, even if we do not realize it just yet. But I hope that we will.

And so what I'm going to do is look at the five phrases which begin with the word sola over these next several weeks or so. Beginning with that one, I said, sola scriptura, the Bible only, scripture alone.

Well, what does it mean? What did it mean for these men? What is it they rediscovered? What does it mean for us as well? Well, the first thing very clearly that they believed and they taught was this, the Bible speaks.

Or rather, they put it in this way, the Bible is clear. There's a clarity in the scriptures. The Bible speaks. The Catholic Church taught that the Bible could only be interpreted by the church, through the church, through its understanding.

[11 : 47] Ordinary people couldn't understand the Bible. They couldn't understand what it said. They couldn't understand what God wanted. It had to first come through the church. The church had to filter the Bible and its truths.

It had to explain them and make them known. Now, of course, at the time, 500 years ago, majority of people in Europe and in Germany where Luther was were illiterate.

Probably only 5% to 10% could read their own language, never mind Latin, which was the only translation of the Bible. And even if they could read, there were no Bibles for them to read.

Churches didn't have Bibles at the front as they do nowadays. There were very few copies and any Bibles were the property of the church and they were kept safely locked away from people because they would be too dangerous them to handle in monasteries and libraries and so on.

That's why, as Luther began later on in his life, he was keen to translate the Bible from its original, not from the Latin, but from the original Greek in which it was written and translated into the language of the people, the language of the German people, that they could have it in their hands.

[13 : 02] But the Reformers believed something more than that, more than the importance of being able to read the Bible in your own language. They believed that God had worded the Bible in such a way that any Christian believer could read it and understand what God was saying.

They based their belief in these things in what the Bible has to say about itself too. In Psalm 119, the writer writes, the unfolding of your word gives light, it gives understanding to the simple.

The simple is not someone who is intellectually challenged, but somebody who doesn't know God, doesn't know the truths of God. And in Deuteronomy 29, we read, the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of his law.

They believe that the Bible speaks, that it has something to say, that it's God's word to us, and that we read it, we can understand it. That's why Jesus was a little bit harsh, you may feel, with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, when they said, we don't understand what's going on about Jesus and his death and about him possibly rising again.

And he says, how foolish you are, how slow to believe all the prophets have spoken. In other words, he's saying, look, it's clear in the Bible, if you knew your Bible, and for Jesus, of course, that was the Old Testament then, then you'd understand.

[14 : 25] He challenged his opponents again and again when they brought questions to him about the traditions that they had made. He would challenge them and said, have you not read what God said to you?

He expected them to read it and understand it. See, some people think the Bible is a secret book full of codes and mysteries. Only the initiated, only the very intellectual, only the really theologically read can understand what God is saying.

Even perhaps as Christians, there may be a fear of reading the Bible ourselves. Because we think, well, I'm not going to understand. I don't understand. But in fact, that's quite the opposite.

The Bible has been designed by God and given to us by God in the simplest of language. God has stooped down to our level in that sense and made himself known to us in words that we can read and understand.

Now, yes, there are hard parts of the Bible. There are parts of the Bible that we have to be careful how we handle and study and think clearly about and not just rush into our own application.

[15 : 31] But the essential truths about who God is, why Jesus came, how we can know God, how we can follow God, all those things are there clearly and plainly for us to read.

So the question is, dear friends, to you and I, are you reading your Bible? Are you reading it daily? Are you reading it with that realization or that expectation that you'll understand it and apply it to your own lives?

The Bible speaks. The second thing that sola scriptura means is that the Bible commands. In other words, the Bible is authoritative for all of our lives.

It has something to say with authority. It doesn't just speak suggestive ideas or thoughts or perhaps or so on. So we go back to the sausage party in Zurich all those years ago.

The church had made a rule saying that a person could eat this and could not eat that during Lent. But it was a rule that was found nowhere in the Bible. That was Zwingli's point.

[16 : 39] You're making the Bible say something it doesn't say. You're making a law. You're telling people this is what God wants when God hasn't said that's what he wants. The church was acting as if it had the final authority and not the Bible itself.

The church at that time was saying oh we are the ones who have the power to say yes or no. We have the power over the Bible instead of the Bible having authority and power over our lives.

If the Bible is God's word which we truly believe that it is then surely what it says must be more authoritative must be more dependable must be more reliable must be more accurate than what any man can say any church any council or any pope can say.

That's why we must be very careful dear friends whenever we hear somebody preaching or teaching or speaking about God whatever their religion whatever their background we need to ask ourselves is what they're saying true?

So often sadly we take it as being taken as read that if somebody speaks and they call themselves or have been appointed as some sort of religious leader that what they say is right but we've got to go back to the source go back to the Bible is it in keeping with that?

[18:00] The apostles were called up before the religious leaders of their day because they'd been preaching about Jesus and about his resurrection and they had been commanded by those religious leaders not to preach in the name of Jesus but this was their response judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God of course it's clearly right to obey God rather than people the Bible is God's revealed will for everybody it's for everybody it's for everybody as we've said it speaks so that whoever reads it can understand about God and what he's like and what his will is and his laws and his commands are so it is for every single person in every part of the world but dear friends for those of us who are Christians those of us who have come to know the God of the Bible it is more so the case that we must pay attention to it here's what Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3 16 all scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching rebuking correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work our lives are to be guided chaperoned directed instructed by what God says in the word not by the latest trends around about us now in 1500 the trends as it were the things that people did the way they lived was all directed and controlled by the Catholic Church but even in today dear friends there is nothing equal to nothing that has to have the first place in our lives above the Bible not what our friends say at school not what we see upon the television not what we read about in the media no theories or traditions not even our own personal experiences can override the Bible we are to give it our greatest attention and we cannot ignore the Bible if this is God speaking to us again which we believe it is then surely we should be concerned to hear it the reformers didn't just believe that the Bible had some blessing upon us simply by reading it in that sense there was something that had to happen there had to be a right attitude to it but they recognised that when God's word is taught accurately and correctly as it should be in keeping with the rest of the Bible then God is speaking

Luther said this people generally think if I had the opportunity to hear God speak in person I would run until my feet bled but you have the word of God in church and this is God's word as surely as if God were speaking to you in the day and age in which we live many Christians have turned away from the Bible or neglected the Bible to say I want to hear directly from God I want a voice from heaven or a voice through a prophet or a voice through a messenger I want to hear God speak in a supernatural way but dear friends this is God's supernatural word this is God's instruction to us this is God's voice to us this is God's presence with us they recaptured the wonder and the joy and the blessing of God's word and actually the sufficiency of God's word everything that we need to know for our Christian life is here we live in a world don't we where people are rushing here and there

I want some advice I want guidance I want counselling I want somebody to show me what to do I want to know how to make these decisions and here is God's word and we neglect it to our peril because it is sufficient for everything that we want and need sola scriptura means also that the Bible saves in other words that in the Bible God has revealed the only way of salvation God has revealed the only way for us to be right with God to know forgiveness to know his love to enter into his family to become a Christian again the Catholic Church of the day claimed that it was the channel that gave salvation yes God saved but he could only save as you were part of the church and did the things that the church told you to do it was the one that gave you salvation it was the one that gave you forgiveness only by obeying its teaching could a person receive forgiveness or be right with God and only the church could tell you if you were right with God or your sins are forgiven now the reformers insisted that salvation comes only through the scriptures salvation comes only through

God's word as God's word is understood as God's word is applied to our lives as we trust in the God of the word that actually we come to faith in him we read there from 2 Timothy 3 16 about all scripture being God breathed but earlier this is what Paul says to Timothy you've known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus the greatest need of the people is to know what God says not to know what the latest politician says or tweets not to know what the latest council or committee meeting says and it's only as we hear and know God's word and the gospel of God's word that we can be saved listen to how Paul explains it in Romans he says this Romans 10 and verse 13 everyone who calls on the name of the

Lord will be saved that's a wonderful truth but then he says this how can they call on the one they've not believed in and how can they believe in the one of whom they've not heard and how can they hear without someone preaching to them how can anyone preach unless they are sent as it is written how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news the world the world around around about us needs and we need God's word it explains to us it makes known to us the things of salvation particularly because it makes known to us Jesus that was the great thing that the believers the reformers the protestants found the bible is full of Jesus when we come to the bible we come to Jesus that's why we read from there in Luke 24 that's why when Jesus speaks to his disciples there he tells them beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them what was said in the scriptures concerning himself if the only way which it is for us to know God is through knowing Christ then the only way that we can know Christ is as he's revealed to us in the scriptures as the bible tells us of his life as the bible tells us of what he did what he accomplished tells us of the reality of his power to save and to forgive but the reformers taught this as well that in coming to the bible we need

[25 : 43] God himself to make it known to us yes it's simple and it's clear and it's plain it has everything we need but if we think that we can come to the bible with a wrong attitude if I can put it that way or by our own wisdom or our own strength then we are mistaken we need God's holy spirit and they believe very clearly that as we come with a right heart a prayerful desire to God's word God speaks to us and we know his presence amongst us because he sends his spirit to us there's not an automatic blessing you know you speak to some people and say yes well I'm a Christian I've read the bible but reading the bible doesn't make you a Christian any more than reading the menu at McDonald's makes you a hamburger something special has to happen it's not automatic it's not immediate it's not like some great initiation read the bible you'll be saved and write with God go to church you'll be saved no it has to be God at work by his spirit

John Calvin one of the reformers wrote this we hold we believe therefore that when God speaks that's his word he adds the power the efficiency the efficacy of his spirit since his word without it would be fruitless many people in the world who have a bible on the shelf many people in the world who are far far cleverer than me or you and they've studied and they've pulled apart and they've taken every word of the bible down but they have no knowledge of God's love they have no knowledge and assurance of forgiveness of sins they have no faith and trust in him no it's the holy spirit who does the work Paul says this in 1 corinthians chapter 2 the person without the spirit that's the holy spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of god but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the spirit wonder if you're one of those people you've got a bible maybe you've read some of the bible or heard some of the bible and it just doesn't make any sense to you and perhaps when I said well it's clear and plain you say well no it's not I don't understand it

I don't comprehend it but let me ask you how have you come to the bible how have you approached it have you approached it with that attitude with that desire for god to speak to you or have you just looked for some answers for a problem or thought that somehow it would transform transform your lives by some magic we must come dear friends as those who are longing to hear the voice of Jesus to hear the voice of Jesus above all the other voices of the world that are clamouring and calling for us to do this or live this or believe that we must come to god's word as it is only the scriptures only they can offer me what I'm looking for only they can produce in me the life that I know god desires I'm going to close with these words of psalm 119 a wonderful psalm that speaks about the blessing and the joy of knowing god's word this is something of the prayer of the man who wrote it I wonder if it echoes in our hearts as well teach me lord the way of your decrees that I may follow it to the end give me understanding so I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart direct me in the path of your commands for there

I find delight turn my heart towards your statutes and not towards selfish gain turn my eyes away from worthless things save my life according to your word fulfill your promise to your servant so that you may be feared notice it's a prayer teach me give me understanding direct me turn my heart let's pray together now lord our god we are so grateful that you are the god who makes himself known the god who wants to be known you're not a god who's hidden himself away you're not a god who is secretive you're not a god who is concealing you're a god who is revealing we thank you that in this world in which we live we see the marks of your handiwork we see the beauty of your creation and they speak of you but we thank you for your word particularly that you've given us that we might not be in the dark that we might not be ignorant of you but that we might see that you're a god who made us and a god who calls us to himself god who has the right to command and direct in our lives what is good and proper no other person does no other human being whether they be a church or a council or a pope or a preacher or whoever lord not even ourselves have the right over our own lives because our lives belong to you we thank you for giving us your word we pray oh lord that just as the psalmist prayed and just as the disciples experienced so we pray that you would direct us and teach us and give us understanding lord that you give us a passion and a desire to hear your voice help us lord to see that in our hands we have the most precious possession god speaking making himself known that there we can find jesus and know him we pray oh lord that as we are excited about your word and its power and effect on our lives so lord we may be excited to share and to tell others where they too can find the god who speaks we ask oh lord again your help your guidance your leading we ask again oh lord that you would keep us close to your truth and your word where many voices clamor and call out for us to do this or do that or be that or be this help us lord to have our ears attuned to your voice a voice that only wants the very best for us a voice which will only direct us into what is good and we ask these things as we bring our prayers to you now in jesus name amen now may the word of god be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path for the word of the lord is eternal it stands in the heavens and his faithfulness continues through every generation amen you you you you you you you you you