

From the Table to the Road

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0 : 00] Let's invite George to come up and read Scripture for us. Our reading this morning is from Luke's Gospel, verses 28 to 53.!

And they said to each other, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened the Scriptures to us?

And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon. Then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace to you.

But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?

[1 : 37] See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, Have you anything here to eat?

They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. Then he said to them, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ shall suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. 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.

[3 : 03] Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

And they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple blessing God. And may God bless to us this reading from his own precious and most holy word.

Amen. Let's pray together. Lord, we give thanks for summer and for the great weather we've had, and we pray for our kids and our teens as they enter their school break.

We ask more than anything else, Lord, that you would give them childlike faith, faith appropriate to their age, and that we as adults would learn from it, that we would see what it looks like to believe. And we pray that you would protect them as they travel, as we all do, and bring them back to us at the end of the summer. And Lord, we thank you for the people that have been part of this church family that will now be leaving us.

[4 : 09] I pray today for Axel, our dear friend. And we give thanks for him and all he's meant to this community and for his testimony of faith and for his love, his kindness, his friendship, his faithfulness.

Lord, so we ask that you would bless him and keep him as he goes from us. And we do pray, Lord, as in every person that leaves, that if it be your will, you would bring them back to this church family at some point. And for anybody else that may be leaving, I might not know about, Lord.

I do pray and lift these same prayers for them as well. Now, Lord, I give you thanks for every single person here today. And I ask that as we come to your word, you would open our hearts, that you would meet us where we are, and that the Holy Spirit would condescend and illuminate the Bible for us, that we would be transformed, that our faith would be strengthened, that maybe you would give

us the gift of faith today for the very first time.

And so we pray for that. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. We have been working through the Road to Emmaus story for three weeks already. This is our fourth week looking at the same passage. And so far in the story, we've met two travelers that are walking on the way to the Road to Emmaus. And then this stranger meets them on the highway.

[5 : 18] And the reader, you as the reader, know that the stranger is Jesus. But they don't know that because they're blind. They can't see him. And we're told in the story that he opens their eyes.

He changes their life by opening the Word to them. So two different sections, both to the two travelers to Emmaus, but also the 11 later on. He goes through the Old Testament, the Torah, the five books of Moses, and the prophets from Joshua forward, from the Psalms to the writings. And he shows that how Jesus was already preached in the Old Testament and how the cross was necessary, verse 26, that the cross had always been preached, even from the ancient areas from the time of the Old Testament.

He opens their eyes fully at the table. They finally get to the road to Emmaus, I should say, and he breaks the bread and their eyes are open and they can see him. We've said every week that this story is paradigmatic of the normal, completely ordinary Christian life that God meets us, Jesus meets us on our roads, on our ordinary roads, and he opens our eyes to see our minds by way of the Scriptures, the Old and New Testament.

And then the point of the Christian life is that one day he will bring you all the way to the table, to the banquet feast, and you will sit down with Jesus and you will see him face to face, and you will break bread with him, and that this is a paradigm.

[6 : 38] He wants us, week one we said, we don't know all the reasons, but Jesus wants every single one of us to believe him by hearing the word before we ever get to see him.

And so that means that we've all been called to live this life by faith before one day when we can live by sight, where we can actually see him and sit across from the table. Now today, we start at the table, and in verse 31, he's there at the table with them, and he breaks the bread, and their eyes are open.

And then all of a sudden, it says in verse 31 that he vanishes, and that's where we pick up today. Remember, when they were walking on the road, in verse 21, we learn that they were depressed, they were without hope.

It said that they had hoped he was going to be the Redeemer, the Messiah of all of Israel. They had hope, but they had lost that hope because they thought their Messiah was dead. And now, as they sit at the table, and he broke bread for them, that thought became something different, and it became something more like this.

They had said, they crucified him. Full stop. He's dead. But now, as they see him, they can say, they crucified him, and that is the very way he has redeemed Israel.

[7 : 53] He has redeemed us. And so their eyes are open. They believe. They see him. They have sights, not only faith. But then, sort of the surprise of the passage is that he vanishes, and the reader is left.

We're left sitting there thinking, why did he vanish? In other words, the whole Bible has been culminating to this moment. If the whole Bible has been teaching that the Messiah must die and must rise from the dead, then finally, this moment where the curtain's pulled back and they can see the resurrected Lord, and he's sitting there in front of them, you think, surely this is the moment where the Lord is going to inaugurate everything that was promised in the Old Testament, and the Edenic Garden is going to fall down upon earth, and these disciples are just going to get to break bread with him forever, and instead, he's gone.

He vanishes in that moment. Why does he do it? And I think that the reason he does it is because, again, this is a paradigm of the normal Christian life. This moment of him showing himself, this is the great hope, the beatific vision, and the vision of God of every Christian, but then he departs. Why? Because he's foreshadowing the fact that he must ascend, that the work was not yet finished. He was going to be with the Father. So you remember maybe in the garden, Mary Magdalene, when she finally saw him, the text says that she clung to him and gave him a big bear hug, and he had to say, don't cling to me.

In other words, the work is not yet done. And so here, they finally see him like Mary Magdalene, and then he just disappears. And you're left thinking, Lord, why didn't, why can't you just stay? Why can't you just inaugurate the new heavens and the new earth right here in this moment?

[9 : 35] And the reason is, well, we don't know all the reasons. But he disappears, he vanishes in this moment because he's telling us that the work is not finished.

And so from the table, from sight at the table, he sends them back out onto the road. And that also is the normal rhythm of the Christian life, that when you come to see him, when you come and realize that you are walking on his road, that he's set before you, he then, after giving you faith, sends you out.

And he says one thing, and this is the great identity marker of the Christian life, and it's found in our passage in verse 48 in a single word, and it's the most important word of Christian identity until he comes again, and he says, you will be my witnesses.

And so we don't know all the reasons that the Lord in that moment doesn't just inaugurate the new heavens and the new earth, but we do know that until we get to the table, the banquet feast at the end of our days, he has in this moment then commissioned them and said, you will be my witnesses.

And that is fundamental identity of a normal Christian. And it was for the two travelers, and then it became for the 11, and then if you, that's just the beginning, the prologue to the book of Acts that Luke also wrote, where in Acts chapter 1 verse 8, he says, to the whole church, you will be my witnesses from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth.

[10 : 57] And so today we come, and the Lord says at the end of this series, you will be my witnesses. Let me tell you three things that this story teaches us about what it means to be a witness according to the Emmaus Road.

Number one, we learn here that witnesses are emboldened to walk out into the dark. Okay, so, at the very beginning of the table, sorry, at the very end of the table, I should say, in chapter 24 verse 32, when they realize that this is Jesus, they say to each other, did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road and opened the Bible?

So when he opened the Bible and showed them himself, they realize the Lord has lit a fire in the bottom of our souls as we realize that he really is the Messiah, he really is the Redeemer.

But then as he vanishes, of course, that's not just saying that the fire was lit as the word was opened on the road, the fire is there in that moment, and in that moment it becomes an engine, and that engine of fire in their hearts for the risen Christ is the engine that then sends them out.

And so in verse 33, they leave. Now this is striking. Luke wants you to see how striking this is. They have just come seven miles from Jerusalem after he was raised from the dead.

[12 : 21] It took them all day. Luke goes out of his way in verse 28 and 29 to say the day was drawing to a close. They were tired. They urged Jesus not to keep going.

They wanted him to come and they pulled him in. It says it's too dark. The day's over. You're exhausted. We're all exhausted. If you're a first century traveler, one of the things you never want to do is to step out on a road in the dark.

And you can read all about that throughout the ancient Near East and documents we have extra biblical literature that talk about how dangerous it is to travel in rural roads. I mean, how many of us want to walk through the rural roads of the highlands in the middle of the night?

Probably hardly any of us, but in the first century, boy, that is something you do not do. And as soon as they see him and he vanishes, they get back up after just having arrived and walk straight back to Jerusalem in the middle of the night in the dark.

Why? Why? And the answer is because they believe the resurrection. And what we learn here is that when you come to believe in the resurrection, it gives you a ministry energy that you didn't have before.

[13 : 33] I can attest, many of you can attest, that ministry makes you tired. But when you believe the resurrection, there is a ministry energy, a fire, an engine that gets lit in your life that sends you back out on the road even if that road means walking straight into the darkness.

And so there's a great reversal in this moment where they are exhausted, they're so tired, and yet at the same time when they see he really has risen from the dead, it sends them back out emboldened as new witnesses.

I want to ask you this morning, has your life been disrupted enough by the resurrection? Have you been emboldened to go out into the darkest places, places that you couldn't have imagined you would be able to because you believe the resurrection?

Is the resurrection a doctrine merely, a doctrine that if you were asked to check mark your confessional beliefs that you can just file away and say, check, I do believe the resurrection? Yes, we need that. And is the resurrection a historical reality, a future reality that has disrupted your life and changed you and unsettled you and sent you back out on the road as witnesses?

[14 : 48] One of the cultural idols that the sociologists, the theologians, the philosophers talk about so much in our time and we've talked it to death here, I know, but is the reality that the modern person is curated to be an autonomous self.

Autonomous meaning self-governed, self-ruled, self-defined. And in the modern story, we're told that you are the author of your own life, you create your own path, your own meaning, your own purpose.

It's your truth, it's your journey, it's your terms, you are in charge of yourself. self-control, it's worth noting that the resurrection won't allow for that narrative.

The resurrection is the fact in the middle of history that says that you can't just be in charge of your own life anymore, you can't just decide who you're going to be anymore. The resurrection actually disrupts you so much, it disrupts all of history so much, that it's got to change us, it's got to change the way that we're living our life today.

Last week, we talked about two great desires that every human has to reach the end of the road at the table and the two great desires are we were made to see God, to see the beauty of God's face and that happens in the face of Jesus Christ at the end of our road and we were made to do so in healed, resurrected, uncorrupted bodies in the land of the living and what we're being asked to do here is to say if that's true, if one day because of the resurrection I will see the beauty of the face of God in the face of Jesus Christ and I will do so with an uncorrupted, resurrected, healed, healed body then just those two simple facts, the very things you were made for have got to change the way, mean something for the way we're living life today.

[16 : 27] The simple fact that that is the end of our road has got to dictate to some degree how we're going to live life on the journey, on the way that we've been sent back out to in the historical moment we're in right now and so that's why in the book of Acts we've said every week, I know, but we've said that in the book of Acts Christianity was called The Way, six different times we're told it's called The Way.

We see here because when you have faith in Jesus and you believe the resurrection the next thing that happens is you get sent back out onto the road to walk the way until you see him with sight and we're simply being asked here to say, has the resurrection disrupted my life enough?

I know that in this room because I know a number of you in this room that we all have many of us have even right now roads to walk back onto when we walk out the front doors this morning that are dark that there are dark things this week for some of us even decisions that have to be made conversations that have to be had the pain that has to be endured every single one of us can talk about that to some degree.

The resurrection does not remove the darkness of the road today but instead it removes the power of the dark roads we're walking down to be the last word and so you got to say as you walk out the doors today that if the darkness I'm walking through right now if the road that I'm going down right now if there is a resurrection at the end of my life at the end of all of history then that has to matter so much for the way I'm facing the road facing the darkness the darkness is not the last word the resurrection when you encounter Jesus and you say he really has risen from the dead it has to send you back out into your life ready to face things in a way that's different that's new it's got to disrupt us it's got to change us secondly not only does encountering the resurrected Jesus make us into witnesses who are emboldened to enter into the darkness the second thing we learn here is very simple and it's just this that we are witnesses if you're a Christian today you are a witness and if you are a Christian and a witness you have been sent by Jesus now

Charles Scobie is a commentator on the gospel of Luke and he talks about this he says that this is the culmination point of the entire journey motif throughout the whole bible so you can think of Abraham being called from Babylon Chaldea to go to the promised land this journey and then Israel being called out of Egypt on the exodus wanderings through the wilderness to the promised land a journey or the psalms of ascent these journey these pilgrimages that people have to take every year and then when you get to Luke's gospel Jesus the whole frame of Luke's gospel is that the disciples have been invited to journey with Jesus from outside Jerusalem to Jerusalem to the cross and in that moment then to be sent back out again and so Charles Scobie points this out he says

that the whole bible is framed like all of history and that's that all of life has been a journey going to the middle of history where Jesus is there on the cross and then when he rises again humanity has been sent out from that moment from Jerusalem so here's another reason they go back to Jerusalem they see him they get up they go right back to Jerusalem where they've been because it all begins in Jerusalem and when you get to Acts chapter 1

[19:59] Jesus gives this thesis statement for what it means to be a witness he says you will be my witnesses from where from Jerusalem then to Judea then to Samaria then to the ends of the earth and so we learn here that we the apostles in this moment start in Jerusalem and in verse 48 he declares and says to the eleven and says to the two and says to Simon Peter you will be my witnesses and then from there we are sent back out into all the parts of the world let me show you this in just a couple ways in verse 48 he says you will be my witness you are witnesses he had appeared to the two and then we read that he had appeared to Simon Peter here and we don't know anything about that it's just mentioned there was another appearance to Simon Peter and then he says this is your fundamental identity you are now witnesses what is that a witness is a person who bears testimony to the truth it's a courtroom term and so he commissions the apostles in this first moment and then to us and says fundamental identity is now you are to bear witness like a person in court testifying to the truth out anywhere that God has sent you now we know that the apostles the travelers

Simon Peter Mary Magdalene and so many others they did this in Jerusalem you can follow the book of Acts and say they started in Jerusalem then they went to Judea then they went to Samaria and then they started to go to the ends of the earth you know Paul got to we guess maybe Spain but nobody ever as far as we know in the book of Acts nobody ever got to Edinburgh and nobody ever got to Scotland and that means in verse 48 when he says you are witnesses of these things we're being told that there is this apostolic office that Jesus creates and that apostolic office has a qualification you must have seen the risen Jesus in person but you could say as people have said well doesn't that mean they are the witnesses we're not but when you get to the book of Acts what you do is you see the apostles preaching and they preach the gospel in Philippi and Colossae and all sorts of places Colossae and they say they say you are now witnesses and those people never saw the resurrected Jesus before he ascended into heaven and we realize the only way to fulfill the great commission the only way to fulfill the thesis statement of the book of Acts to take the gospel the word of the resurrection to the ends of the earth is if it's also our job it has to be our job as well and so when you when Jesus encounters you on the road and you believe him and you say the resurrection is real an identity marker has entered into your life and you can't get rid of it it's who you are you are his witness you have been commissioned to bear testimony in the very place that God has put you in this moment in your moment in human history and so we're sent to it wasn't just a calling for the apostles the Lord is risen indeed what did they say they come to the 11 and they the 11 say we heard already from Simon Peter this has happened somehow along the way Jesus had appeared to Simon Peter after he had vanished or before I don't know with the two and they get to the room behind the locked door and the 11 say the Lord has risen indeed that's what it means to bear witness that's a testimony and so you can think about the woman at the well she was her life was changed by Jesus and she went into the village and she just said let me tell you about a man who knew everything I ever did and then these folks see him and they come to others and they just say he really did rise from the dead and that means that this commission is not for the elite this is for ordinary people this is for every one of us to go out into the city into whoever God has put you in front of in your life and just to say something simple like the Lord has risen from the dead and here are the reasons that I actually believe that and so I want to ask you a question this morning have you ever have you ever told anybody that you know if you're a believer in this room have you ever told anybody else that you know the Lord has risen from the dead and because that's the very invitation of fundamental

Christian identity is to go out into the world and be a witness and you can ask yourself today have I been emboldened by the reality of the resurrection that I'm willing to go into dark roads and for some of us today I would imagine that maybe maybe the darkest road you can possibly think about the darkest event maybe would be to actually turn to somebody in your life that you know and love and say the Lord did actually rise from the dead and boy we have to do that with wisdom we've got to think about that carefully I know but we are being called here and commanded to go out into the world and to say to somebody else the Lord has risen indeed and that is what it means to be a

witness thirdly and lastly witnesses are emboldened to go back out into the darkness we see this from the table to the road and then we are called witnesses we're sent he tells us in verse 48 and then lastly witnesses never graduate from the basics now how do we become these people how do we become these people how do we become faithful witnesses emboldened witnesses and at the very end of this story down from verse 49 to 53 we learn a few things and let me just give you four things as we wrap up and I'll just give them very briefly about what it means to cultivate your life as a witness and they're the basics really they're just the basics and they all show up right here in this passage so down in verse 50 to 53 after he blesses them in Bethany in verse 52 the way they respond to him in the earliest moment of being his witnesses we learn in verse 52 is they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and they were continually in the temple blessing God the very first thing they do to cultivate the beginning of their lives as his witnesses is they go to church they just go and worship and it says week by week they continually went back to the temple in those early moments they were trying to figure out where to worship and so we see worship move from this moment from the temple to the house church then to constructed churches a few centuries a century later but they just went to church and one of the most important things I think we can see is that it will be very difficult to cultivate fire in our hearts as resurrection witnesses if we don't have the sense that as Christians we never graduate from the basics that the word and the table Sunday by Sunday are the meat and potatoes of the Christian life and I say that in the best possible sense of meat and potatoes I like meat and potatoes I hope you do in that metaphor you never graduate from it it's not your fillet the Lord's Supper is not your fillet steak it is your tea and toast you need it all the time you need worship you need the word and the table all the time because as you're walking back out on the journey as witnesses Sunday by Sunday worship is like coming to that end for refreshment when you are desperately tired and there's an invitation here just to see what they do they modeled it for us as soon as they say I am his witness they went week by week going to places to bless him and worship and that means that if Sunday worship has become as the culture tempts us so much for it to be this way has quietly become optional once life gets tired and once life gets busy there's so many good reasons to not be in worship on a Sunday a few being sick being away but if

[27 : 57] Sunday worship with the gathered people of God has become an option based on tiredness and busyness then we've missed the calling of what it means to be a witness that's coming to the end for refreshment week by week at the word and the table so we never graduate from the basics Sunday worship as they did week by week is our is our basic diet we never progress from it the second thing we see that they did throughout this passage is just the note that these are two travelers walking from Emmaus and two travelers walking back from Emmaus to Jerusalem Jesus came alongside them and he journeyed with them and then at the very end of this passage there's some assumptions and that's from verse 49 to 50 he said in verse 49 I'm sending the promise of my father upon you but stay in the city for now until you're clothed with the Holy Spirit and then verse 50 he took them out to Bethany and he lifted his hands and he blessed them now there's a gap between 49 and 50 and we don't learn about what that gap is until you flip the page flip a couple books over to Acts chapter 1 what's the gap

Jesus stuck with them for 40 days and he disciplined them through those 40 days and he taught them more about the Bible and he walked with them and then what did they do as they left Jerusalem for the first time they decided let's go two by two let's go in groups and so one of the things you see is how do you cultivate a heart of witness that's on fire to tell somebody about the resurrection a commitment to local worship to weekly worship and then secondly we've got to walk the road with people with Christians Jesus did that with us he did that with them for 40 days and we see that as the model from this moment forward all throughout the New Testament he left them and he said now be together as you go and you take the work of witness out into the city and so this is exactly what a local church exists for to gather us every single week for the inn of refreshment the meat and potatoes the tea and toast of the word and the table and then to create a space where you can walk with somebody closely on the road of witness until you sit down with Jesus face to face at the banquet feast one day this is exactly what the local church exists for and the Old Testament raises the language of a pilgrim community and the Israelites were pilgrims longing for the city of God in the Old Testament and on the other side of the cross and resurrection we are pilgrims as well walking along a journey till we enter the city of God and so we've got to do it together does anybody here know you if you're a member if you're a regular attender of St. Columbus or if you're visiting

today from another church at your church if you're a believer does somebody know you deeply and can say that this is the person that I'm walking this road with that I'm in community with trying to do the work of witness with them among others does anybody here have that kind of relationship with you you with them it's what the local church exists for thirdly we learn here in verse 49 he tells us third of four things that we need to cultivate our life as witnesses!

He says you are witnesses of these things in 48 and then in 49 and behold I'm sending the promise of my father upon you but stay in the city until you're clothed with power now we don't we could we could do a sermon on each of these four we're not going to but what is he talking about here?

he's talking about the moment that you flip over to Acts chapter 1 and you learn that they are to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit descends and so just to say one little thing about it he is telling us he's telling them that at the beginning of the church age Jesus did not leave us alone he clothed you he sent the Holy Spirit into your life and today if you're a believer you can say the Spirit of God dwells with me and in me and as you leave and walk whatever dark road you might be facing this week with the call to witness to the resurrection to someone in your life the Spirit of God is with you and the Spirit of God dwells with you and goes from this place with you the Spirit of God is with us now in the community gathered together and it is how do you know one of the clear signs of the Holy Spirit being present in your life is that you find

Jesus to be a treasure and today I'd invite you to find the flame the light the fire reignited in your soul saying Jesus is my treasure he has risen from the dead and the Spirit is with me as I go out into the city today the Holy Spirit is with you you have been clothed in power from on high and so that means that when you go out and you say you know the darkest thing I can imagine maybe is saying to somebody else Jesus really did rise from the dead and here's the reasons I think that then you've got to then say but if the Holy Spirit really is with me and has clothed me from on high if the resurrection is actually going to happen and it is then that that changes my approach it changes my confidence it changes my courage it changes my ministry power my ministry energy and then the fourth thing the last thing is just just a very simple thing that he's telling them again to go out and to do the work of witness he's he's introducing us in this moment to the age of the church the age we live in until our faith becomes sight and that just simply means that we're being asked here at the very end of Luke's gospel to go and take a risk a beautiful bold risky life that's not afraid to spend ourselves to talk to other people about the cross and the resurrection it is normative in our culture along so many other cultural norms that are new for the 21st century and for the digital age we live in to prioritize rest and that is so good to prioritize limitation we just had

[34 : 32] Kelly Capuk speaking on that and boy that was such a help and at the same time we must also say that there is a sense in the New Testament that our life as it's lived until Jesus comes again should be full of tiredness because we have gone out and spent our ministry energy to witness to the reality of the resurrection there is a sense of both that do it with wisdom seek rest but the priority of the Christian life on the road that we're walking right now is to be witnesses to Jesus Christ and that's that's how he leaves us at the end of the gospel let me finish with this at the very end of the passage there's a moment where you can ask the question on the basis of what power could I possibly become this person so there's no hope today at all to feel guilt about lack of witness in our lives not at all because that's me instead it's the call to cultivation and say on what basis on what basis on what power could we go from here today and see where Jesus where the spirit might be leading us to share the truth of the resurrection with somebody in our lives and here it is it's found in verse 50 he led them out as far as Bethany and lifting his hands he blessed them now this is the moment we know from Acts 1 of the ascension and he noticed that he lifted his hands it says and he blessed them so he gave them what we now call from the Latin translation a benediction a benediction a good word as he ascended into heaven so in a moment

I'll also give a benediction and one of the questions to ask is why do we do benedictions in churches at the end of church why do we give a good word to the people and here's why so a benediction is not a prayer a benediction is a pronouncement by Jesus Christ of a change in your status that cannot be taken away from you and so when a minister gets up as I'm going to do in a moment and gives a benediction at the end of the service it's not a prayer asking Lord will you bless them it's the minister simply mimicking only trying to remind you I don't have any power to bless you only simply trying to remind you ministerially that Jesus Christ who has ascended into heaven has pronounced a benediction over your life and on what basis was he able to do that it's because when he went to the they said we had hoped he would redeem Israel but he went to the cross and he died

but when they saw him they could say he went to the cross and he did redeem us and that means the reason

Jesus Christ can stand here in the middle of history and lift his hands over any Christian in this room today and bless you is because the debt has been settled the cross was the fullness of the payment of your sins everything that you owed you deserved has been paid for by him and so you can hear him in the power of his resurrection you know when he lifted his hands you could have seen his scars he was a real human he had risen from the dead and that means in this moment he pronounced over you a word for all time a change of your status that you were blessed you were his and that cannot be taken away from you on what power can you go today and become more and more a witness the very thing you really are and it's to know that as we pronounce the benediction today that is true not because I say it not at all but because Jesus Christ says it over you from the heavenly places the debt has been settled the victory has been won you will rise from the dead and that means that that's got to send you back out into dark roads with ministry power with ministry boldness with ministry courage let's pray

Father we ask that you would commission us today as your witnesses Lord we feel the weakness that we have in that we come today to be re-strengthened and emboldened and given fresh eyes and fresh faith to go out into our city and to share the gospel with people to talk to people about Jesus to say the Lord has risen indeed so Lord teach us teach us the courage the virtue the strength to walk down roads that seem so difficult and dark sometimes but with boldness and courage because Lord you have risen so I pray now as we sing that you would clothe us with power by the Holy Spirit and we ask for that in Jesus name Amen Amen