

Time of Grace Ministry  
**The Healing of the Church: Proclaim Repentance and Forgiveness**  
January 29, 2012  
Luke 24: 36-49

Did you ever ask yourself this question: “Why do I exist?”

Tell me something, have you ever eaten in a hospital cafeteria? I kind of hope you haven't, but I bet many of you have because you've known loved ones and you've gone to see them at the hospital, and then you get hungry because you're there for hours at a time, so you go down to the cafeteria to eat.

What would you think if at the table next to yours you saw the wine steward come up and show the wine menu? Wouldn't that be a little weird? If the waitress came up to you to show you the menus and tell you about all the different specials of the day? Wouldn't that be just a little weird?

And what if at the table next to you somebody had the dessert cart brought over and they were having peach flambé or a Grand Marnier soufflé. Wouldn't that just seem a little odd? You're thinking, “This is not supposed to be a fine dining experience. I didn't come here for the elegance of the food; I just need something to sustain me because I'm just kind of hungry.”

When I come to a hospital cafeteria a burger will do; a ham sandwich and a bag of chips and a glass of milk or some coffee. That's enough. You don't want the hospital administration pouring all their energy and their capital investment into the dining experience. You don't go to a hospital cafeteria for the quality of the dining experience. You want them investing in the health equipment and in the staff and in the training of the medical and the lab staff. That's where you want the money!

Or what if you somehow were able to sneak up on and tiptoe up and clandestinely visit a military base, one of the forward bases that the U.S. has in, let's say, Iraq or Afghanistan. And what if you kind of just poke your nose inside one of the tents. What would you think if you saw a bed; a headboard and a tailboard and a box spring and a mattress in there for each one of the soldiers? Wouldn't that be a little weird – or even a lot weird? You might be thinking, “Hey, I don't begrudge our soldiers a comfortable night's sleep.” For Pete's sake, you and I will probably sleep on our mattress and box spring tonight. But this is the military. This is a forward base. That tent might be struck and they might be moving off to a different location in a day or a week. You don't want a whole line of army trucks behind carrying all the mattresses and the headboards and the box springs. That would be nuts! This is supposed to be a unit that can move out quickly, and so the best they'll have will maybe be an army cot or maybe even just a sleeping roll, sleeping on the ground. Someday they'll be back in America sleeping in a real bed but for now, their mission would be compromised if they had to travel with an enormous load of comfort stuff. The army's mission is not based on the comfort of its troops.

Well, what's the point in all of this? You know, it seems to me that sometimes the church can suffer from mission distraction. Just as, let's say, a hospital that put all its energy into the cuisine

or a military unit that put all its energy and investments and planning into the comfort of the soldiers is going to hurt the mission because those are non-essentials. And I know that sometimes congregations lose their focus.

Last week I talked to you about the way in which the church needs healing, because internally Satan will see to it that there's lots of quarreling, temptation for cliques, infighting, and backbiting, where he puts people against each other instead of working together; they waste precious energy fighting with each other.

Today, I'd like to talk to you about the danger of mission distraction, where people are involved in the organization we call their "church" or their "congregation" but they are not putting their energy and investments into God's mission; instead they're being distracted by other things.

Some people go to church, I think, to kind of protect themselves from the stress and changes of the world. They really prefer an experience that's just like it was when they were a child, and they basically want to go into the fetal position and just stop all the stress and change.

Some teenagers may just go to church to hang out with their friends, and they may be reluctant to actually step inside. I know when I was in my younger days, sometimes we would go to a baseball game and never make it inside the stadium because we were having too good a time out in the parking lot over the grill.

But the church can lose its focus on its mission if it's not careful, and I'd like to invite you to come with me to Luke 24 and overhear an Easter conversation between Jesus and his disciples on what is our mission.

That day was crazy. You would not have done it that way if you had just risen from the dead! If you had just appeared to people, you would have stuck around. If you've been out of town and missed family gatherings because you've been, let's say, in China teaching English for a whole year, and you came to a family gathering, you would stay. You wouldn't go through and then disappear or walk out the door after five minutes – you'd stick around. It would be weird of you to leave and yet, that's exactly what Jesus did. He would greet people, they'd freak, he'd calm them down, he would say an "I love you" message, or some blessing God has given. Then he would give them an outreach message and then he would walk away, fade away, or disappear. Do you think that didn't drive them crazy? Isn't that odd?

And then they stopped believing! It's like their conviction that the Son of God is alive again faded away, and he kept fading in and out like a bad TV picture. It's very peculiar. And I think – it's my opinion – that sounds very weird, but I think Jesus was preparing them for life. He is not going to be around us physically, visibly, every moment of every day. And as much as he wanted them to believe in his physical appearances, he wanted them – as he told Thomas – even more to believe in him when they couldn't see him. But they fell like in and out of faith in his resurrection all that day, and now it's happening again! By then, many of them had seen him earlier – Peter for instance, and John – had seen him.

But, "Then when they were still talking Jesus himself stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you,'" and they freaked. "They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost." But he

wasn't there to scare them. "People of earth, I come in peace." He's gentle! "I am bringing absence of conflict between your God and you. All is good between God and you. I did it! There's peace now. Your worst nightmares have ended. Satan can't put a glove on you anymore. He can mess with you but he's already lost. You've already gotten your score in the fight and you win. You have pre-won through me. I've brought you forgiveness of your sins. There's no guilt anymore, there's no hell for you anymore. I went to hell for you, so now there's peace."

It means that you can handle anything that comes upon your life because your God is with you, because he's going to make everything work for you – "everything" for the good of those who love him means – everything. Everything means everything. So it's all good! If he were talking to us in American-ese today he'd say, "Yo, dudes, it's all good! It's all good. I won – you win!" And then he could see that they were terrified and he said, "Why are you so troubled, and why do doubts arise your mind?" Everything's all about belief, and you're not believing in me. He said, "Look, my hands and my feet." You knew what was in his hands and feet – he kept his scars. "It is I myself! Touch me and see." This was a physical resurrection, not just a holograph or a spirit. This is not an angel. This is a real body like yours. There was a heart beating, there were lungs inflating and re-inflating right in their presence. And he said, "What can I do? You still don't believe." Now it's because of joy and amazement.

He said, "Do you got anything to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took..." and what do you suppose he did with it? "He ate it," to show that he was a human being just like them and just like you. Because he IS a real human being. Not a simulated human being, not a computer projection; a real flesh and blood human being. This was a physical resurrection from the dead, and he came back to be with them and take away their fear and give them and leave them with peace.

Now comes the cool part. He said, "You should have known this. I've been telling you this for a long time. In fact, God's spokesmen have been telling the people of God about me for a long, long time." In verse 44 he said, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me," not me, Mark – me, meaning Jesus, "in the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Jesus used a traditional three-part way to refer to the books of what we call the Old Testament. Now, they didn't have a New Testament yet, they just had the Scriptures. At Jesus' time, they never said, "Old Testament." That's a more modern kind of nickname for it. They just had their Bible, which was the thirty-nine books from Genesis to Malachi, not always arranged in that particular order, but those thirty-nine books, and we think of it as thirty-nine layers – they thought of it as three. They had groups. They had the five books of Moses – Jewish people often call that "Torah." Then there were the books of the sermons – the proclamation messages of the prophets; the big ones, the long ones and the little ones – the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. And then everything else in Hebrew they called the Ketuvim, the writings. And Jesus here gave it the nickname of the Psalms because that was the biggest and most famous of the books in that section. So he basically said, "The entire Old Testament is talking about me, and I came not to push that all away as superfluous, I came to fulfill it. I came to keep every one of God's promises." He himself, for instance, in his body in what he performed, carried out the fulfillment of what God had told Abraham: "Your Descendant, your Offspring," – with a capital "O," your descendant with a capital "D" – "in him, every man, woman and child in earth's history and on earth's surface will be blessed, Abraham,

through you.” And Jesus was the in-flesh fulfillment of those words, going all the way back to Genesis. He said, “You knew that! And God’s people have known that, and now you are witnessing the fulfillment of everything God said he was going to do.”

“Then he opened their minds,” so they could get it, and they got it. “He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer.’” It wasn’t an accident; it was on purpose. “What you thought was your life and my life spinning out of control was in fact scripted.” In fact, it was necessary, for his suffering was the making of the payment for the sin of the world, for the sin of them, for the sin of you and the sin of me. He will suffer and then, “He will rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached” – will be proclaimed. This doesn’t mean “preach” in a pulpit by a guy in a suit or a robe. This just means to be proclaimed, and you can do that as well as I, perhaps even better than I. “Will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations,” meaning worldwide. It’s starting here, right here in Jerusalem. “You’re witnesses! I’ve drafted you onto my talking team.”

“I’m going to send you what my Father has promised.” That’s a little allusion to Pentecost, which hadn’t happened yet. He had already given them one burst of spirit power to grasp what was going on. Their minds were foggy. He gave them a little clarity, but more is coming. Wisdom is coming, power is coming and, “Wait until you’ve been clothed with power from on high.”

As Jesus is talking with his disciples, almost as an offhand kind of way, he outlines the mission of the church with an almost elegant simplicity. He said, “Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name” – Christ’s name – “to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.”

This is something the world does not know. This is something that needs to be revealed. Repentance means you recognize your aching need for a Savior; you admit that something’s wrong.

Maybe you know somebody in your life who suffers from an addiction. When you’re addicted to something – whatever it might be; food or some sort of chemical or alcohol or whatever – the first casualty is the truth. People who are addicts lie, and they lie most of all to themselves, and they pretend. The sin that is in each of us, like a disease, makes us all liars and pretenders, and we need help to cut through the malarkey and get to the essence of it: that our sin makes us guilty before God. And when we’re in groups, that dysfunction also comes naturally with sinful people. And in the groups that we make we pretend and deny enjoying conflict and only being selfish, looking out for ourselves.

Repentance means that we speak a message to each other and to the world: We need a Savior. But also because that Christ suffered and rose from the dead, forgiveness of sins is announced to you and to me, and we can share that tremendous message with the world.

And the forgiveness of sins is the key to everything! It’s the most important asset you have on your balance sheet. Far more important than your money, far more important than your good looks or lack thereof. Far more important than your health or lack thereof. Far more important than your age and vitality and energy level or lack thereof. The most important thing in your universe is the forgiveness of sins. The Bible calls that the gospel; that’s kind of shorthand. But

because the word “gospel” is used in so many different ways, I’m just going to use Jesus’ plain old words – the forgiveness of sins needs to be proclaimed, starting with you proclaiming it to yourself. The Son of God bought freedom from your guilt. The Son of God broke the power of sin over your life. The Son of God ended Satan’s nightmare of laughing at you for getting you convicted in God’s court. The Son of God has come to bring you peace with God, and that you can look at him without fear, and he gives it to you. It is a priceless gift. And what has been given to you for free gets to be shared, and you get to be part of the communication team.

One of the words I don’t like in here (the text) – it’s just a personal thing, I’ll admit a prejudice – is it says that repentance and forgiveness need to be “preached.” And I think you kind of get that, but I just want to make that really clear. This isn’t talking about the job that pastors do, because most people think, “Well, preaching, that’s something that pastors do,” and to me that’s not a helpful word at all because it might make you think that somebody else is going to do that. Or that’s something you do in church where you’re sitting still in wooden benches. The most effective proclamation of this happens starting Sunday afternoon and going forward into the week where you are part of a communication effort to let despairing, depressed, fearful, angry, hurting people know that there is hope for them, that there is forgiveness for their sins. There is peace to replace that fear and conflict in their hearts. That is the church’s Job One. That is the first thing, and we need to stay on each other to make sure that we as individuals, as we seek to communicate Christ personally, that it all comes around to that in as graceful and winning a way as possible when we do our personal evangelism. But it’s important that we in groups, when we as Christians act in groups as a congregation or a school or a denomination, that that stays in the core. That is our resurrected Christ’s charge, or challenge. Everything else flows out of that.

Just as a hospital certainly wants to put out some decent food for its guests and employees and you... they don’t want them eating in a cockroach, grease-infested sleaze pit – that wouldn’t say much about the hospital. But neither do you want a hospital pouring an immense amount of their capital and energy and their best staff into how good their wine cellar is. You can have a decent place to eat, but patient care is Job One in a hospital.

Now as congregations, for instance, we do all kinds of stuff. We have a wonderful food pantry and give food away, and by now we have helped thousands and thousands of families get a boost to help some frazzled women stretch their food budget a little more when they’re struggling to survive. And the gift of food is a wonderful gift, a message of hope, we’re glad to do it – but that is not Job One.

We have given away by now thousands of bags of clothes. Our congregation has developed a network of partnership with secondhand stores and resale stores all over the state, and whatever they can’t sell they know they can give to us and we’ll give it away. And it would be interesting sometime to see if God felt like doing a cool miracle – just where are all those clothes right now? How many people walking on the streets of our city are wearing the clothes that we gave away that they got from here? Wouldn’t that be cool? And I’m thrilled that we can do that, but it’s not Job One. It is something that flows out of our conviction of what our mission is, but it is not our main mission.

We’ve educated a lot of children and helped a lot of people who were illiterate to become able to use and decode words. But as important as that is for our nation’s economy and for people being

able to get a job, it is not Job One of the church. It's good, but it is not Job One. Helping children manage numbers is very, very important but it is not Job One. And so in order for us to stay focused and to organize how we allocate energy, dollars, resources, and how we manage what we do around here and the reasons for why we gather, let us refocus on these words of our Lord Jesus and his early commissioning on the very first day of his new life, his resurrected life. And that is that his resurrection guarantees you and me two powerful things. It guarantees your physical resurrection; that you are not ever going to die. And it guarantees the forgiveness of your sins and gives you something powerful to share with other people. That is Job One, that we communicate to our world as clearly, as lovingly, as persistently as possible the good news that there is unconditional forgiving love from God. And all the other things must circle around that and reinforce that central concept that the gospel of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ is our most valuable asset, and that it only gets better the more we share that with people in any way that we can.

Jesus said some beautiful things about what that's going to mean for the disciples. He said, "I'm going to send you what my Father has promised. Stay put until you've been clothed with power." And the Holy Spirit's work is still going on. Through the Word, he is still helping you to understand the Scriptures. And through the power of the Spirit, he still gives people the courage to speak up when Satan would like you to shut up. Through the wisdom of the Spirit, he still is helping people make sense to try and grasp, "What is the central message out of all these Bible stories and all of this doctrinal talk? What really is the core of it all?" He still is helping people get that.

And the Spirit is still teaching us how to communicate it – still giving us courage to speak instead of being cowards. Still helping us to be patient and loving with people who are often kind of messy and sometimes not very nice, just as God stuck with us and is patient with us. And in this way, as we let him refocus us, we will get back onto his agenda. Because the more we jam our agenda onto our lives or the lives of our church body or our congregation – the more we push our agenda in and push God's agenda out the side – the power goes away. And God says, "Well, I'll have to get somebody else to do it."

The more we stay with this in the middle, that's where the wisdom flows in and that's where the power will flow in, as well. So as we tune into Christ's agenda, that's where our satisfaction will come from. And then all the other things, whether it's helping someone with tending to their family, whether it's helping with education and training, whether it's helping with job counseling, whether it's helping with whatever it may be, like helping them develop their own personal skills and talents of service – those are all wonderful things. But they will flow out of the main thing, which is to celebrate our immortality and forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus. And to give that away to people, starting right here – as the Bible says – right here in our city and taking it to the ends of the earth in every way we can. That is Christ's agenda; that is what he will bless.

Let God's people say, "Amen!"

Announcer: In a world where time slips by too fast, pressures increase, and dreams fade away – Pastor Mark Jeske wants to remind you that more than anything in the world, God cares about you.

That's the message Pastor Jeske and our Time of Grace team are taking around the world, into homes just like yours. But – we can't do it alone. We need people just like you, who believe in this bold dream, to help us share this life-saving, life-changing message with the world.

You can take this opportunity – now – to become one of Pastor Jeske's *Grace Partners*. When you send your regular, monthly gift of \$20 or more, you'll receive a special monthly letter from Pastor Jeske, plus four messages from Pastor Jeske each year that will never be seen on television – our way of saying "Thank You" for your partnership. You'll also receive special Time of Grace resources throughout the year.

Call us right now to become a *Grace Partner* with Pastor Jeske and Time of Grace.

I've got some great news! The new issue of Time of Grace Magazine is ready to go, and we'd like to give you your own free copy. All you have to do is give us a call or send an email or send us a letter and we'll mail you one for free. In it you'll find a new Bible study from me, some questions and answers, and other articles giving you some joy and encouragement in your Christian life.

I'd also like you to be aware of a new resource that we have on our website. If you have some issues in your life for which you would like some prayer support, go to the website that's on your screen right now. We call it our prayer wall, and there you can post your need, anonymously if you'd like, or you can also volunteer to pray for people whose needs you see there. But join us on our prayer wall if you'd like to join in and participate in our prayer ministry here at Time of Grace.

I'd like to pray with you today. Let's come to our Lord and ask for his help.

"Lord Jesus, please help your church and all its congregations to stay focused on what is our true mission. Help us to share the important but difficult message of your call to repentance – to admit our sinful need for a Savior, but also to proclaim the wonderful news that you have suffered, died and risen again to give forgiveness of sins to the world. All this we pray in your holy name. Amen."

For Time of Grace, I'm Pastor Mark Jeske, reminding you that every day is a day of God's grace for you.



# Grace Notes

Guides for Personal Bible Study

## The Healing of the Church: Proclaim Repentance and Forgiveness

**Luke 24:36-49:** While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. 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.”

### Points to Ponder

- Verse 41 lists one reason for the disciples’ disbelief? What was it?
- What two demonstrations did Jesus give to show that his resurrection was physical and real?
- Read Luke 24:46. What are the two greatest works of Christ?
- What did Jesus promise to do in order to help the disciples in their mission?
- On the basis of what Jesus said to his disciples, what is the central purpose for the church? What is its central message to be?

### The Bottom Line

After his resurrection, Jesus showed himself to the disciples and helped them to see that the Old Testament prophecies were about him. Then he promised them the gift of the Spirit so that they could go out and tell others about what he had done for the world. Through the Word, Jesus is still helping us to understand the Scriptures. And through the power of the Spirit, he still gives people the courage to speak up about repentance and the need for a Savior but also that because Christ suffered and rose from the dead, forgiveness of sins is ours. And we become part of the communication team for sharing God’s free gift of grace with others. Sometimes we as individuals or congregations get distracted from our main purpose and get caught up in other things, but here Jesus points us to our main mission.

*You can dig deeper into your Bible by reading more about these truths from the lesson:*

- He Is Alive! Matthew 28:6; John 20:19; Romans 6:4; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:20
- Repentance and Forgiveness! Proverbs 28:13; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:31; James 4:8-10; 1 John 1:9
- We Are Witnesses! Daniel 12:3; Matthew 5:16; John 15:16; Romans 10:14; 1 Peter 2:9