

Sermon on Luke 24:44-49

Pray:

Father, we come together this morning to learn from you. The Bible is your Word to us, made alive to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We confess that we are weak, that we are incapable of understanding it apart from your work. Please open our eyes and hearts to understand. We know that the Bible is a story, your story, your story that goes far beyond its pages because it is the story of the whole world and all of history. We want to understand what you say the story is about...not what we have learned before, not what we want it to be about, but what you say the story is about: Jesus. Please give us the humility and wisdom to hear from you today and please transform not only our thinking, but also our hearts. We know that the Holy Spirit always glorifies Christ. Would you please glorify Him here today in our hearts and minds? Our desire is that we would be swept up into your presence so that we leave with such a captivating picture of Jesus that we want nothing else. We love you and we trust you to do this work.

I mentioned in my announcement on Sunday that I have yet to meet anyone who doesn't love a good story. Some of my favorites are The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings Trilogy and the Chronicles of Narnia. I also, like many of you, loved watching 24. A few years ago – before they had little children to exhaust them – we would watch episodes of 24 with Kari and Eric. They would stay at our house after home group and we would always swear that we were only going to watch one episode...and usually ended up watching 3 or 4, with our time together ending around midnight. The writers of 24 always left us on the edge of our seats. And, to prove my point, and provide the perfect illustration for this talk today...look what I found in one of Richard's ESPN magazines this week. See? It's Kiefer Sutherland, but we all know it's really Jack Bauer. You can see by the lines around his eyes, his deeply serious expression and

the multiple tattoos on his arms that this is a man with a story. And the advertisers know we love a story! In fact, they COMMAND us to have a story. And not just any story...in small print here at the bottom, it says, "Be epic. Drink responsibly." I don't buy the fact that Jose Cuervo gives you a story, but, boy, do I want to be like Jack Bauer.

There's also nothing worse than a story that doesn't go anywhere. As much as postmodern thought would have us believe that it is the journey that matters, it is not. I had this absolutely miserable experience with the show *Lost*. It began as a show with so much promise...some of the greatest characters ever created and they only got better over time as they got to know each other...incredible mystery and intrigue...there was so much that couldn't be figured out...deep, thought provoking questions asked...every single week I had multiple conversations trying to figure it all out. However, as the final season began to wrap up, it became painfully clear that the writers had utterly failed. They had no idea where they were going. I hung on until the very end, ever hopeful, but they never delivered. Characters...too neatly wrapped up. Mystery...unsolved. And worst of all, essential, ultimate questions...unanswered. To sum up: Promises...unfulfilled. Angie Renich and I likened it to a bad break-up...the relationship was great, but it was so painful in the end that it wasn't even worth it. 7 years of my life wasted.

Okay, so where am I going with all of this? We love stories because we are in a story. We are in the greatest story of all time. It has all the essential elements of a story...a beautiful, pure wonderful beginning...a terrible conflict of deceit and sin and death...a promise of redemption and hope...great mystery (Where is this hope? When will it come?)...trial and suffering and sacrifice and great love...and best of all, a wonderful ending. Jesus fulfills every

single promise ever made. There is no bad break up for the Author and Hero of this story knows exactly where He is going.

As you know, our hope for this entire year is to delve into this story, to see it more clearly. Our goal today, at the start of this tale, is to see the beginning...and in seeing the beginning, to understand the purpose, the goal, and really the PERSON about whom it is written. There is a story. It is all about Jesus, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. The key to our entire story, to His Story, is found in Luke 24.

Let me set the scene for you. Jesus had died. He had also risen from the dead, but the people in the story don't know that yet. To them, the ones who hoped that He would be the Messiah, the promised One, the story had just ended tragically...hopelessly. On the way to Emmaus, two of Jesus's disciples were talking about this, trying to figure it all out. Jesus came up to them and began to talk to them, but they, for some reason, didn't recognize him. Jesus speaks to them, He says, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" He gives them a hint, a taste, that the point of the story, that the hero of the story, had been revealed...already revealed in the Old Testament...and that they had missed it. The Scripture then says, "Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scripture." I imagine every single one of us would have loved to be there that day.

They get to a village and invite Jesus (who they still don't recognize!) to their house, He breaks bread with them and gives it to them, he figuratively opens their eyes, and they finally understand who He is...and He disappears.

Now we're getting close to our text. Those two disciples head to Jerusalem, where the other followers of Jesus are assembled. Again, try to put yourselves in their shoes...they thought they understood the Story, they thought that Jesus was the hero and that His conquest would be immediate and physical...the overthrow of the Roman oppression, the restoration of the nation of Israel to their land, the descendant of David on the throne...and instead, here they are...confused, grieving, not understanding. The disciples tell them about their encounter with Jesus and right then, Jesus appears in the midst of them. He says, "PEACE be to you." Wonderful words considering their state of mind and heart. However, they are terrified...this must be a ghost! Then Jesus graciously, physically shows them that He is alive! With astonished joy, hope returns. To show He is indeed substantive He even asks for food!

You know they've got to be thinking something like, "What in the world just happened? None of this lines up with our expectations. What is this story really all about?" Our passage is Jesus's answer to this question.

Read Luke 24:44-49

Jesus begins by telling them that, although none of it makes sense to them, He really has told them all this before. Given Jesus's great compassion and love for His foolish disciples, I'm sure He did this with great patience...and perhaps a bit of the loving exasperation he expressed in vs. 25... for His disciples do not readily understand and they never really have. Many times in the gospels we hear Jesus being honest with His disciples about themselves. He tells them they are slow to learn, they are like children, and He is patient. Now, Jesus is willing to slow down and explain it all to them again. This same patience is available to us all the time. Jesus doesn't grow weary of your questions; He does not withdraw Himself when we do not understand. Even now, just as He did with the disciples, He is willing to come and help you understand His Story.

But Jesus does much more than this. If all the disciples needed – if all we needed – was an explanation from Jesus, then His followers would have understood long ago. Remember, Jesus says that what He is about to tell them is what He has been telling them from the beginning. No, there is a greater problem that must be overcome. In verse 45, Luke tells us that Jesus actually “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” This word for opened is not merely to open, but means to open completely, so that there is full access and full understanding. It is the same word that is used in verse 31, back on the road to Emmaus, where Jesus opens the eyes of the two disciples so that they recognize Him. They simply could not see Him until He opened their eyes completely, so here, too, the disciples in the room will not be able to see Jesus – and specifically, see Him in the Old Testament, until He opens their minds to understand. The same thing is true for us, sisters.

Why is this opening necessary? What is the nature of this blindness? It goes back to the effects of sin. In the Garden of Eden, Satan promised Eve that she would be like God and know – have wisdom and understanding – if she ate the fruit. Of course, Satan lied. Satan always lies. Instead of having wisdom, Eve, then Adam, then all of humanity lost the ability to evaluate correctly and to judge the value of the things of God and they do not even know it. The signs of this inherent inability are painted throughout Scripture, but Isaiah gives an especially clear picture in chapter 44. Here, the reader is given access to God’s view of idolatry. Speaking of a piece of wood, Isaiah writes, “No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, ‘I have burned half of it in the fire and also have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat it. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination, I fall down before a block of wood!’ He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, ‘Is there not a lie in my right hand?’” Paul confirms this inability to understand in I Corinthians 2: “For

the natural man [the one apart from the Spirit's eye opening work] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them." You see, the disciples, sinners as they were, were desperately in need of Jesus to open their eyes, their minds, to see Him at all, and that includes seeing Him in Scripture. They were completely dependent. We have the same need. Yet, let us not forget, we have the same Jesus – the same Spirit of Christ – who is willing to do this – who has done this in you – and who will continue to do this even now as we enter His Story.

Having opened their minds completely, now Jesus gets specific about what the disciples had been taught...what Jesus apparently had been saying all along. "That all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Let me unpack this statement for you. All things. All things implies a totality. All things written about Me...okay, so Jesus is talking about Himself. All things written about Me...in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. Do you know what this signifies? The Old Testament to the Jewish person was, and is, of course, their entire Scriptures. The whole Story up to this point, coming to them, as it does to us, in all kinds of genres...narrative, poetry, prophecy and more. Of course, the New Testament had not been written yet. For the Israelites, the people of God, the Scriptures, consisted of three parts...the Law of Moses. That's the Pentateuch. The first five books of the Bible. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Then the Prophets, which include all the books we consider to be the major and minor prophets, but also the other narrative books like Joshua and Judges. Finally, the writings. The term "Psalms" may refer to merely the book of Psalms or to all the poetic books, known as the writings. Luke's intent here is to show that the Old Testament is comprehensively and exhaustively about Jesus.

This is what this signifies. There is no doubt that the disciples would have heard: The entire Old Testament is about Jesus.

But not just about Jesus in general. Jesus gets even more specific... “That all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be *fulfilled*.” This word “fulfilled” is a word that can mean to literally fill something, like a jar with water. The idea is that it is filled to the brim. It also applies to prophecy and I think the meaning, “fill,” continues. It’s as if the entire Old Testament is a series of God’s promises...clearly promises all about Christ...about hope after the fall, hope of redemption and restoration, hope of life and joy, hope of things being the way they were created to be, hope of a new creation from the inside out...these hopeful promises like an empty jar, waiting to be filled. And, as we see from these hopes, this was no small jar. It began with one promise, but the vows continue and continue until the jar is a vast, empty ocean, asking with increasing intensity, “Is God trustworthy? Has He promised more than He can deliver? Who is the Messiah? When will He come?” Peter, writing to believers, says that even the prophets, the human authors composing the inspired Word of God, specifically the grace that was to come, had “made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ [note: the Spirit of CHRIST] within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit.” Even the writers of the Old Testament understood that they were hearing about what was to come...they knew they had the beginning of the Story...all the promises...waiting to be fulfilled.

Back to our passage in Luke. Back in the room with the disciples. Jesus isn't finished yet. He wants them and He wants you to know more about the content of Christ in all of the Old Testament. Remember, it's all things. All things written about Me must be fulfilled. So what was prophesied...what must be fulfilled in order for God to be faithful and trustworthy...what was written was "That the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." In a word: Gospel.

"Really?" You may ask me incredulously. "Really?" All of the Old Testament in every genre and in every text...that Jesus would suffer. That Jesus would rise from the dead on the third day. And that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed to all the nations. "Really?" "Yes," I reply with certainty. For Jesus has said it. And it makes sense when we see that it is one story. One Story. One cohesive story all about Him.

Let me show you what I mean. We'll begin with the Law of Moses. The Pentateuch. Do you know that Messiah – the Old Testament word for Christ – is not even mentioned in the first five books? So how is Jesus there? One prominent way is the theme of the Seed. It begins in the Garden and we all know the worst part of the story: It began with uninterrupted fellowship between God and humankind, Yahweh's, in close relationship with Adam and Eve gave a command not to eat the forbidden fruit. Then there's the twisted lie of Satan, the unbelief of Adam and Eve and the awful fall. Sin. Death. Curse. And right then, in one of the most dreadful moments in human history, perhaps surpassed only by the murder of God Himself on the cross, the first promise is made. God says to the serpent, "I will put enmity between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." The Old Testament word for seed is also the word for offspring or descendant. There are two "seeds"

mentioned in this verse...the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent For our purposes today, we will trace the seed of the woman. This seed is the promise that Someone will come. Someone born of a woman. Someone who will ultimately defeat the serpent. The theme of this promised seed continues...Cain and Abel...Abel the good seed, but then he is murdered. Is God's plan thwarted? Ah, but there's Seth. The seed remains. But then the whole world rebels and God decides to destroy them all...except one. One man, one seed of the woman, and his family. God renews His promise of the Seed to Noah, "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants [seed] after you." The jar of promise gets bigger. And then we get to Abram, Abram and Sarai, old and barren, not much hope there, and a whole slew of promises come, "I will make you a great nation and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." Your seed will be great, your seed will be like the dust of the earth and the stars of the sky." And Abraham does have a son, Isaac...and he has two sons...and one of them, Jacob, is chosen by God as the next in the line of the one through whom the promised seed would come...and he has 12 sons...and God says the seed will come from Judah. And on and on it goes...the nation growing, part of God's promise of many descendants to Abraham fulfilled, but still not this seed, not this one, who will crush the serpent's head and set all things to right. Even though this theme of the seed is found in the Pentateuch, it runs through the entire Old Testament...it's implied in Judges, where there is no king and everyone does what is right in his own eyes...it is promised again and narrowed down in King David, who sure seems like he might be the seed, but he sins, he dies...he is not ultimate. On and on it goes, the jar ever bigger, its emptiness calling out for fulfillment.

And then finally, wonderfully, gloriously, after 500 years of silence...Jesus. Jesus comes. Paul elaborates on this in Galatians. First, he explains that the promises made to

Abraham were not really made to his seeds, plural, but to his Seed, singular. He writes, “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘and to your seed,’ that is, Christ.” It is Messiah, it is the Christ, it is Jesus to whom all the promises were made and about whom all the promises spoke. Paul continues, “But when the fullness of time came [notice again fullness...all that must come before had come...the massive jar stood ready to be filled]” “But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” This should take your heart and your mind all the way back to Genesis, the beginning. Note the clear connection: “Born of a woman.” These Biblical connections are never accidental and Paul is purposefully drawing us back there. In the Garden, back in Genesis 3...right in the middle of the curse. God had said that the penalty for sin was death. Death that meant physical death eventually for His first two children, but fundamentally and much worse, spiritual death. Separation from God and therefore all that was good. Adam and Eve now had a knowledge of good and evil, but it was nothing like God’s knowledge of good and evil. They were covered in sin, they were permeated with sin....and we are the same apart from Christ. This was God’s judgment and He could have chosen and would have been just to leave them in their sin, to punish them with eternal separation from Him, but He did not. Instead, the Seed. The promised One. The serpent crusher. Jesus, born of a woman. Born under the Law, which, although the Law is inherently good, only brought in further condemnation and knowledge of sin for fallen ones. But the Seed overcomes. He lives a perfect life, perfectly obeying the will of the Father, perfectly trusting that He is good and faithful. And then He goes to the cross where He takes our sin, our curse upon Himself. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the

righteousness of God in Him.” He bears the wrath in our place. The Seed, God Himself, suffering for us in ways we can never even comprehend. For He loves us, this promised One. This Hero of the Story, who accomplished for us atonement for sin, redemption, righteousness, adoption as sons, the gift of the Spirit and eternal life. This lineage of promise, which began with the promise in the Garden, is fulfilled in Jesus the Christ, the promised Seed, the long-awaited One, and it is all part of one Story. Does this sound like the bad break-up? The jar is being filled, but let’s continue...God’s not finished yet.

Jesus also said that everything written in the prophets was about Him and His gospel story and one specific part of that is the fact that this gospel would be proclaimed to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. This is yet another great promise made and it’s very clear to see in Isaiah 49. This passage, not surprisingly, is a predication about what is to come in the Story. Here, Jesus is called the true Israel, the ultimate, single Seed. God says to Jesus, “You are My Servant, Israel, in Whom I will show my glory.” This God, who would form Jesus in the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him...a glorious promise in and of itself...continues, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make you a light of the nations, so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” In other words, God is too glorious and Jesus is too wonderful to be contained in a smaller promise jar. This vessel must be vast, for God is so merciful, compassionate and forgiving and Jesus is so magnificent a Savior that He redeems and brings in many more. Jesus, the true Israel, the one Seed, is the light and His salvation is so grand that it reaches to the ends of the earth. And this was always God’s plan, always part of the plot of His Story, yet one more promise that is fulfilled in Christ, because it is all about Him.

Finally, we turn to the Psalms. Many of the Psalms are quoted in the New Testament in regards to Christ and all of them ultimately preach Him, but today we'll narrow in on Psalm 16. This Psalm is one written by David. One major way that Christ is preached in the Old Testament is through typology. Pauline will cover this in detail when she speaks in January about Christ in the New Testament, but I'll give you a quick overview now so that this Psalm will make sense. A type is like a shadow or a picture of something greater to come. One easy example to understand is the idea of the sacrificial lamb. In the ceremonial system of the Old Testament, it was sacrificed in place of the one who committed the sin. However, all the animal sacrifices, rather than actually accomplishing redemption, merely pointed forward to Christ, the one with the actual power to atone for sin. Every type has an antitype, which is the "real deal" or ultimate reality to which the type was pointing. Jesus is the antitype. For today's purposes, we will look at David, the king of Israel, the one who loved the Lord more than anything else and delighted in justice, righteousness and truth, is a type of Christ. In fact, he is so much more like the Messiah than the other kings of Judah that the nation of Israel, before it was scattered into all the nations, spends the rest of its time lamenting that David is gone and that he was so close, but yet failed and was not the promised Seed. Therefore, the Psalms which were written by David, the human author, as He was inspired by the Holy Spirit, also had a divine Author, who revealed Christ as well. Mysteriously, David was speaking of himself, but also prophesying of Christ. It is "both, and."

With that in mind, let's look at Psalm 16 together. It becomes most clearly about Jesus towards the end, so let's begin there. David writes, "I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will

You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” It sounds just like David and it is David. But I bet part of it sounds familiar to you. “You will not allow Your holy One to undergo decay.” It sounds like Jesus, doesn’t it? And it is. There are actually two sermons in Acts, one preached by Peter and the other by Paul, which quote this Psalm. We’ll look at Acts 2, Peter’s first sermon. Here, he says that David was speaking of Christ and then he quotes this Psalm. Listen to what Peter says, “Brethren, I may say confidently [why confidently? Exactly because of the passage we’re studying in Luke 24. Exactly because Jesus had completely opened his mind and had shown Peter Himself in all the Old Testament Scriptures].” “Brethren, I may say confidently to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” Do you see how clearly this ties to Luke 24? Jesus would suffer and *rise from the dead*. The promise of the resurrection...the overcoming of the curse...the great promise of redemption from sin and death...the climax of the Story...predicted in these very words of David.

But there is more. Go back with me to Psalm 16 for a moment. This is one of my very favorite passages. We know that this Psalm – and really all the Psalms – are ultimately about Christ. Let’s look now at the beginning. “Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You. I said to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; I have no good besides You.’” Jesus, then, put His entire trust in the Father and understood that only in Him was all that was good. How opposite Eve when she believed the lie of Satan...that God was stingy and keeping something from her...Jesus, the

righteous One, is never tricked in this way. The Father is His only good. And now look at what He says about you, dear sisters: “As for the saints [the holy ones – that’s you, those of you who are in Christ] who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.” You are the delight of Jesus. In fact, He says that all of His delight is in you. He doesn’t need you...He knows that everything good is in the Father and He has had perfect fellowship within the relational Trinity from all eternity...but He wants you. You are the joy of his heart, the one over whom He dances with joy...exults, like Richard taught last week in his sermon. He doesn’t want you ever to forget that one of the major motivating themes...the heartbeat of the plot of this story is His immense love for you and delight in you. In Christ, even with the often all-too-clear reality of indwelling sin, nevertheless, you are holy and majestic – for you have been united to Jesus and covered in His own righteousness – and He greatly delights in you. Jesus, our Hero, the true and perfect David who will never die, loves you more than you can ever imagine.

Alright. Jesus. He is everywhere in the Old Testament. This is only an infinitesimal smattering of the riches of Christ in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Let’s go back to Luke 24 and finish up this beginning to our story. You’re back in the room with the disciples. You, like them, in a small way have just had your minds and hearts opened to see Jesus in the Scriptures. Notice again the three events in the plot that Jesus emphasizes. First, the Scriptures promised that He would suffer. That had already happened for these disciples...the cross, three days before. The jar of promise is filling. Next, the Scriptures promised that He would rise again from the dead the third day. That had also occurred by the time Jesus is talking with them. More fulfillment. He’s not a ghost...their Savior is alive, well, and is eating and talking with them. Now listen to the third promise, “That repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” Oh. I wonder if they

knew. I wonder if their heads lifted, if they made eye contact with each other. I wonder if they thought, “WE are in Jerusalem.” This, my friends, had not yet happened. Jesus was telling them the next chapter in the Story. This gospel – this glorious news of the possibility of repentance and forgiveness of sins – has to be proclaimed! It must now go out to all the nations, just as Isaiah said. Jesus’s next words to His disciples are, “You are my witnesses of these things.” Suddenly, Jesus is no longer talking about the past. Not the ancient past, the things written in the Old Testament, and not the recent past, His death and resurrection. No, He brings the Story right up to the very moment. The gospel must be proclaimed. And Jesus says, “YOU are my witnesses.” In the gospel of Matthew, before He ascends to heaven, Jesus elaborates on His plan for this proclaiming. He says that they are to go and make disciples and teach them. Often we think of this proclaiming as merely evangelism, but it is so much more. Evangelism is part of it, but coming to Christ is merely the beginning. There is also baptizing, teaching, and maturing, the creation and growth of the entire Body of Christ. And, we know, we have the book of Acts...the disciples go. They do not go alone or in their own power, for Jesus tells them even here in Luke 24 that the gift of the Father – the very Holy Spirit – would come and live in them, preach Christ to them, and then empower them completely to proclaim it abroad. So the disciples go. They go and they preach the gospel. They take the next steps in a Story which began in Genesis – in the beginning – and continues to this day.

What about you? Like the disciples over 2000 years ago...do you know? Are your heads lifting? No, you are not in Jerusalem. But you are witnesses of these things. Jesus said, “Repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” On the one hand, precious sisters, we are “all the nations.” God’s choosing and calling and saving of you is a fulfillment of this promise, prophesied so long ago.

We are the ones *in* the Story. On the other hand, we are the witnesses. We are now the ones *with* the Story. The Story of Christ, the story of redemption. We've had our minds opened. We've seen the beginning, pure and wonderful, but marred by the conflict of sin and death. We've seen the many promises of redemption and hope, all of them made about Christ. We've answered the questions that the prophets longed to know...the Messiah is Jesus, born in a manger, born humbly, born of a woman, yet God Himself, born to live for the will of His Father, born for trial and suffering, born to sacrifice Himself in our place because He loves us more than we can imagine. Promise upon promise fulfilled. He clearly knows where He is going, but we're not quite there yet. We haven't yet seen the ending, for every single promise has not yet be fulfilled. He has come...but He is also still yet to come. So now continue to put yourselves in the Story, but right at this very moment, here in this room.

In Matthew 24, Jesus graciously told the disciples and us what to expect before He returns. He speaks of false teachers and wars and earthquakes and persecution and tribulation and all the things we love to think about...all the terrible things that are worth it because Jesus, our captivating One, our Hero, is worth it...and He never leaves us as orphans to handle it alone, but comes and carries us...and then He says, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Do you realize that we are supposed to expect the end of the Story...the return of Christ...at any time? We will look at this more closely in March, when Jeanine will tell us about the end of the story. But as a teaser now....because I can never resist giving away the ending, it's just too good...Jesus just said that what has to happen before He comes back for us, to take us to be His Bride...and what clearly hasn't quite yet been completed...is that the gospel must be preached to all the nations. Peter explains this delay, "The Lord is not slow about His promise,

as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.” He is coming back. Our Hero will return, just like He did for the disciples, with His glorified body, whole, real, alive and when we see Him, we will be made like Him.

Therefore, witnesses, what about you? You, who are in this Story. You, too, have been called to proclaim this gospel to all the nations. We do it together – like the disciples, we do not act alone – each with our individual gifts, but unified in Christ. Do you know what to do in order to proclaim? Ask the Lord to show you and seek Him in His Word. Talk to one of us. The Lord will make it clear. Do you know how? You have been given the very Spirit of Christ to equip you for every good work. Don’t forget, the Author of the Story knows exactly where He’s going and He will get you there. Do you know why? Oh, dear sisters, there is only one compelling motivation. It is Jesus. It has always been Jesus. He is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. He is the one who suffered and died, rose again from the grave the third day, and He is the One we love to proclaim to all the nations. He is the one who knows you intimately and loves you more really and more deeply than you could ever imagine. He will never fail you, never leave you, there will never be a bad break up. He is the Hero of the Story and you were created for Him. He is worthy of your time, worthy of your life, worthy of everything you hold most dear. He is our majestic One. He is our delight. He is our Story.