

V. The Holy Spirit in Biblical Perspective  
*Led by the Spirit*  
“The Empowered Witness of the Holy Spirit”  
Luke 24:44–49  
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III  
February 14, 2016 – Morning sermon

We are in Luke 24 and they are in the Upper Room. This is resurrection day and Jesus is with His disciples. There were at least 15 post resurrection appearances documented in Scripture prior to His ascension into heaven. This is one of those resurrection appearances to the disciples in the Upper Room and this is what takes place as He is speaking to them. Luke 24:44–49 says [44] *Then he (Jesus) said to them (His disciples and those with 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.” [45] Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, [46] and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, [47] and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] You are witnesses of these things. [49] 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.”* The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

John Wood will be our guest speaker for the upcoming Global Mission’s conference and he and I went to high school together. If you had taken a poll as to who would end up preaching the Gospel at our school I would assure you that neither one of us would have been on that list but God’s grace is glorious. John and I have been in the same accountability group for a number of years and I know you’ll be blessed to hear that which the Lord has laid upon his heart.

You may have noticed the three crosses in the front of our church that mark the anticipating of our season of holy week and the celebration of the resurrection of Christ on Resurrection Sabbath that we are looking forward to, Easter Sunday. On that Sunday it is my responsibility to preach a sermon on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and I’m getting ready for that which many others do as well. How long has the habit of preachers preaching a resurrection sermon on Easter Sunday been in practice? And which preacher was the one who started this? And what did he preach on that resurrection Sabbath? I want to make sure you have the answers to those questions before you finish reading this.

So who is the first preacher to preach the first resurrection Sabbath sermon that has continued ever since to this day? I have the sermon and I’m going to give it to you today but before I get there I want to talk a little bit about our upcoming Global Mission’s conference. This will be our 51<sup>st</sup> Global Mission’s conference this year. Long ago with our founding pastor and member there was a commitment that we would be intentionally committed to the point of asking God to make world missions a legacy ministry at Briarwood. That has been the commitment carried out with that mission’s conference for 51 years since the existence of this congregation. The Lord has been gracious and made this a legacy ministry many ways.

Last year was the most notable year for it became the 50<sup>th</sup> year and the first year that over fifty percent of our members participated in the faith promise giving for the world missionary faculty and staff at Briarwood. Tied to that was the largest faith promise commitment that we had ever made and the largest fulfillment of a faith promise commitment at

the beginning of the year and by the end of the year that has ever been done. It is very exciting the number of people from this congregation that the Lord has called to the mission field and the enlargement of our mission's team. God has also blessed us with another missionary pastor to follow up the ministry of Tom Cheely and he is one that deeply appreciates what Tom has done, is honoring what Tom has done and has already taken us to other vistas as to where that will lead us in world evangelism and the commitment to send the Gospel to all the nations of the world.

I am so thankful for that in many ways. For instance, there are churches right now being planted in Japan that we were not even planning to be a part of but because of the generosity and sacrificial giving of faith promise we were able to do this year. In fact there were four different countries that we were able to plant churches in this year that we had not even considered initially. We not only were able to do the hallelujah stuff but we were able to go beyond that this past year. I praise God for that and I rejoice in that but sometimes when you have a legacy ministry and God leads you to do things that He honors, it's very easy without intending to, to start relying on what we do instead of Him.

It's very easy to think we can do all these things because of this incredible mission's conference we have or because of our faith promise system at Briarwood. We use this faith promise giving as a time to involve the family and we try to seek God to find out what He, by His Spirit as we pray through this, is leading us to give this year and then our commitment is what He gets to us will get through us to be used one hundred percent to get the Gospel to the nations. Yet it is very easy to start depending upon the faith promise or the process or upon the conference or other good things instead of Him.

Then in God's kind providence our Global Mission's Team looked at the theme of our ministry this year called 'led by the Spirit.' They want to focus on that in our mission's conference and I am so grateful that they did that because that brings us to the One we need to depend on to be empowered witnesses to the world. Where does that power come from? It comes from the Person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that in our zeal we can easily start to depend upon ourselves, our zeal and what we do instead of Him. So in His Word He gave us not only our mission but He gave us a mandate that was essential to accomplish that mission.

To get started, what is the mission of the church of Jesus Christ? I am so grateful we don't have to go sit in the corner and contemplate our navel – what is our mission? We just go to the Bible because four different times, Jesus with His last words tells us what we are to do until He comes again. He gives it in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Those four statements of our mission are given clearly and then He restates the mission a fifth time as He is about to ascend.

Here is the one in Matthew 28:18–20 which says [18] *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Until I come to usher you into the new heavens and the new earth, I have given you My command and the command is to make disciples.

How do we make disciples? We do it by going, through evangelism, by baptizing believers and their households and enfold them into the body of Christ and then teach them to equip them so that they can know all the things that He has commanded, the whole counsel of God in His Word. That is our mission but He gives us an encouragement as well because this is impossible to do. Can you imagine what they must have felt like when they heard that in the Upper Room? We're going to send the Gospel to the whole world and make disciples of

nations? They must have felt a huge relief to hear Him say ‘and I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ I am with you every day to the end of the age.

In Mark He gives the same great commission but it’s the succinct version. Mark 16:15 says [15] *And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”* He basically tells them to go, then preach (what) the Gospel (to where) the world. Now here is what He says in the Gospel of John, John 20:21 says [21] *Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”* What did the Father send Jesus to do? He sent Him to seek and to save the lost. What does Jesus who saved His people from their sins and ascended back to heaven, now send us to do? We are to do what the Father sent Him to do. We are to go seek to bring the saving message of the Gospel to the lost.

That’s why we say you are either a missionary or a mission field. You are either a mission field to bring the Gospel to but once you are saved you now become a sent one. So as the Father has sent Me now I am sending you. So we are all missionaries. That is why in our mission statement at Briarwood that we want to equip every Christian to be a minister for Christ and a missionary to take the Gospel of Christ to where you live, work, go to school, play etc. and that you become His sent one to that place. So He has given us this glorious great commission in Matthew, Mark and John.

There is a summation in Acts where as He is about to ascend to heaven He brings it all back to focus and says this in Acts 1:8, [8] *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* So we will be empowered by the Spirit. This will be our missionary verse but in this study I want to spend time on what Jesus said that led up to that statement right before He ascended. What did He say to prepare us for that moment? He has already told us that we’ll be His witnesses with power and we’re going to start in Jerusalem, then to Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. So we have this series of high commission statements that are given to us so that we stay on mission.

I want to put a parenthesis right here that is purely pastoral. Our mission at Briarwood is simple. It is to make disciples in our Jerusalem (Birmingham), our Judea (Alabama), our Samaria (North America) and the world. This upcoming mission’s conference focuses on our goal of going to the world. I also want you to know that we are constantly faced with challenges in a broken world and there are valid responses we must make to the challenges that come to us in this broken world. We have to deal with the issue of the sanctity of life and the Biblical ethic and sanctity of sexuality. We have to deal with the Biblical doctrine that has been given for the well-being of humanity, the sanctity of marriage and the sanctity of the family. What is a government? What is a civil magistrate? God’s Word is a world and life view. It’s not simply a message that you contemplate for one hour on a Sunday morning.

I said that to say this; we can never allow valid ministry initiatives to replace the mission. Pastor’s call that missional drift. We must always be ready to respond to the challenges of the day with Biblical ministry initiatives, whether it’s life, family, sexuality, marriage, the role of the family, state or the church or whatever it is for they are all valid, but we cannot let valid ministry initiatives become our mission. Our mission is right here. Go and make disciples beginning in Birmingham, then Alabama, then North America and then the world. That is our mission and we have to stay on mission and on message as we do ministry. That is why I’m grateful for our National Conference and mission conference to make sure we don’t drift to valid ministry initiatives to make them our mission. Our mission must continue to be this Great Commission.

Jesus not only keeps repeating the mission in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts but He then gives us a whole book on how it's to be implemented. The book of Acts shows us 33 years of what is happening where the body of Christ is being unfolded. We see the Great Commission in Jerusalem in Acts 1 through Acts 8. Then we see it in Judea and Samaria in Acts 9 through 12. Then we see the Great Commission in Acts 13 through 28 where it goes out to the world. Then comes this great statement less than 25 years after Jesus gave the mission we hear from an opponent in Europe out of frustration "These people have turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). I love how they did it.

One of the reasons we don't get a hundred percent of faith promise commitments is because a lot of our members and right so because you're perfectly free in Christian liberty to do this, are giving beyond their tithe outside the church directly to various agencies. So many don't do their missions giving through Briarwood's faith promise and missionary endeavor and my wife and I do this as well but we do a tithe, our faith promise giving and then we'll do even beyond that.

We want to ask God by the power of the Holy Spirit to have a congregation that has been led to pray for world missions. I don't know where that will lead you or how you'll pray for our mission's team and missionaries. You may focus your intercessory prayers in one particular area. We are just looking for the Holy Spirit to bring the tapestry of God's providence, your commitments to intercessory prayer with how the Lord leads you and then your faith promise giving with how the Lord leads you there as well.

Here is what we're going to do with it. We are just going to do with it what they did in the book of Acts. When they went to a city they did evangelism and discipleship so everyone we send out has to be committed to evangelism and discipleship. Then they planted a church and we're going to do church planting and church revitalization (strengthening churches). Then they did Gospel deeds of love and mercy and we're going to do those as well. Then we will multiply and mobilize leaders because they never left a church without leaving good leadership in its place. Everyone we're sending has to do one or all four of those things. The main focus will be on church planting and church revitalization. Why? It is because when we come home from a mission field we're home but when you plant a church they are there 24/7, 52 weeks out of the year. Now we have a partner to always work with year after year after year.

I'm also praying that God will move upon some of you young couples to join our Global missions' team. The team did grow this year but I'm not only praying it will grow this coming year but that some of you young couples who may not be the sent ones overseas but you can be a sender and oversee our sending by joining our team. We need that kind of leadership. Maybe God is calling you to be a part of that sending. I know that everyone we're sending out have all been vetted and they are all accountable so what are you going to do? Does it fit the strategy? Secondly, are you doing it? We are not paying you for a cross cultural experience. We are supporting you to do evangelism, discipleship, church planting, church revitalization and deeds of love, mercy and justice and leadership multiplication and mobilization. I love to participate because I know there is accountability. So we try to get them all back here once every four years to meet you and you'll get to meet thirty plus of them this year. This is so you can get to know them on a personal level as well. That is our mission and how we do the mission.

This is where I want to finish today. You can't do the mission, the command of go do this, on your own. So then He gives a second command. Let's look back at Luke 24. Do you know who preached the first Easter sermon? Jesus preached the first Easter sermon. We have

His sermon in distillation form. Here He is going to preach the resurrection sermon on a Sunday evening so some will not be there like Thomas but here it is.

Luke 24:44a says [44a] *Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you..."* That is an interesting statement 'while I was still with you.' What does He mean by this because where is He right now? He is with them talking with them. When He ascends He will send the Holy Spirit so that He will be with them until the end of the age. So let me finish what He says. "These are the things that I taught you while I was still with you, accomplishing My mission which I just accomplished three days ago and now I am risen. All along leading up to that cross, I kept telling you, see that Old Testament, everything written in there not only pointed to Me but it pointed to Me going to that cross to save My people from their sins and coming out of that grave in victory. All those prophecies have been fulfilled in Me when I went to that cross and came out of that grave."

Luke 24:44–49 says [44] *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."* [45] *Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,* [46] *and said to them, "Thus it is written (He is explaining the Old Testament), that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,* [47] *and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.* [48] *You are witnesses of these things.* [49] *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."*

For three years He stopped at sermon after sermon where we were up on a mountain or down in a valley or by the water or in the temple or in a garden. He would open the Scripture and teach this to them. I kept telling you that everything in the Scriptures is fulfilled in Me. All the prophecies and promises are yes and amen in Jesus Christ and when they are amen in Me then I will accomplish them at the cross. On the third day I'll rise again in triumph proclaiming all has been accomplished to the glory of the Father and the salvation of His people. All those sin offerings were pointing to Me. The temple, circumcision, Passover, offerings, the law of God, the presence of the Shekinah glory, all of it back there was pointing to Me to go to that cross to save you from your sins and you are witnesses of the triumphant, I am risen!

I love it when it says He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. Can you imagine how they must have felt when they understood the Old Testament? This thing just went from 2D to 3D and from black and white to color. Wow, everything is pointing to Him! Everything is fulfilled in Him. Just three days before it came to fulfillment and three days later there He stands, our victorious Savior! He tells them this Gospel is to be preached to all the nations and that is not just a New Testament phenomenon, for it was also in the Old Testament. God's grace reached down to Noah and gave him a covenantal sign through a rainbow. The rainbow went from horizon to horizon. God's grace was to go to the whole world. God said to Abraham that He would be a God to him and his seed after him and in Abraham will come the Seed and that Seed will bless all the nations.

The fact that Israel rejected Him did not stop God's plan for His plan all along was through that nation to bring the victorious Savior to send the News to all the nations. That has always been His plan, now go and preach the Gospel to all the nations. The first step is Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria and then to the utter most parts of the world. After He says that He then gives a mandate.

The mandate is don't go until you stay. Luke 24:49 says [49] *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.* In other words, don't go and do the mission for the Father which I have secured at the cross in triumph and resurrection, without the promise of the Father. Don't go do it until the same Spirit that was sent by the Father to Me, is sent by the Father through Me to you. Why?

The Christian life in general, our mission as the church in particular, is not doable without the Christ secured and sent resource of Holy Spirit, who clothes us with power on high. He wraps us and anoints us for the mission. So what is the mission? Go and make disciples into all the world, beginning in Jerusalem. What is the mandate? It is to wait for the promise of the Father. What is the promise of the Father? The Father promised His Son to save us from our sins. The Father promised the Holy Spirit to be upon the Son and now the Father promises in the name of the exalted, victorious Son to send that same Spirit upon the body of Christ and upon His people to go do the mission. He will clothe you with power because this mission is not possible without His power, because when the Holy Spirit comes to you Christ is in you and His power clothes you.

When the Holy Spirit comes to you My mission that is impossible now becomes more than possible for it will be done because I will be with you to the end. My power is at work within you. It is My power that will go with you into that prayer closet. Lord, who do You want me to pray for? My power will be with you. Lord, what do You want to give through me? My power will be with you. Lord, are You calling my children as cross cultural missionaries? My power will be within you. Lord, are You calling me? Perhaps God has called you to cross cultural missions or maybe short term missions.

Do you know where the two biggest arenas of securing those whom God has called to cross cultural missions? One is from college students. It is students who begin to sense God's movement. Maybe He is calling you to be a great Christian doctor or Christian lawyer or Christian brick mason. I don't know what He is calling you to but the other group is at the other end of the spectrum, those who are about to get their golden parachute. God doesn't call you to retire to go pick up conk shells. No, He was putting together your support package. Maybe that business gift and ability could be used in a church planting team. I don't know but He may want you to go cross culturally too.

Here's how you know. It is when the power of the most High comes upon us. Here is the takeaway. The mission of the church will be embraced when the mandate of the church is engaged. I love it when He said "Go but stay. I don't want you to stay to stay but I want you to stay to go but I want you to stay to get the power you need to go. I want you to stay to go. Don't let your zeal send you out to go without coming to Me for the power because you can't do this without Me. So come to Me and I will clothe you with power."

Then we see how God does it. Look at the power of the Holy Spirit. Here is a religious terrorist, Saul, who becomes the great preacher to take the Gospel to the world. Here is Peter who denied Jesus three times, in front of a servant girl who then stands in front of the same people that put Jesus to death and said 'this Jesus whom you crucified God raised from the dead and He commands all men everywhere to repent.' Where did that come from? That came from the power of the Holy Spirit. Three thousand came to Christ and that came from the power of the Holy Spirit where they had spent that time in prayer in the Upper Room – clothed with power from on High sends the resources out into the world.

To be a sending church we must be a depending church. How do you know a depending church? A depending church becomes a sending church. You see grandparents getting to retirement age going to the mission field. You see parents who willingly let their children go. That's the power of the Holy Spirit. You see a church that says fifty cents out of

every dollar will leave here for local, national, regional and world missions. That is the power of the Holy Spirit. I can talk about it because I inherited it, I didn't think of it. I praise the Lord for it. That is the Holy Spirit moving upon people.

So we want to be a sending a church but before we go we need to stay. To send we need to depend. God give us the power. I thank God for every mechanism that He has put into this church for over 51 years to be a missions minded church but I know that to do the mission we need to obey the mandate. Go call upon the Holy Spirit. He will visit you when you worship Him. He will visit you when you pray for Him. If earthly fathers can give eggs and bread to their children then Jesus says "How much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for this coming couple of weeks together. I pray that You would make this a great spiritual experience in Your Word, not only as we commit ourselves to Your mission, don't drift, for we'll engage in all ministry initiatives that we need to do, but we'll stay on mission and on message with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then Father we'll get in the game in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is understandable to have our self-reliance and self-confidence because it's been done but help us now to say 'no' to self-reliance and 'yes' to the Holy Spirit. Give us a God-reliant resolve clothed with power from on High. Lead us Holy Spirit, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

THE MISSION

THE MANDATE

LIFE TAKEAWAY

The Mission of the Church will be embraced when the Mandate of the Church is engaged.

To be a Sending Church we must be a Depending Church.

A Depending Church will be a Sending Church.