

Luke 24:44-53

Ascension; May 12 & 13, 2024

In 1880, George Eastman founded a new company and he called it "Kodak." In 1888, Kodak marketed the world's first flexible roll of film. When that happened, Kodak had figured out to turn Photography into an overnight craze. In 1900, they introduced to the world the \$1 Brownie camera. Innovation and mass production of their camera and film production now brought the world into people's homes. The world was changing and Kodak was there to record it. In the 1970s the company introduced the wildly popular "Kodak Moment" marketing campaign and slogan. A "Kodak moment" came to mean those special, unforgettable life moments worthy of capturing in a photograph. Kodak had become so dominate in photography that by 1976 85% of all film camera and 90% of all film sold in the U.S. was Kodak.

Then the world of photography began to change. By the 1990s digital cameras were on the rise, but Kodak did not completely ignore digital photography. In fact, it was a Kodak employee who invented the first digital camera in the 1970s. But Kodak did not see them as a major threat to the film market. Executives believed that digital was predominately a fad, and that "real photographers" would still use film as their primary method. Film was Kodak's bread and butter, and Kodak knew film better than anyone else. In 2012, Kodak filed for bankruptcy. Even though Kodak would emerge from bankruptcy a year later. It would no longer be the powerhouse that they had been. The digital camera would change the world.

He was born in very humble setting. The world would hardly know that the King of Kings was born in Bethlehem. He would grow up in carpenter's house. Then one day he would take a walk into the Jordan River with a man named John and was baptized. The world was about to change. The heavenly Father would announce to the world: **"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."** (Mt. 3:17) From that moment going forward, this world would never be the same. As Jesus began his ministry, He would call 12 men to be his disciples.

They loved to watch Jesus do his work. For three years, they saw some pretty amazing things. They sat at his feet and listen to him teach. They saw him give sight to the blind. They saw Jesus give hearing to those who could not hear. They even saw him raise people from the dead. They loved to watch Jesus preach before thousands of people. They began to dream about Jesus setting up a kingdom in this world, and they would be in it on the ground floor. They could imagine such a kingdom.

Then one Friday, everything changed. This Jesus would be put to death. He would be laid in a tomb. However, three days later he would come out from that tomb. Over the next 40 days the emotions of the disciples were on a roller coaster. Things began to change in the disciples' minds. Words, that they once didn't fully understand, took on new meaning with the resurrection of Jesus. Even though Jesus would come and go over the 40 days after his Resurrection, he would always come back to them. Therefore, that question would continue to float around in their heads. After all that they had seen and heard, they still had to ask Jesus the question: **"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"** (Acts 1:6)

At first, it seems like Jesus isn't answering their question. Yet, he does answer it: Jesus says: **"The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."** Jesus is saying to them: *Let's talk about this kingdom thing. I'm going back to sit next to my heavenly Father. Let's talk about what you're going to do.* Jesus I want you to share my words throughout the world. But don't be afraid. I'm going to help you. I'm going to be with you. But now it is time for you to put Easter into practice. The time for watching Jesus do the work was over. It was now time for them to be **"witnesses of these things."**

Look at the promises that Jesus gives to them. I'm going to send to you the Holy Spirit. **"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."** This Holy Spirit will bring power to your words. Your words will be my words. My words will change the world. Elsewhere Jesus had told them: **"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."** (John 14:12-13) He assures his disciples that I will come back for you. While I'm gone, I will rule **"over**

everything for the church.” (Ephesians 1:22) He promises them that he will be with them always. **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:20)

Then Jesus leaves them. **“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.”** Great joy? Why? Jesus had done what he had come to do. He came to take the sins of this world and toss it into the deepest pit. As far as the East is from the West, Jesus has separated our sins from him. He’s redeemed this world. Now it was their turn to take this message of forgiveness to a broken world.

The next time Jesus returns, he will come back in all his glory; No more being born in a stable; No more walking on the dusty roads of Israel; next time there will be no more dying or suffering. Companies in this world will come and go. The homes that we live in may come and go. What’s here today may be gone tomorrow. Yet, as wait for Jesus to return, he wants us to know that he is still in charge. As hard as some days can be, you are not alone. That’s what the Ascension of Jesus is all about. Amen.