“I can see clearly now!”

Seeing the Risen Resurrected Jesus & experiencing his power & presence

[ Alternative Sermon Title ~ ‘3 Dimensional Religion’]

9.30a.m. Sunday 8 January, 2017

Key Bible Passage ~ Luke 24:13-53 (NIV)

Delivered by Senior Pastor Marshall Muller @ the Laidley Baptist Church (Qld).

Opening Question: Who was your favourite super hero when you were a child?


Talk about my Christmas gift when I was about 7yo – fully molded Batman mask/helmet, cape, gloves, shoes, underpants things, and the bat gun that shot out sparks. I was invincible. When I put all my costume on and looked in the mirror - my superhero “came to life”.

Well, the Emmaus Road reading is all about a ‘super hero’ that came to life – Jesus.

What has just happened:

- The crucifixion of their ‘super hero’. (Imagine how you would feel if your super hero got killed in a comic).
- Their hero/leader didn’t do anything wrong – he was just a gentle man
- Disciples are all indoors for fear of being the next victim of the Romans/Jewish Rabbi hatred etc.
- But women had discovered the tomb empty and there had been angels appear and conversation with them.
- The graveclothes (neatly folded)!!!!
What is going on???? (This is a very rich passage)

*Read Luke 24:13-53*

There are some things about this passage that I want to make sure you ‘grab’ this morning.

**1. This story tells me that people can know about the story of Jesus and even know about his resurrection and even be his disciples, and still not recognize when the Lord is in their midst.**

Every now and then, I’ll be at some Church gathering or in a worship service and a person will be telling their faith story. Or sometimes you’ll hear them on TV. You’ll hear them say something like, "I was a member of the XYZ Church for thirty years, then I became a Christian..." Or they’ll say, "I went to a Church all my life, and became a leader of this and a Sunday School teacher and then, one day I finally met Jesus..."

And when I hear those stories, I just cringe. That shouldn’t happen. Was it the preacher’s fault? Was it that person’s fault? I don’t know. I know it happens, but it shouldn’t. It shouldn’t happen like that.

But maybe part of the problem is when we narrow our range of expectation about where the Lord is to be found. Maybe the problem is that somehow we have given or gotten the impression that Church is the only place to look for Jesus Christ ... that meeting our Lord is a once-a-week-affair.

The story of the walk to Emmaus clearly says something different. This story tells me that the Risen One comes to us, walks alongside us, rides along with us, works alongside us, and maybe even speaks to us. **The key is, recognizing him.**

People can know the story of Jesus, as these disciples did, and have heard about the resurrection - as these disciples had - and even be disciples of his - as these disciples were – and even talk to Jesus – as these disciples had - **and still not recognize when the Lord is in their midst!!!**  

*So where do you find Jesus?*
2. He will come to you where you are, and be with you where you’re going.

The story seems to indicate that this was not a happy occasion for these disciples. It was a time of disappointment and despair. I think that’s significant.

Let me tell you about something that bothers me. It may not bother you, but that won’t keep me from telling you that it bothers me. It bothers me when football players score a touchdown and then kneel to say a prayer of thanks to God.

I suppose it’s possible to pray a very inclusive prayer that thanks God for the day and the opportunity to enjoy athletic competition and the joy of fellowship with players on the other team even though I just finished running over a few of them... But what those prayers seem to say to me is that they’re thankful that God helped them score a touchdown and run over a couple of defensive backs. I don’t like to hear players interviewed after the game and hear them say that God gave them the win. God certainly gave them their ability, but I don’t think God gave them the win.

Is that when God is with you, when you win? What about the player that got run over? Did God leave him? What about the team that lost the game? Did God desert them?

When do you feel close to God? And when is God close to you?
When the ATO sends a refund check, instead of you having to pay?
When you get the job, and someone else doesn’t?

I understand that we might be more aware of our blessings at those times --- but know this, God is reaching toward you at precisely the moment that you may feel farthest from God.

When you’re in pain, when you suffer, when you’re grieving, when things aren’t going great, God is there. The presence of Jesus Christ is there.
Let me just ask you something, and you answer it honestly -- when was it easiest for you to take God for granted, to feel no need for God, to neglect your relationship with God? Isn’t when things are going wonderfully smooth, and you somehow get the feeling you can do without God?

Ask me, I’ll tell you about the people who stopped worshiping, stopped coming to church, stopped giving money to others when they got the bigger house, when they got the new car, when they starting making more money. Don’t ask me why, I just know that for some people, it’s true.

He is with you where you are.

3. You can see him when he’s with you, or you might not - because having the Lord with us is not the same as recognizing his presence.

That’s what the story says. There’s a time when he’s with these disciples, and they don’t know it’s him; they’re unaware of his presence. And then, later, the same disciples, and they recognize that it’s the Lord with them. Then they remember, and say to themselves, "didn’t you feel what I felt while he was talking to us? Didn’t our hearts burn within us while we were on the road, as he was opening the scriptures to us...?"

A fellow told me about a time when he was traveling out of town on business, and during the evening, he went out to a bar, something he’d done plenty of times before. He had a couple of drinks, and struck up a conversation with a young lady, something he’d done with other women on other trips. And eventually she asked if he’d like to leave and go over to her hotel room -- something he’d done before.

And he paid the bar tab and walked out the door and got in the car, and his mind was on this night of passion that lay ahead, and then he felt this feeling inside, that made him feel like what he was about to do really wasn’t the right thing to do. He’d felt that feeling before, too. He had this little struggle going on inside of him for a while, the same sort of thing he’d felt before, and he knew what he needed to do to ignore or suppress that feeling. But when they arrived at the hotel, instead of parking the car, he
pulled up to the front door and said to this young lady, "I can’t do this. I don’t think it’s right." That was something he had never done before.

She got out, and he drove off, and he said, "As I was driving off, I gotta tell you, -- I’ve never felt that good before in my whole life. I had more self-respect and felt a closeness to God and gratitude to God for his help in doing the right thing that I had never ever experienced. It was great!"

There used to be a commercial on television for a certain pharmaceutical product, and it shows some animated drawings of characters, and then you hear these words - "if you suffer from chronic heartburn, it may be a more serious condition..."

Well, I’ve got some good news about that stirring that you may be feeling inside of you. It could be something more wonderful than you know. It could be a more serious condition - it could be the Lord himself.

**Three Dimensional Religion**

Today I will talk to you about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and its' benefit for us.

I assume that you know that the Resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact - I will not try to prove it today. (I have another sermon about the actual Doctrine of the Resurrection – but for another day). There are many proofs of the Resurrection, and the historical truth of this event is a matter of record. But I will not talk about the fact of the Resurrection because I do not think many of you came here today asking the question, "Is it true?" But I imagine that great many of you came here asking the question, "What does it mean?" and “What does it mean for me?”

Each year the film industry has a big awards night – we know them as the Oscars. It recognizes all of the work & achievements in film/acting/producing etc. for the past 12 months. The crowning award is the Best Picture award for the year. Do you know which movie won the 2016 Best Picture award for 2016? Spotlight. *(Movie Synopsis - In 2001, the journalists of The Boston Globe's Spotlight team begin investigating Father John Geoghan, who is accused of molesting more than...)*
80 boys. As they dig deeper and acknowledge their paper's own failings, the team uncovers a conspiracy of lawyers and government officials who helped the Boston Archdiocese hide the pedophilia of many priests and deny justice to the victims.

How many of you knew the Best Picture winner for 2016? How many of you didn't? How many of you don't care? Some people thought another film should have won (there were a lot of other good pictures – The Martian, Mad Max, The Revenant). I don't have an opinion, because I didn't see the film. I know that it won the Oscar, but since I haven't experienced the film, the knowledge that it is "Best Picture" is pretty flat. Oh well!

It is a fact. It is true. But it means nothing to me.

So too is our knowledge of the Resurrection. We know that Jesus rose from the dead, but until we experience Resurrection Power, our faith is pretty flat. This is two-dimensional religion; it is a flat religion. Sadly it is crippling Christians.

There is a difference between knowledge and experience. For a while we have wanted to go to see some of the waterfalls in North Qld. Seen pictures, heard stories about them saying how beautiful they were. This past year in July we travelled up to the Atherton Tablelands and saw many of them. The difference between knowledge (knowing of their existence) and then experiencing them is the difference between seeing a photograph of a mighty waterfall, and being there to experience the thunderous sound, the cool mist on your skin, the mossy smell. Two dimensional vs. three-dimensional.

Today I want you to have a three dimensional experience of the Resurrection of Jesus. Your experience with God should be three-dimensional. The resurrection of Jesus is FACT. It is also DOCTRINE - a key doctrine upon which all others depend. But if that is all that you have experienced of Jesus, then your knowledge of Jesus is (still) two-dimensional.

Today I want to answer the question, "What does the Resurrection mean?"
1. The Resurrection Means that God is Good.

Let's face it; there are many things in life that bring the goodness of God into question.

Every day we see the hideous consequence of man's evil toward one another and we wonder what kind of God is he?

We see the ravages of disease and famine and we question how can God stand idly by?

We feel the depression and hopelessness of life and we can often doubt that God was ever around.

People feel the affliction of life and wonder - can God be good?

Many endure the abuse of religion and they say - how can God be good?

Resurrection is part of the nature of God.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he may die, yet shall he live." John 11:25

Peter preached about Jesus, "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

Then he quotes the Psalms, "You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption." Acts 2:24,27

Peter knew that the Resurrection went to the very centre of the character of God - It was NOT POSSIBLE THAT he should be held by death, He would NOT ALLOW HIM TO BE CORRUPTED. Because God is Good.

The Resurrection tells us that God is good. God will work to see that Good wins over Evil, to see that Grace will triumphs over Disgrace.

The Resurrection proclaims that God will not allow Corruption to prevail.
There is much evil in the world, but there is a greater power that is active, a good power. It is the resurrection power of Jesus!

There are probably some people here today who deep down do not believe that God is good. Your experiences in life may leave you feeling that God is not good. But you have heard that He is. The Church has told you that He is. But you haven't known it for yourself.

Mary looked right at Jesus and thought he was the gardener. She could not see. The Emmaus disciples walked with him and did not know.

I think that you have looked right at God, and you have not seen. Perhaps you did not want to see. Perhaps you would not see because you wanted to hold on to your excuse that God is not good. Today I ask you, "Open your eyes and see the Risen Christ, know that God is indeed good."

2. The Resurrection Means that Sins are Forgiven

The Scriptures tell us this plainly.

"If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. And if Christ is not risen you faith is futile; you are still in your sins" 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17

Paul said, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

Believe that God raised Him from the dead - The Resurrection means that Jesus can forgive sins. (Hallelujah)

It all seems too easy doesn't it. Too easy.

John Grisham may be one of your favorite authors. In his book ‘The Chamber’ Grisham describes the story of a young attorney named Adam whose grandfather, Sam, is discovered to be a member of the Klu Klux Klan. Sam is convicted of causing several deaths through bombings and is sentenced to die in the gas chamber. A moment before Sam is taken to die Adam and the prison chaplain Ralph meet with Sam who has an encounter with Jesus.

I would like to read you their conversation.
Ralph rubbed his hands together. I guess the best way to do this, Sam, is to confess
your sins. Ask God to forgive you.
All of them
Well, you don't have to list them all. Just as God to forgive everything
Sort of a blanket repentance
Yeah. Yeah, that's it. And it will work, if you're serious.
Chaplain, I'm serious as hell.
Do you believe in hell Sam?
Yes, I do
Do you believe in heaven?
I do
Do you believe that people who believe in Jesus as Savior go to heaven?
Sam thought about this a long time and then nodded slightly before asking, "Do
you?"
Yes, Sam I do. It's in the Scriptures.
Then I'll take your word for it.
Good. Trust me on this one okay?
Reverend, it seems too easy, you know. I just say a quick prayer and everything's
forgiven.
Why does that bother you?
Because I've done some bad things, preacher."
We've all done bad things, Sam. Our God is a God of infinite love.
Ralph gently placed a hand on the back of Sam's head and said, "Pray with me,
Sam." Sam covered his eyes with both hands and rested his elbows on his knees.
Do you believe Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that He came to earth born of a
virgin, lived a sinless life, was persecuted and died on the cross that we might have
eternal salvation? Do you Sam?
Yes, he whispered.
And that he rose from the grave and ascended into heaven?
Yes
And that through him all your sins, all the terrible things that burden your heart, are
now forgiven? Do you believe this, Sam?
Yes. Yes.
Ralph released Sam's head and wiped the tears from his eyes. Sam didn't move, but
his shoulders were shaking. Adam squeezed his grandfather even tighter.

It all does seem too easy doesn't it? A little prayer and murder, bigotry, and hatred are
forgiven. That God will forgive sins, real sins like that. We look at a man like Sam and
we wonder how can God forgive him so easily? He is on death row, moments before his
execution. How can God wipe away his terrible crimes just like that?
Jesus once proclaimed to a lame man, "Your sins are forgiven." When the religious people objected he said, "Which is easier to say, "your sins are forgiven," or "rise up and walk." But that you know that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins -- he said to the lame man, I say to you, rise up and walk." Mark 2:7

Forgiving sins isn't easy. But it is possible. With God all things are possible. And we know it is possible because Jesus rose from the dead.

3. The Resurrection Means that New Life is Available.

The scripture says it clearly.

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His spirit who dwells in you." Romans 8:11

"Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." Philippians 3:10

"May the God of peace, who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, ... make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight." Hebrews 13:20

Do you want to have a more complete life? Do you want to have better control over your heart? Do you want to experience more Joy, and Love? Do you want to feel peace instead of fear? The Resurrection is where this comes from. Resurrection Power in your life today!

I admit that many Church-going people do not experience the Power of the resurrection. They come to Church because their family did. The do Church on Sundays because that’s what they’ve always done. That’s what ‘s expected of them. They have heard about it, but they have not experienced it. Theirs is a two dimensional religion.

Paul said, "The Kingdom is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Paul does not mean that moral choices are not important. Obviously living right is an important part of true religion. What he meant is that true religion is not
external dos and don'ts, but it is internal. It is spiritual. It is more than doctrine & knowledge - it is a doctrine that becomes an experience.

To many people the major part of their religion is rules and regulations, rituals and dogmatism. This is two-dimensional religion - it is a flat religion. (And let me tell you – it can leave you feeling flat) It is the difference between listening to a concert on a crackly transistor radio, and sitting in the front row at the Sydney Opera House.

Your experience with God should be three-dimensional. The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

- True religion goes beyond rules.
- True religion goes beyond doctrine.
- True religion goes into your heart.

Righteousness = being right with God and others. How many of you know that someone has something against you. Doesn't feel good does it. How many of you think that God has something against you? The Kingdom of God results in being right with God and others.

Peace = contentment that comes from trust. We are anxious, impatient, and hostile. But the Kingdom of God results in Peace because we trust that God is at the controls and has our best interest in mind. (Like pilot in control of an aircraft – when I go on board, I have so much trust, that I curl up and sleep, sometimes waking up when we touch the tarmac!)

Joy = attitude that enjoys blessings and is not spoiled by troubles. (Yes, there will be troubles, but knowing there is ALWAYS joy in the Holy Spirit).

**Conclusion:**

Most people don't like the doctrine of the Resurrection. When the apostles preached the gospel the audience always listened with interest, until they mentioned the Resurrection, then the shut their ears. Even today, people want to establish a "Resurrection Free" Religion. Christian ethics are admirable. Christian examples are honorable. But the Christian doctrine of Resurrection is ridiculed.

Why? *Because the doctrine of resurrection implies that man can't do it on their own, but they need divine help.*

But let me ask you - has the world managed to become a better place without Jesus?
Are there fewer wars today than there were before Christ? Is there less hatred? Are people happier, do people love more? No.

Perhaps the world ought to give Jesus a try.

And what about your own life? You have tried for years to get by without Jesus. How do you feel about your life?

Have you managed to avoid making destructive mistakes?

Is your life free from bitterness, fights and unforgiveness? Do you have control of your feelings?

Maybe it is time for you to give Jesus a try.

**What does the Resurrection mean to you and me? (A wrap-up)**

It means that God is good, and I can always know that - regardless of whatever seems to be happening.
It means that my sins and mistakes of the past are forgiven.
It means that I don't have to resign myself to blundering through life making mistakes and feeling weak - there is a power available to me.

What did the Resurrection change?

Well, some may say that the next Day the Romans still ruled, the Jews still plotted revolution, Herod still planned his parties, and the common people still suffered. The Resurrection didn't change anything ... on the surface.

From our reading this morning we know that what the Resurrection changed was the disciples themselves. Suddenly they felt forgiven, instantly they had purpose, they understood what was going on, they saw Jesus had conquered death and in a flash they became courageous. Everything came into focus – they saw everything clearly now.

Paul prayed, "*That you may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His might power which He worked in Christ when He raised him from the dead.*" Ephesians 1:20
The Resurrection will not make big headlines. The newscasters will hardly give it a word or two (even at Easter). Nevertheless, I promise you that this day can make an eternal difference in your life - if you are willing to BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is risen. If you are willing to really know and experience Him in your life - you can be changed forever.

Talk about expectations.

Those who expect big things (like the resurrection) receive them.

Those who expect little, get just that!!!!

Talk about Keswick Convention – hundreds of teenagers and young adults converging on a small country town – it would grow the town’s population by 15% all because of Jesus (and the resurrection).

They hired out the largest place in town to hold this convention (Civic Centre) – do you think it was just coincidence that the place was only finished a year or two before this Jesus explosion happened. NO!! God is always working ahead of us.

Those who expect big things, receive them.

Just like the disciples on the Emmaus Road, when Jesus explained why the Resurrection occurred, and the Risen Christ was revealed, their hearts burned within them. They knew there was something different about Jesus. They knew the power of the Resurrection in their lives. All of a sudden, they could see everything clearly now.

Just like the disciples, each one of us also has the opportunity to see Jesus clearly. At the start of this new year, do you need another lackluster year spiritually? Will it be another year that is just ho-hum when it comes to your faith journey? Will you just struggle along with a rules & regulations-based two-dimensional religion, always feeling like one of your spiritual wheels are dragging in the dirt?

Or will it be a year where the presence of Jesus will make a massive difference in your life? Will it be a year where Jesus changes everything. Everything becomes so clear as we forge ahead into the ministries that He has for us? Ministries that are going to bring healing into the heart of the Lockyer Valley?

Which one will it be for you? Because, for me, the Resurrection changes everything!!
Do you know that some people have called me Pentecostal? I’m not sure what their definition of that word might be. And I find it a bit weird, because I grew up in staunch traditional Church of Christ and Baptist churches. Trained at a fairly conservative Bible College.

But, here’s what they might be referring to – The Resurrection of Christ changes everything!! The Risen Christ has come alongside my life and has revealed everything. Now my life is so clear. I can see things that I would’ve never dreamed about. I have a greater understanding of life, forgiveness, sin, holiness, joy, peace, trust, purpose, calling, destiny, the future. Why? The because the Resurrection changed everything!!

Some might think that I have ants in my pants. I get excited about Jesus. I mean, C’mon church, is there any other way? That, I guess, has caused people to refer to me as being Pentecostal. Well, if the Resurrected Christ has made all the difference in my life (and He can do the same for you), and it has put ants in my pants (so to speak), then I’m guilty as charged.

**Has the Resurrection changed everything for you?**

I pray that it has. I pray that at the start of this new year, God’s Holy Spirit is speaking to you and encouraging you about the next 12 months ahead.

Hey, there’s always speed bumps!!! What happens though if you hit them doing a 100km/hour? Ask Carl, he’ll tell you the damage that can happen. It will leave you stranded on the side of life’s road. But what happens when we anticipate them, see them coming, see clearly and respond?

**Only because of the Resurrection, can we anticipate the spiritual speed bumps. Only because of Christ and the power of the empty tomb can we see things more abundantly clearer. And only because of Jesus’ presence will we have a three-dimensional 360 degree perspective to the year ahead.**

Let’s trust God and his grace and mercy, and stand upon the fulfilled resurrected blood-bought promises of our Risen Lord Jesus – so that everything WILL come into focus. Everything WILL be clear. Everything WILL look different ... because of the power of the Resurrection in our lives. Amen.

**Let’s pray ...**
Father God, Give us a new look at your Son. Help us to understand that He comes to us where we are and in what we are doing and in our sin. 
Reveal your Son Jesus to us again today. Let your resurrection power change our life. 
We can’t do things on our own. Help each of us to have a three dimensional faith, not just to know you, but to know your power. 
Thank you for the empty cross and the empty tomb. Let us right now to have a heart that is empty and ready to receive you and the wonder that is all about the resurrection of your son, forgiveness of our sin and a lifetime change. 
Thank you for the work of your Holy Spirit in our life today. Let us have the courage right now to say, “Change me and use me for your glory this week.”
In the risen name of Jesus. Amen

Closing Song ~ Open the Eyes of my heart

On the Road to Emmaus

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

19 “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”
They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

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 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. 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.”

The Ascension of Jesus

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.