
Jubilee and the Joy of Salvation

SCOTT HOEZEE

Imagine, the preacher Tom Long once said, an intersection of two streets, and that on all four corners of the intersection was a church; imagine there is one church for each of the four writers of the gospels. One would be Matthew's church, and you would be able to tell that because it would be the church with a large education wing attached to it, since in Matthew, teaching is key. Well, what would distinguish Luke's church building from the others? Well, it would have a giant fellowship hall attached, because in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus makes it clear that he has brought the ultimate year of Jubilee to pass, and it was time to have a party of great joy. Today on *Groundwork*, we will explore this theme in the Gospel of Luke, so stay tuned.

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And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, we are now already over halfway through our six-part series on the Gospel of Luke. This is our fourth of six programs. The first program took a big overview of the book, and really focused on the Holy Spirit in Luke. The second program looked at the theme of economic justice in Luke; and the third program...the one just before this one...pondered prayer and how prayer is treated in the gospel. In this episode, the year of Jubilee and the theme of joy in Luke.

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So, we want to talk about how Jesus Christ is the Son of God and he came to earth and he wants to sound a note of celebration. It is really a good thing to see he is coming. They call it the gospels for a reason. It is the

good news; everybody is reporting it. They are actually having a good time with this; and we can see the text from Luke 5, and it kind of sets the stage for this, when the Pharisees have an issue with the disciples. It says:

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So again, Jesus is basically saying he is bringing about something new. It is not going to be fully brought to fulfillment yet, right? But while Jesus is here, he is bringing something new. He is bringing something that is very important in the Old Testament, and that is the theme of Jubilee; and so, what we want to do in the first part of this fourth program of this Luke series, Darrell, is review that Old Testament background. We have said before in this series, you are not really going to understand the gospel or Jesus or the new covenant in Jesus’ blood if you don’t understand the Old Testament and the old covenant with ancient Israel. The same is true here. So, let’s listen to this from Leviticus 25, where God is giving his law of how Israel was to structure their life. Leviticus 25:8: Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. ⁹Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. ¹⁰Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to (claim it as) your own clan. ¹¹The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you.

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Exactly; so, every seven years there was a sabbatical rest, right? Every seven years you even gave the land a rest, you know. So, every seventh year you had a sabbatical. You do seven of those...seven times seven equals forty-nine...and then the next year was the Jubilee; and in addition...interestingly, Darrell, in addition to the jubilee year being a time to reflect and celebrate the goodness of God, the jubilee year was also meant to serve as a kind of resetting of the economic clock.

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Yes; it is really interesting that, you know, debts were returned; properties were sold back; and their national deficit, if you will, was set back to zero. So, if I owed you a debt, that debt was cleared. So, it was a really time, where everybody can start afresh and everybody is on an even plane. I don't owe you; you don't owe me; and it is really beautiful how every fiftieth year they would restart.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; you know, God knew things happen, right? I mean, you make a bad economic choice and you lose the farm...sometimes literally, your property gets foreclosed on or forfeited; or, you know, in really severe circumstances, a person could literally land in debtor's prison if they couldn't...you could go to jail. Well, the fiftieth year...every fifty years, open the jail and let everybody out who was there because of debt. Cancel the debt. Everything is going to get reset; and one of the things that was meant to be, Darrell, is to remind the people: Hey, this land of Canaan, the Promised Land, it is not yours; it is mine, God says; it is mine; you are tenants on my land. I apportioned the land to each tribe. Everybody got a fair share. You give it back because it is not yours, and we read that also in Leviticus 25.

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So, God makes this clear. He says: ²³The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. ²⁴Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

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Jubilee was a year of grace and restoration; and as we have said, and we have mentioned this in a couple of other programs already in Luke, this key moment in Luke 4, Jesus is in the very beginning of his ministry, he is in the synagogue in Nazareth, his hometown; and he reads Isaiah 61: ^{Luke 4:18}The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

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Through sin, through brokenness...he wants to clean that ledger. He wants to reset that; and his Jubilee will, of course...fast forward to a spoiler alert...it is the atonement... it is the paying of the sins that he died on the cross for, to set our ledger right with God in righteousness.

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Exactly; he is resetting the clock for the whole creation. It is not going to fully happen in Jesus' lifetime, right? The kingdom has not fully come even now, two thousand and some years later, but that is what he is starting. So, that is why he is saying to the people who say: Hey, how come your disciples seem to be in a good mood? It is like, there is a reason. I am on track to reset the whole creation back to how God meant it to be. So, not surprisingly, Darrell, you know, I mean, what do you think of when you think of *jubilant*? What do you think of when you think of jubilant people? Well, you think of joy...you think of joyful people...people who are grinning from ear to ear. They break out into dancing. Jubilee—jubilant—jubilation; that is all upbeat stuff, and that is what Jesus is making possible.

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Jesus makes it possible, and so, the relationship with God, joy should be a full theme of what it is like to live under the governance of our good, good Father, because he is blessing, he is keeping, he is protecting, and he is watching over us; and he is actually the one we get to have a relationship with; and so, that joy is not circumstantial; it is not based on what is happening to us; but it is an inner peace and gratitude to a God who is in charge of it all, pretty much.

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And again, as we have said, there is nothing in Luke that isn't also in Matthew, Mark, and John; but each gospel writer had their own emphasis, and for Luke jubilee and joy was punched up a little bit more. Even as we saw in the previous program, Luke made sure to remind us that before every major event in Jesus' life, he prayed, more than even Matthew and Mark and John do; and here he makes it clear: Hey, Jubilee is here and so is joy. And we want to talk about that joy of salvation in just a moment, so stay tuned.

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Segment 2

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And Darrell, one of the best-known chapters in the Gospel of Luke is Chapter 15, and we are going to spend some time with that in this second segment of this fourth program on the Gospel of Luke; but we cannot understand the three parables that get told in Luke 15 if we don't remember how the chapter begins:

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So, Jesus is obviously hanging around the out-crowd, if you will; the people who are not welcome to...it says he is hanging around with tax collectors and sinners. Of course, the Pharisees believe that they are better than these people and they don't associate with these people. They want to move as far away as they can from these people; but of course, Jesus has said in other places it is not the ones who are well who I come to, it is the ones who are sick because I am the Great Physician. So, you know, it is really setting the stage for what he is going to talk about, because the attitude of the Pharisees, I think it sparks the reason why he talks about these three things.

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The Pharisees were properly, in a lot of ways, concerned with righteousness, with holiness, with staying pure, but they kind of thought the only way we can do all that is if we keep the sinners and the undesirables and the losers at arm's length. They get too close, they are going to contaminate us. So, you know, keep them away; but interestingly, not only did Jesus seem to enjoy hanging out with these people, those people found Jesus

magnetic. They *wanted* to be... I mean, they would never dare approach a Pharisee. They know what they would get; a cold shoulder or worse; but with Jesus, they also knew what they were going to get: Love, grace, mercy; a warm smile; a word of forgiveness. Of course they found Jesus magnetic. When he had all that on offer, who wouldn't want to be around that? They certainly did.

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So, if Jesus is appearing as approachable, if he is appearing as hospitable and loving, like you said, then, I mean, he is warm, he shows mercy, he is loving them; and so, I mean, that is attractive, you know. My question is, I wonder if I could live that way; where people feel...they don't feel self-conscious around me or they are not moving the other direction when I come in the room or hiding their faces from me; but do I carry that kind of spirit that has the fruit of the Spirit: the love, the joy, the peace; so that they can come to me and say: I don't know why I feel comfortable talking to you, but I just feel comfortable talking to you. Because the Holy Spirit is working in my heart to humble me and help me remember that I am no better than the person that is next to me. It is beautiful that Jesus is going to make sure that the Pharisees don't miss this point because of their arrogance.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, exactly; and Jesus also, sadly, knows something else, right? The Pharisees were missing something. They were missing God's heart for the lost; they were missing the joy of salvation. When salvation comes to somebody, there is joy, and they were missing that. So, he tells a triplet of parables on the theme of lost and found. He tells of a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost son. We don't have time to look at all three of those parables, Darrell, but let's look at the bottom line of all three. So, let's just read in turn here how each of those three parables ends. Here is the first one: ⁶Then (the man—the first one—the shepherd) he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “ ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep. ⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

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And now we are talking about the coin. In verse 9 it says: “And when she (who lost it) finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

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And at the end of what we call the Prodigal Son, verse 31; after the elder brother complains that his brother didn't deserve this party that his father threw, the father says: “My son,” the father said, “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is now alive again; he was lost and (he) is found.”

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It is unfortunate, Darrell, that in most translations it says: We had to *be glad*, because actually, that is we had to *rejoice*. It is the same verb found at the end of the lost sheep and the lost coin. All three end the same: Rejoicing is what happens when salvation comes. When salvation happens, joy happens; and the source of that joy is the grace of God.

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So, it is beautiful because...I mean, in this series here, I call it three pendants on the same necklace, because the idea is: Something lost, something found, rejoicing; something lost, something found, rejoicing; and what we see in these stories is that each thing increasingly goes up in value. The sheep was important; the coin is more important than the sheep; the son is more important than all of them; and Jesus is saying: Pharisees, you missed it...

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There are some sons and daughters here in our midst that are coming to be found and you are missing the rejoice part. Maybe you are acting like the older son in the last story.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and there is such a hyper-abundance of joy in these stories, and there is this wild lavishness, you know. So, the woman loses one coin, finds it, and then throws a party that probably cost her more than the coin was worth in the first place, right? Or in the parable of the prodigal son; the father lets loose with a lavish party, the likes of which people in that neck of the woods had probably never seen before. That is the joy that the Pharisees were missing. They were perfectly content, Darrell, to let the lost stay lost. What; you lost one sheep out of ninety-nine? Meh, you still got ninety-nine and it was probably the dumb sheep's fault for getting lost, so let him stay lost. But no; Jesus says God counts by ones; and if seems a little borderline reckless in that parable, that the shepherd would leave ninety-nine kind of vulnerable to look for the one, well that is kind of the holy recklessness of the grace of God. Almost everything in these three parables is over to top...it is over the moon; the joy here is almost delirious.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and there is such a hyper-abundance of joy in these stories, and there is this wild lavishness, you know. So, the woman loses one coin, finds it, and then throws a party that probably cost her more than the coin was worth in the first place, right? Or in the parable of the prodigal son; the father lets loose with a lavish party, the likes of which people in that neck of the woods had probably never seen before. That is the joy that the Pharisees were missing. They were perfectly content, Darrell, to let the lost stay lost. What; you lost one sheep out of ninety-nine? Meh, you still got ninety-nine and it was probably the dumb sheep's fault for getting lost, so let him stay lost. But no; Jesus says God counts by ones; and if seems a little borderline reckless in that parable, that the shepherd would leave ninety-nine kind of vulnerable to look for the one, well that is kind of the holy recklessness of the grace of God. Almost everything in these three parables is over to top...it is over the moon; the joy here is almost delirious.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and so, it is really important that Jesus is actually zinging the Pharisees with the last story, because he is showing the comparison of the older brother and the younger brother. The older brother is upset; he is not joining in the party; he is saying: I have been with you my whole life; I don't understand it; I mean, why you didn't throw me one party with my friends? So, he is comparing and he is talking about the righteous things that he had done in his life, and the father is trying to get him to understand we have free choice. So, the Pharisees are missing that he...Jesus...is identifying them in the story.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; I have never done anything to embarrass you, Father. Your son gave you nothing but embarrassment, and you give him this? What is going on? And the father says, you know: That is not true; he says to the older brother: Everything I have is yours already. Don't you know the joy I take in also you? But he doesn't. The older brother has no joy; not for himself, not for anybody else; certainly not for that fop of a brother of his; and the Pharisees...as you just said, they are the older brother. They were joyless on every front. They took no joy in trying to be as outwardly righteous as they could. They took no joy in seeing a sinner come home to the Lord; and Jesus knew that that was beyond a crying shame. But, of course, Darrell, Jesus does not round out the Prodigal Son, does he? He leaves the question hanging in the air.

SCOTT HOEZEE

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, you know; so, does the son go in? Does he hang out? Does he not go in? And the Pharisees have this choice, and so does the older son. I think we also have the choice. Are we going to be thankful and enjoy and rejoice with those who are lost who are now found; or are we going to try to stay smug with our self-righteousness and perfectionist attitudes? It is a dilemma.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; the Pharisees just didn't think people like that were worth their time; Jesus knew otherwise; and speaking of people not being worthy of our time, there is this interesting story, Darrell, in Luke 19 about Zacchaeus. We are going to look at that, and then close with some final questions and thoughts. So, stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

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Segment 3

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DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

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You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and let's dig right back into scripture, Darrell, in Luke Chapter 19: Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. ⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he (Zacchaeus) came down at once and welcomed him (Jesus) gladly. ⁷All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." ⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

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DARRELL DELANEY

So, of course, this a famous story. We often tell it in children's church and in youth ministry about this short man...this wee, little man named Zacchaeus who couldn't see Jesus and got in a tree...a sycamore tree...to see him. There is no indication that he intended to become a disciple, a follower, or even a convert of Jesus. He was just curious, like, who is this guy? What is going on? I need to get a better view of this. And then something happens that changes his entire life.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

I think he was probably hiding up in the tree. I mean, a man of his social station, they don't want to see him up a tree, his legs dangling inelegantly off a branch. So, when Jesus says: Hey Zacchaeus; you know, every face in the crowd turned up to Zacchaeus too, and I imagine that the guy blushed pretty good. He was kind of embarrassed; but then Jesus as good as says: Zacchaeus; you are my kind of guy. I gotta spend time at your house today. The crowd thinks Jesus is nuts. He clearly has no idea who this scoundrel is, people were thinking; but interestingly, for his part, Zaccheaus comes out of the tree so fast, he almost falls out of the thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it says that he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. So, when Jesus actually says: I must stay at your house today, then Zacchaeus is caught rejoicing there. He came down at once and welcomed Jesus gladly. That *gladly* is a translation. Of course, it means rejoice. So, the first person to rejoice in this passage is Zacchaeus.

DARRELL DELANEY

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SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and as we just saw in the previous segment, that very word for rejoicing is how all three of the parables in Luke 15 end. In Luke, when somebody rejoices, it is because they got saved. So, as my former colleague, Dean Deppe, once pointed out: Zacchaeus didn't get saved a little bit later when he promises to repay everything. No, no; he got saved up in the tree. That was the root of his salvation. The grace of Jesus that led him to smile at this crooked little tax collector. What he did later was the fruit of his salvation. As soon as we are told that Zacchaeus *rejoiced* to see Jesus, in Luke that is a clear signal: Ha; he is saved; he got saved right there. Because where Jesus goes, joy and jubilation follows. That is why, in this episode, in this series of the Gospel of Luke, Darrell, we have seen the theme of Jubilee, and now we have seen how Jubilee is closely yoked to joy, and particularly to the joy of salvation.

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So, as we close out this particular program, Darrell, where does these two themes, jubilee and joy, where do they leave us? What might we say are some important questions that all of this lays in front of us?

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DARRELL DELANEY

I think first and foremost, do people who are needy and lost, find the followers of Jesus and Jesus' Church just as magnetic as they find Jesus in this story? When we see people who are sinners and tax collectors and women and those marginalized, drawn to Jesus...

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Are they drawn to us as his followers in the Church like that? That is the diagnostic question. We would hope to say yes, but obviously we have not always toed the line there. We have not always done that very well.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

You mentioned that earlier in the program, too. Yes, we want to say do people who are in need spiritually find the Church magnetic? Absolutely, we would want to say, but unfortunately, not so sure. I mean, if you say to somebody who is struggling in life: Hey, you are struggling. Have you thought about trying to go to church? And too often we hear the reply: the church?! Why would I go there? Those people are only going to make me feel worse about myself.

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Or, as pastors, you know, sometimes...again, you are counseling with somebody who is in great need; they have some sort of crisis. They need Jesus. They need more of Jesus. And then, sometimes they say things like: Well, okay; once I clean up my act—once I get my stuff together—then maybe I will go back to church. But as a writer I read years ago once said, that is like, you know, you are really, really sick; you have a hot appendix or something, and you say: I am going to try to cure myself; I am going to take care of this on my own; and then when I am all good again, then I will check into the hospital. It is like, no. you need the hospital now; and the Church is supposed to be the hospital, not the place you go only *after* you are better; the place you go when you are not better so you can get better.

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DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; it is basically like saying: Clean yourself up before you get in the shower. But the shower is designed to clean you; and so, the Church is meant to be a hospital for your soul. You go there when you are broken,

when you are hurt; when you are sick. Unfortunately, if we have developed a Pharisaical attitude, we think we are better than people and they feel so self-conscious that they don't want to darken the door of a church; and we need to repent about that.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

That is the first thing all of this puts in front of us, Darrell. The second thing is, we should look at ourselves in a spiritual mirror and then say: What do I see reflected back at me? Am I a joyful disciple of Jesus? Or am I trying to be super careful and super serious about the faith...and of course, our doctrines, our confessions, what preachers preach and what Sunday school teachers teach...it is all very serious business, but we don't want it to become so serious that we come across as dour and stern and pinched. We want people to look at us and say a line from the book of Nehemiah: The joy of the Lord is your strength! I can tell that you are a joyful Christian. So, we don't want to come across to the world as tight and stern and angry. We want to show forth the joy that the people that Jesus comes into contact with in the Gospel of Luke display. That is the second thing.

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DARRELL DELANEY

The third, and finally, I think it is important to be joyful over our own salvation and realize that we have been saved by grace. That is a great story that should be told over and over again. Think we fall back in love with Jesus when we see young people profess their faith and stand up in church and say: Yes, I believe in the covenant promises. I claim them for my life. I want to follow them for the rest of my life. When they do that, it reminds us of our own story. We should be sharing that testimony each and every day.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

We should say every day the Jesus prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God; have mercy on me, a sinner. Because that prayer can kindle joy. It is not just other people who need to be saved by grace alone, I do too and so do you.

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SCOTT HOEZEE

So, that should be a source of great joy. The great line from Psalm 51, we should pray it again: Psalm 51:10-12 paraphrased Restore onto me the joy of your salvation and create a right spirit within me.

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But Darrell, since this is a series on Luke, let's hear the final verses of the final chapter in Luke 24, and let's hope that this can be a description of us and our sisters and brothers in the Church at all times and in all places.

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