

Open Our Eyes, Minds, and Hearts

Scripture Lessons: Luke 24:13-49 (New American Standard Bible)

¹³ And behold, on that very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, which was sixty stadia from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they came to a stop, looking sad. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You possibly the only one living near Jerusalem who does not know about the things that happened here in these days?" ¹⁹ And He said to them, "What sort of things?" And they said to Him, "Those about Jesus the Nazarene, who proved to be a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² But also some women among us left us bewildered. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. ²⁴ And so some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." ²⁵ And then He said to them, "You foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to come into His glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures.

²⁸ And they approached the village where they were going, and He gave the impression that He was going farther. ²⁹ And so they strongly urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. ³⁰ And it came about, when He had reclined at the table with them, that He took the bread and blessed it, and He broke it and began giving it to them. ³¹ And then **their eyes were opened** and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² They said to one another, "Were our hearts not burning within us when He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" ³³ And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ They began to relate their experiences on the road, and how He was recognized by them at the breaking of the bread.

³⁶ Now while they were telling these things, Jesus Himself suddenly stood in their midst and **said** to them, "Peace be to you." ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened, and thought that

they were looking at a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why are doubts arising in your hearts? ³⁹ See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you plainly see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ While they still could not believe it because of their joy and astonishment, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They served Him a piece of broiled fish; ⁴³ and He took it and ate it in front of them. ⁴⁴ Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things that are 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 He said to them, “So it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the 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 you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Acts 16:14 (New American Standard Bible)

¹⁴ A woman named Lydia was listening; she was a seller of purple fabrics from the city of Thyatira, and a worshiper of God. **The Lord opened her heart** to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

Introduction

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

Circle **the bolded sentences in** Luke 24:31, 24:45, and Acts 16:14: their **eyes** were opened, He opened their **minds** to understand the Scriptures, The Lord opened her **heart**.

My sermon title may remind you of the famous Methodist logo, “Open hearts, Open minds, and Open doors.” Many people like that phrase. It is a symbol of welcome. Indeed, it is essential for us to stay open-hearted, open-minded, and keep our doors open to all seekers. But it means much more than just welcoming our visitors. It has everything to do with our understanding of God and walking with the Lord Jesus. When our hearts are closed, we will not be able to obey the Lord. When our minds are closed, we will fail to understand the Scriptures. When our eyes closed, we will not see the resurrected Jesus among us. Let me unpack what I just said for you.

Content

Open eyes to see Jesus (Luke 24:31).

Have you seen Jesus? Most of us would say, no, at least not physically. I bet, however, many of us have seen Jesus, without realizing. That's what happened to me once many years ago. That day, I saw Jesus. In my salad days of ministry in Michigan, I was an ambitious young preacher. Fresh out of the seminary, I was in my thirties and ready to turn the world upside down with the gospel message. The West Michigan Conference found a small congregation for me--70 members--in the rural area. One afternoon, I was on my way home after visiting one of the shut-ins. Her name was Bertha. A sweet lady. That afternoon, I drove 45 minutes to get to her place and spent the next two hours with her. Talking and listening. Laughing and praying. It was a bit challenging, though, because she had a hearing problem. She wasn't wearing hearing aids, either. During our visit, several times she asked, "I am sorry, pastor. What did you say?" Anyway, that afternoon, driving back home, I was in deep thought. I was thinking about my future. I was thinking to myself, "What am I doing here in the middle of nowhere in Michigan? I deserve better. I need a bigger congregation. I don't want to waste my life here!" All of a sudden, in my heart, I heard a voice, "You have seen Me today!" I knew it was the Lord. Then, Jesus reminded me of Matthew 25:36, "You visited Me (today)." That day the Lord opened my spiritual eyes to see Him among His flock. I was shocked. I was ashamed of my spiritual blindness and arrogance. Immediately, I repented of my sin. The sin of not knowing God's will and the sin of failing to recognize my Lord among His flock. Listen to what Jesus says: *'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me'* (Matthew 25:40). From then on, this verse became my motto. Every single believer in God's flock is Jesus to me. When I see them at church, I see Jesus. When I visit them in the hospital, I visit Jesus too.

On the First Easter, two disciples of Jesus were on their way to Emmaus. A complete stranger, the risen Christ hidden from their naked eyes, joined them. Three of them walked together for some time. During this whole time, they failed to recognize the risen Lord with their naked eyes. However, at the dining table, Jesus opened their eyes and they immediately recognized Him. Likewise, may the Lord open our eyes to see Jesus among God's people, at home, at work, at church and in our communities.

Open our minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

When it comes down to resurrection and afterlife, most of us simply assume that someday we will arise from the dead and be in the presence of God forever. There's more to it, though. We must understand how real and significant the resurrection is to our faith and

practice. To do so, we need our minds opened by the Lord. Our knowledge of resurrection doesn't come automatically to us. Neither does it depend on how long we have been going to church nor how many church committees we served in. Only with the mind that was opened by the Lord, will we be able to understand the resurrection and its ramifications. E.g. Sadducees, the religious leaders in Jesus' time, were so ignorant of God's Word and His power that they ended up denying the resurrection, that of Jesus and their own.

Today, in America, many folks think and act like the Sadducees. They have hard time believing in the resurrection, not only that of Jesus but also their own. Listen. The reason why we believe there's resurrection for all, the good and the wicked, is because that's what the Bible says. In the Last Judgment, everyone will be resurrected and stand before God's judgment throne. God will recompense according to their deeds and words and each one will enter either eternal life or eternal destruction. You can't be a Christian without believing in resurrection. That faith begins with hearing of God's Word. To understand God's Word, you need an open mind, and only the Lord can give you that open mind.

Today's text (Luke 24:45) shows how Jesus opened the minds of His two disciples. Once their minds were opened, they understood the prophecies in the Scripture regarding the Messiah; what He would do and how He would die and resurrect from the dead. When they understood God's prophecies regarding the Messiah, their hearts were burning within them (v. 32). I pray that the Lord will open our minds so that we may understand the Scriptures, and that our hearts may burn within us.

Open our hearts to listen and obey (Acts 16:14).

Let me ask you this: what matters most in our relationships? Money, health, and so forth. But it is the heart that matters the most, isn't it? You name it. Love, hate, affection, respect and disdain all begin and end in our hearts. Likewise, our love for the Lord and the desire to obey Him begin in our hearts. E.g., In my high school days, there was a church friend who attended the same youth group as I did. One time, he confided in me saying that he was about to quit the church. By then, he had been going to church all his life and I just began as a baby Christian. Puzzled, I asked him why. He said that he felt the church was too confining. It was all but rules and regulations. Do this, do that. Don't do this or that. So, he said, he wanted to be free from all those rules and regulations. The only way? Quit the church. At that time, I was unable to give him any better answer. Eventually, he quit as he said. Looking back, I realize that my friend's relationship with God was founded not on love, but on regulations. His heart failed to see that we obey the Lord out of love, not out of duty or reluctance.

The same thing goes with listening to the sermon. It requires an open heart to listen and understand it. Here's the reality. We experience this all the time in church. Even this morning. As you listen to the sermon, you may see your mind wander off to someplace else. You may say, because you are not interested in the topic. But, if you are honest with yourself, you know that your heart is not there. Your heart is not with God and His kingdom priorities. That's why it doesn't interest you. That's why your heart and mind wander off during the service. If I gossip about some celebrities, you would perk up and pay attention to it. Right away. Why so? Because your heart is there in the world and resonates with what the world promotes. May God help us.

In today's text, Acts 16, we see a woman named Lydia. Although she never met Paul before, when she heard him preaching, she believed in the gospel. She instantly became a believer and later she and her entire household were baptized. Why was it so easy for her to pay attention to Paul a stranger? Because ***the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul*** (Acts 16:14). I pray that the Lord open your heart to respond with faith every time you hear a sermon.

Conclusion

Easter is a great time to remember the historical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. You may hear a lot about Easter bunny and egg hunt in the world, but you won't hear about the resurrection, because in the name of science they deny the resurrection of ours, let alone Christ's. Do you believe in the resurrection? Good. If not, my sincere prayers for you that the Lord open your heart, mind, and eyes to experience the living Christ and grant you the hope of resurrection and the glory of being in God's presence for eternity.

Amen.