

Luke 24:36-49

³⁶As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

³⁷But they were terrified and frightened and thought they were looking at a ghost.

³⁸He said to them, “Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While they still did not believe it (because of their joy), and while they were still wondering, he said to them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”

⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. ⁴³He took it and ate in front of them. ⁴⁴He said to them, “These are my words, which I spoke to 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.”

⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He said to them, “This is what is written and so it must be: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹Look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Open-Minded

I.

It’s over. At least, for most of the world, Easter is over. April 1st was the date this year. That was already an eternity ago, especially in the hearts and minds of retailers who are on to the next holiday. You probably can’t even find anything in the clearance isles any more pertaining to Easter.

For the Christian Church, however, the joy of the Risen Savior continues. This is why each of the Sundays in the Easter season are called Sundays “of” Easter. Each Sunday is a mini-Easter. Really, that’s a theme that continues all the year through, not just in the 40-day period between Jesus’ resurrection and his ascension into heaven. The wonderful Good News of Easter is that Jesus defeated death, opened the grave, and rose to life again.

As important as this news is, there is another opening Jesus did that is just as important as opening his grave on Easter Sunday. Luke tells us that Jesus: “Opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45, EHV).

Closed-mindedness is a problem for understanding and believing the realities of the empty tomb. In last week’s gospel we heard of the difficulties Thomas had in believing the reports from the other 10 remaining disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. The world has even developed a phrase from his story: “Doubting Thomas.”

The verses before our text record Jesus meeting with the Emmaus disciples along the road. Once they realized who they had been talking with, they hurried back to Jerusalem. Luke tells us: “They found the Eleven and those who were with them assembled together. ³⁴ They were saying, ‘The Lord really has been raised! He has appeared to Simon’” (Luke 24:33-34, EHV). When Luke recorded the events of the first Easter evening, he didn’t focus on Thomas’ absence. He didn’t even mention the fact that Thomas wasn’t there, but simply records the reaction of those who *were* there. The phrase “The Twelve” had been used in the past to refer to Jesus’ closest disciples. Now that Judas was no longer part of their

number, Luke refers to them as “The Eleven.” That had now become their title, no matter which of them were present and which were not.

Probably those of The Eleven who were present were discussing the day’s events with some of the women, who had already been telling them things that were hard to comprehend. It was difficult to come to terms with all these things. Their minds needed to be opened to understand the realities of the resurrection.

II.

“As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’³⁷ But they were terrified and frightened and thought they were looking at a ghost” (Luke 24:36-37, EHV).

There is a problem with open-mindedness. The problem is that usually what is called open-minded is the *world’s* view of open-mindedness. Sometimes the world’s open-mindedness just muddies the waters.

I grew up two blocks from the Missouri River. It was at least a half-mile wide at that place. My young mind believed that once I got quite good at swimming, it would be no trouble for me to swim across that distance. Fortunately, I never tested my beliefs. While the river usually looks pretty calm on the surface, the currents vary all through the different depths of the river. It’s called the Muddy Missouri for a reason. The current stirs up the bottom so you can’t see much at all, let alone see the bottom.

That’s what the open-mindedness of the world is like. It stirs up all kinds of worldly wisdom to muddy the waters of your understanding. You are encouraged to be open-minded about all the world’s religions, and to see each of them as just as valid and viable as what the Bible teaches. Open-mindedness means to society that you not discount *anything* someone else feels to be true, but take it all in. All that so-called open-mindedness just mixes all kinds of falsehoods in with the truth and creates confusion and doubt.

The disciples’ open-mindedness caused them to incorporate the worldly false beliefs of their day with what they saw and heard that Easter evening. “They were terrified and frightened and thought they were looking at a ghost” (Luke 24:37, EHV). Their world believed that the spirits of dead bodies might roam around after a person had died. This caused such apprehension that they allowed it to stir up confusion and fear at the sight of the Lord Jesus.

III.

It is *Jesus* who brings clarity to such situations. It is *Jesus* who gives *real* open-mindedness.

“He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts?’³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet” (Luke 24:38-40, EHV). The first order of business for Jesus was to take away the fears of the so-called open-mindedness of the world of their day. He reassured them that they were *not* seeing a ghost, but the real, physical body of their beloved Master—the same One they had followed so closely and believed in so implicitly before what seemed to be the tragic events of Good Friday.

Once the fear of closed-mindedness is dealt with, Jesus could open their minds to reality. During the three years of his earthly ministry he had been laying the groundwork for them to fully understand. *Now* was the time for that understanding to take hold. Now was the time for Jesus to open their minds.

He said: “These are my words, which I spoke to 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” (Luke 24:44, EHV). It has been said that the Bible is a book with the answers in the back. In other words, the information presented in the New Testament explains and fills in all the questions of the Old Testament. In fact, the whole purpose of the Old Testament was to point people ahead to Jesus. The whole ceremonial law with all its sacrifices pointed ahead to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. All those prophecies pointed ahead to Jesus. All the history of Israel pointed to the fact that God was preserving a remnant of his Chosen Nation for a purpose—to preserve alive the line of the Savior of the world. *Now* the reality was here. Everything was fulfilled. He had done it all.

Real open-mindedness is having your mind opened by the Savior-God to the reality that he loves *you* so much that he made the payment of the world’s sins a priority. *Real* open-mindedness is having your mind opened by the Holy Spirit to realize and to believe that God sent his One and Only Son to deal with the problem of sin, once and for all people.

“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He said to them, “This is what is written and so it must be: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:45-47, EHV).

Luke compresses time in this chapter. Luke 24 deals with the whole period of the 40 days after Jesus’ resurrection, from the women going to the tomb early Easter morning, to Jesus’ ascension into heaven. What Luke speaks of here is that whole 40-day period. During that time Jesus continued to open their minds and expand their knowledge and understanding of Scripture and everything he had taught them *before* his Passion. *Now* they could see things with an open mind. *Now* they could see the whole picture and begin to process so many of the things Jesus had said to them over the previous three years that seemed a bit odd at the time. So many of those phrases came vividly to their minds as Jesus opened their minds to truly understand all he had come to do.

IV.

“You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹Look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:48-49, EHV).

Now that the cesspool of worldly-mindedness has been cleared up with the definitive truths of God’s Word, it is time to go out with *true* open-mindedness to be witnesses for Christ. As for The Eleven, they were to wait for the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would take place on the Day of Pentecost. *We* have had the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in baptism. Our lives have been cleansed from sin by God’s power. We have been given the righteousness of Christ for our entry into heaven. We have been given the whole truth and nothing but the truth from God’s Word—the wisdom from God which is higher than earthly wisdom—with which to clear up all the misconceptions of our truly closed-minded society.

Just as they were commissioned to be his witnesses to the world, so are *we* to do the work of an evangelist. We are to continue to proclaim with our lips and our lives and our dollars the great things God has done for the salvation of the world. The tombs of our minds have been opened to the real open-mindedness of God’s love for us in Christ.

Continue to live in the open-mindedness he has given you. Use what he has given to dispel your doubts and fears. Use what he has given you to fill your heart with peace and the sure hope of heaven. Use his body and blood, given and poured out for you, as a continual reminder and as the tangible evidence with which you taste and see the forgiveness he won for you for all eternity. Live as an open-minded Child of God and heir of heaven. Amen.