

Easter 3 Luke 24 “Open our Eyes, Lord” April 26 2020

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing unto You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen!

Open our eyes, Lord. St. Luke records the words of Peter in the book of Acts 2:³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” And their eyes were opened.

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words He bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Be delivered from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. Their hearts were opened.

Is some of our North American malaise really due to the fact our senses are dulled to God, rendered unfeeling by our surplus of things that own us and our sense of entitlement? But we seldom examine the fact that as fallen human beings, our desires are fundamentally disordered, fundamentally opposed to the petition, “Thy will be done.” Open our eyes, Lord.

In chapter 24:29, St. Luke gives us a verse right out of the beginning of our Evening Service of Prayer, “Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening and the day is almost over.” So, Jesus went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

What opened their eyes?

Then He vanished from their sight. You see, that was enough. ³² And they said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?”

What opened their hearts?

³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

How was He made known to them?

³⁶ and as they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be unto you!” ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit... ⁴⁴ Then He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything 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.

How did He open their minds?

Sin and this fallen world divide people, it makes us lonely, angry, bitter, afraid, all sorts of negative things. We ourselves often don't understand the problem, even when we are in the middle of it, because often we are the problem.

As a result, we often are found walking a lonely road – perhaps grieving, perhaps angry, perhaps without hope. But this way of life, this loneliness, does not belong to the life God intended us to live. It is in fact another sign of our profound brokenness – God had meant us to live in community with one another and in communion with Him.

Jesus knows we are part of this problem, that is why He did not wait for us to figure this out, but came searching for us on the lonely paths of Emmaus, in our locked rooms, hiding places, quarantines, and other dark corners. Through his Word and Sacraments, He radically reorganizes our minds and our lives. No matter what anyone else has done to us, any injury or sin against us, Jesus has died for it. We can love anyone now because Jesus has loved us first and forgiven our sins. And the road suddenly gets much brighter when Jesus is in view. The miles pass and soon we are at the door, where we are supposed to be, where He awaits to come in to us. The future that we once dreaded, now has a hope and a light.

What are the things which blind us to the presence of Christ? Was Jesus purposefully blinding the men in our Gospel reading, or were their eyes kept from seeing Jesus because of something in themselves?

Was this like the time you met a friend but they were in such a strange, unexpected place that you simply could not remember who they were? It's like meeting your doctor at the grocery store. You have a vague idea that you should know the guy, but you cannot figure out who it is. Were the disciples' minds just so clouded by the events of the past days, distracted to the point that they simply could not see? For sure! They had last seen Jesus bloodied and bludgeoned, dead and buried!

Are our eyes just so clouded by the events of the past month, distracted by daily life, that we cannot see past our own self-absorption, cannot see through to Jesus?

What would the Emmaus experience be for us today? What changed the disciples' lives? Was it not the Word and the Sacrament that opened their eyes and ears, hearts and minds? Even though they had God in the flesh with them, it was Word and Sacrament that did it. And it is still Word and Sacrament that does it today for us.

Jesus reveals himself to us in the simple things. We will most likely not see the glorious visage of our returning Lord today, but we will see the loving face of our spouse, our pastor, our children, our friends, etc. And through these people, and through the Word preached, and through the Sacraments received, Jesus is also revealed to us today. And He opens our eyes, ears, hearts and minds.

Jesus' gifts restore our lost enthusiasm, bind our wounds, and focus us on why we are here and what we are here to do. The disciples ran back the same road they had been trudging on a few moments before so they could simply tell about Jesus. We see Jesus' love, and it shapes us and empowers us to see beauty in life and to be a beautiful witness to our community.

The Resurrected Christ opens our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to his presence, bestowing his blessings of insight, passion, joy, and infectious enthusiasm.

We are empowered through Word and Sacrament to rejoice in and see the presence of Christ and the fruit He brings to us. The Emmaus disciples are our models. These disciples started out jaded and cynical. They were discouraged and had abandoned hope. Then Jesus shows up in their journey to encourage and recast their experiences in light of Scripture. The same Jesus who encountered them on the road to Emmaus, also encounters us on the road which we call life.

We also fail to see the Christ who comes beside us because we have gotten so distracted by the tribulations of the world, that we've lost sight of the **One** who has overcome the world.

We should notice what Jesus does to these disciples and notice that He continues to do these same things to us. Our world casts us down and saddens us. Depressed people are usually depressed about genuinely sad things. Discouraged people are discouraged because something really bad has happened. The sadness and discouragement are not inappropriate reactions to bad things. The men in our reading had good reason to be sad as well, but they also had not seen the whole picture. Jesus opened their eyes to see it. Jesus comes to fix our eyes as well and to point us to his gracious work. There is a very good chance we don't even recognize him when He does this. We are, after all, more than a little blinded by our sin. Jesus' vision, however, is acute. He sees us; He sees our problems.

It was when He sat at the table with the disciples that things got really interesting. He is a gentle soul, He makes as if he would go on. He did not beat the door down and force his way in, but delighted in being with them. Along the way they had not noticed his hands. It was twilight and they were not entirely clear in their vision. But when He sat down, and grabbed that loaf, blessed it with the same blessing He spoke in the upper room the night of his betrayal, they saw the scars on his hands. Their eyes were opened! They did not open them; He did that. They rejoice! And He fades, not leaving them, but establishing them in faith.

How **our** hearts burn within us when He opens the Scriptures to us. How we rejoice to take that bread from his hand. And now, the joy of His salvation gives life to our weary feet and puts a message on our lips. We rush to those whom we love, and we cannot **but** tell this story. He opens our eyes, ears, minds, hearts, and also our mouths.

Look at what Jesus did for the disciples. They were sad, trudging along, spent from all the events of this past week. He recast their world; He gave them a glimpse of himself; He moved them, motivated them and sent them out the door with a mission and message. Jesus does this in simple ways. He walks with them, talks with them; He stays with them, and eats with them. None of this is particularly amazing in itself, except of course that a few days before He had been dead.

But we also are given to walk with, eat with, and talk with him. That same Jesus often uses such moments, having united himself to us in his Word, in his Sacrament and in prayer, to comfort and help us.

Jesus walks with us, comes into our homes, and breaks bread with us at His table. He loves to be in our presence. How can we remain in our grief or sorrow? He leads us through his Word and feeds us with the Bread of Life that gives us joy and hope. This is for the whole of life, not just some small part. Like the folks in Jerusalem who heard Peter, we are moved to say, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Like Thomas, we are moved to say. “My Lord and my God!

Jesus opens our eyes, ears, minds and hearts to see our beloved Christ revealed in the whole Bible. Jesus is revealed behind every rock in the OT. And St. Luke tells us what Jesus did to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. And then Jesus does that to us, right now, as He takes us into the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit, and shows us his loving face behind those words and gifts us with his body given and blood shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. Those who have ears, let them hear!

May the love of God and the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit open your eyes, ears, hearts and minds to life everlasting. Amen!