

Easter 3
April 15, 2018

Luke 24:36-49
154-160-158/165-162

Lord, Open Our Minds...

- I. To understand Your resurrection.
- II. To understand Your Word.
- III. To understand our lives.

Dear Christian friends,

It's now two weeks after Easter – our **third Easter sermon** – and these verses take us back ONCE AGAIN to Easter evening. Come on – we know, **“He is risen!”** ENOUGH is enough – or is it?

WHY spend so much time and put so much emphasis on Jesus' resurrection? **Because** it's so important! Easter is THE HEART of our Christian faith – **hope** – and **life**. The BETTER we understand and **appreciate** Jesus' resurrection – the richer – fuller – more meaningful and **peaceful** our lives will be. The opposite is **also true**. The LESS our eyes are on our **risen** Lord Jesus – the less peace – **joy** – **hope** – **confidence** – **comfort** – contentment we will have.

So we return to Easter evening – to that room **“with the doors locked for fear of the Jews.”** We return to the disciples confused and **unsure**. Luke tells us, **“Then Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”** As we study these verses we pray, **“LORD, OPEN OUR MINDS!”** **Open** our minds 1) to understand Your resurrection, 2) to understand Your Word and 3) to understand our lives.

I. To understand Your resurrection.

The disciples were in a SORRY STATE that first Easter evening. **Things** were all happening SO FAST. They were having a hard time FIGURING OUT just what **was going on**. They just couldn't put ALL THE PIECES together. That can be so scary and **unsettling**. You know that **feeling**, don't you – when things just don't MAKE SENSE?

So they were in that room **“with the doors locked.”** Then ALL OF A SUDDEN there was Jesus! **“They were terrified and frightened and thought they were looking at a ghost.”** A **“ghost”** – how stupid could they be?! There are no such things as ghosts. **Stupid** – maybe we better take another look at ourselves. People still have their SUPERSTITIONS – they still do and say **“stupid”** things. We worry when we **don't need** to. We're **“afraid”** when there's nothing to be afraid of. We make problems and **issues** out of things that are really NO BIG DEAL. Isn't that **“stupid”**?

It took Jesus a while to **convince** the disciples that it really was Him. He really was **“risen.”** He had **indeed come back** to life and come out of His grave. Jesus was ALIVE AGAIN! The disciples were slow to believe Jesus' **resurrection** and what it all meant for them. Jesus needed to CONVINCE them and **“open their minds”** so they could understand His **resurrection**.

“LORD, OPEN OUR MINDS” so we also **“understand”** Your **resurrection**. You are risen! You have defeated death and the grave. You are alive – and **because You** are alive – we have peace. **“Peace be with you,”** we hear Jesus say. “Lord, OPEN OUR MINDS to understand this peace. **Because You live** we have peace with God. **Through You all is now well** between God and us. **For Your sake** God has forgiven all our sins.”

Lord, help us to see YOU – ALIVE! Help **us to understand** that Your resurrection means we can BE CONFIDENT – sure – **content**. Yes, we have our problems but we also HAVE YOU – **alive!** Lord, when we have our problems SHOW US again Your hands and side. As we grope our way through life and deal with dark days let our hands touch Yours and lead us on! When we're afraid – **fearful** – **unsure** – **worried** – **on edge** – let us hear You say, **“Peace be with you.”**

Easter began as a TRAGEDY for the disciples. It looked like THEIR WORLD had come **crashing down** around them. The greater tragedy was that it didn't have to be a tragedy in the **first place**. But

they forgot Jesus' promise of Easter. Jesus had to convince them that He was risen. He had to ***“open their minds so they could understand.”*** Lord, OPEN OUR MINDS...

II. To understand Your Word.

The disciples at first doubted and **disbelieved** Jesus' resurrection. And yet, as **Jesus explains**, He HAD TO rise from the dead. There was NO QUESTION about it. Why? Because God had promised and when God makes a promise He **always** keeps it. **Keeps it** – not MORE OR LESS – but down to the last little detail. So Jesus reminded the disciples and explained 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 Jesus ***“opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He 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, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations.’”*** What the disciples had seen and been through the **past few days** had not been VERY PRETTY. There was nothing pretty about the way the **chief priests** had treated Jesus. Anger – hatred – hostility – envy – jealousy – grudges – it's ALL SIN. There was nothing pretty about the was Pilate had **behaved**. **ABUSING authority** and denying responsibility is SIN. There was **nothing pretty** about what the disciples had done. **DESERTING** and denying the Lord is sin. There's **nothing pretty** about the way WE'VE acted. Can't we see ourselves in those **priests** – in **Pilate** – in **Peter** and the others? Can you honestly say that last week you ***“loved the Lord your God with ALL your heart, soul and mind”***?

But what they saw **during Holy Week** was also the MOST BEAUTIFUL sight in the world. They saw God keeping His Word. They saw God's grace IN ACTION – God forgiving a world of guilty sinners. NOW they saw their Jesus ***“risen”*** and alive! Jesus shows them ***“His hands and feet”*** still bearing the marks of the nails. What MARKS OF LOVE they are! Jesus had offered up Himself – His **perfect live** – IN OUR PLACE to pay for all our sins. Jesus had been ***“pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities.”*** Jesus' blood – the blood of God's Son shed on the cross – ***“cleanses us from all sin.”*** AND NOW Jesus ***“the Righteous One”*** lives ***“to speak to the Father in our defense.”***

Lord, as You opened the minds of **Your disciples** so they ***“could understand the Scriptures”*** so also open our minds! Help us to understand Your WORD. **Help us** to realize that we don't have to be a pastor or seminary professor **to understand** Your Word. **Sure** we don't understand everything right away – that's why we're asking You to **help us understand** Your Word. You didn't give us Your Word to CONFUSE us but to be ***“a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.”*** Help us to see that Your Word is ALL ABOUT YOU – and that the better we know our Bibles the better we **will know You**.

Lord, help us to ***“understand”*** that we CAN TRUST Your Word. Everything You've promised us in Your Word ***“must be fulfilled.”*** All those promises – SO COMFORTING – so **reassuring** – are all ABSOLUTELY **trustworthy**. Every single one of them is **true**. We can CONFIDENTLY depend on them. We can CONFIDENTLY stake our lives on them. We can **confidently build our hopes** and **futures** on them. Lord, help us to UNDERSTAND that!

God's Word is ALL ABOUT our **Savior** – our need for Jesus – Jesus' life and work. Jesus helped the disciples ***“understand”*** that – AND THEN to understand their lives IN THE LIGHT of **His Word** and **resurrection**. IN A SENSE Jesus' work on earth was **now done**. Their work was about **to begin**. Jesus helped them to understand that – and so we pray, “Lord, OPEN OUR MINDS...”

III. To understand our lives.

Lord, help us to ***“understand”*** that TRUSTING in **You** we have eternal life in heaven. ONE DAY – sooner or later – somehow or **other** – we will die. But that's OK – we have Easter! ***“I know that my***

Redeemer lives” and so will we – WITH Him – FOREVER – **in heaven**. Jesus has taken **“the sting”** out of death and turned it into a **wonderful blessing** for us Christians. TRUSTING in Jesus when we die we will immediately join Him in the **glory and perfection** of heaven. Because Jesus **“is risen”** we now look forward to that day when He will raise all the dead back to life and glorified body and soul **we Christians** will live forever with Him in the **“new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.”**

Lord, OPEN OUR MINDS so we can understand our LIVES RIGHT NOW. Why should we get ALL WRAPPED UP in **the things** of this life when they’re only temporary – they’re not even THE BEST You have for us? **Why** should we wait for heaven to LIVE WITH YOU when we can live each day RIGHT NOW with You?

Lord, OPEN OUR MINDS to understand the purpose of our **lives right now**. You **“suffered and died and rose on the third day”** just as You said You would. By faith we **“are witnesses of these things.”** AND NOW **“repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be preached in Your name to all nations.”** Repentance – people turning away FROM their sins and TO You **in faith**. People changing their minds about **sin** – realizing how destructive and **deadly** sin really is. People SEEING their sins – AND YOU our Savior from sin and guilt, death and hell. Lord, You died and **rose** FOR ALL. Help us to **“understand”** that ALL NEED You – **need Your cross** and empty grave.

Lord, help us to **“understand”** that You are looking to us to **“preach”** that repentance and **“proclaim”** that forgiveness in Your name. Help us to **“understand”** that the BEST THING we can do for our children and grandchildren is to tell them about You and **“bring them up”** as YOUR children. Help us to **“understand”** that we are being GOOD NEIGHBORS when we talk to our neighbors about You. Help us to **“understand”** that the BEST WAY we can help our country is by LIVING and SHARING our faith in You. Help us to **“understand”** that the MOST IMPORTANT THING we can do in this life is to share You with people everywhere. Help us to **“understand”** that this is why we are STILL HERE on earth – that this is the REAL PURPOSE of our lives now.

“Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand.” So we confidently pray and trust that Jesus will ALSO OPEN **our minds** so we too can understand. Amen.

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