



Open Our Minds to the Scriptures

Seventh Sunday of Easter, Ascension of the Lord

Luke 24:44–53

He said 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 he opened their minds
so they could understand the Scriptures.*

May 13, 2018

Thought for the Week

Some time ago, the administrators of Vanderbilt University placed four Christian student groups on "provisional status" because they were not in compliance with the school's policy of nondiscrimination. The truth is, the organizations are probably guilty as charged. You see, they believe a leader of a Christian organization ought to be a Christian. That makes sense to you, doesn't it?

Not to Vanderbilt University. They believe that these Christian groups should be more open-minded to other religious viewpoints, more tolerant of other faiths. They believe, at least in theory, that an atheist or an agnostic, a Jew, Muslim or Buddhist should be able to lead these Christian groups. Sadly, there are probably many in America that would agree with the administrators at Vanderbilt. Being open-minded is seen as a very good thing. Being tolerant of other people and other lifestyles and other truths appears to be a positive thing.

But look at what happens when we open our minds. Everything can rush in and fill us with wrong, harmful and disastrous ideas/lies.

It's Easter evening. The disciples are gathered together behind locked doors. Suddenly, Jesus is standing among them. He begins by moving them from disbelief out of doubt, to disbelief out of joy. "Peace be with you," He says. Then He does a Bible study with them. He said 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 He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. Jesus speaks of being open-minded. But what Jesus means by being open-minded is the exact opposite of what the world means by being open-minded! For to Jesus, being open-minded doesn't mean that *we* open our minds to anything and everything that can rush in and fill them. No, to Jesus it means that *He* is the One who opens our minds, so that *He* can then fill our minds – not with all kinds of thought and ideas – but with His Word and His Truth and His Peace. The very Word and Truth and Peace that He gave His scared disciples in the room that evening. The very Word and Truth and Peace that our world calls us Christians closed-minded for believing in. And once Jesus opens our minds, He then opens our mouths so that we may be witnesses for Him.



When Jesus appeared to the disciples on Easter evening, Luke tells us that the disciples were "startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. And [Jesus] said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?'" The Greek word Luke uses to describe their doubts is translated "rise up" or literally, that their minds were "stirred up." I think of the cheesy broccoli soup I once encountered at a Pot Luck Dinner. I told the person in front of me, "Don't stir it up. I'll take just the cheese on top. If you stir it, the broccoli that's sitting on the bottom might get in there." Or maybe you think of muddy water that gets stirred up and all the silt and slime at the bottom gets stirred up in the water and clouds it, so that things aren't clear anymore.

That's how the disciples were. Things were not clear for them anymore. Jesus told them He would die, but they thought He was the Messiah. He told them He would rise on the third day, but the religious leaders spread the rumor the disciples had stolen the body. Many among them had encountered the open tomb or even the risen Jesus, but it seemed too good to be true. It wasn't normal. Nothing seemed to make sense. They were confused and frightened ... as many in our world are today.

We want to fit in with our friends and co-workers who have different beliefs than we do. We want to be seen as open-minded and diverse to various opinions and ideas. Honestly, I have my own opinions and ideas on cauliflower and brussel sprouts. And it's fine to have a diversity of food tastes. It's O.K. to have a difference of opinion about what you eat. But when it comes to matters of faith, differences do most certainly matter! All ways are not equally good. To remain silent so that you appear sophisticated and sympathetic will only lead to destruction. I hope you cultivate a very tolerant and accepting worldview when it comes to food, music and art. But I hope you will never be ashamed to urge your family and friends to have faith in the One true crucified and risen Lord.

We, who the world has influenced into being open-minded, need to close our minds to the world and let Jesus open our minds. We need Jesus to do for us what He did for His disciples in the upper room. "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." And whenever the Scriptures use the word "open" like that, it is always the work – not of man – but of God. Opening the eyes of the blind, opening the ears of the deaf, opening the mouth of the mute, opening the wombs of the barren, opening heaven to fallen creation. And so after Jesus rises from the dead, Jesus comes to open the minds of His disciples and clean out the falsehood and fear and all kinds of wrong thinking and ideas. Then He can fill their minds with His Word, and His Truth, and His Peace. He clears things up for us so they aren't so muddy and confusing any longer.

During their three-year training period, Jesus' disciples were not particularly good ambassadors for Him. But the Lord stuck with them. He sent His Spirit upon them and transformed them from cowards into champions of the faith. Even when threatened with imprisonment, physical abuse, and death, they knew that silence was not an option: "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

The more we let God speak to us in His Word; the more we let Him use us in His agenda; the more our minds are closed to this world and its thinking and open to God and filled with His teaching; the more our confidence will grow; and the more we will agree that silence is not an option. We have been blessed with the knowledge and understanding of the outcome of the Great War between good and evil, Christ and Satan, life and death. How can we not help but speak about what we have seen and heard?

Let Christ open your mind. And as you do, the Spirit of Christ will open your mouth so that you can share Christ with others. First God acts. Then you learn. Then you act.

Happy Birthday Mary (5/26)

Only God Can Open Our Minds

He opened their understanding – He enabled them fully to comprehend the meaning of the prophecies, which foretold his death and resurrection. They had seen him die, they now saw him risen. Their prejudices were now, by his instructions, and by the facts, which they could no longer call in question, removed, and they no longer doubted that he was the Messiah. And they understood that all the "facts" in the case, which had before confounded them could be easily accounted for. Hence, we may learn:

1. That "facts," or the further disclosure of truth, will yet remove the "mysteries" that we now see in religion.
2. That our prejudices and our preconceived opinions are one cause of our seeing so many mysteries in the Bible. If a man or woman is willing to take the plain declarations of the Bible, he/she will commonly be little perplexed with mysteries.
3. That only God can open the mind so as to fully comprehend the Scriptures. Only He can overcome our prejudices, open our hearts, and influence us to receive the engrafted word with meekness, and with the simplicity of a child. See Acts 16:14; James 1:21; Mark 10:15.

4. God's opening of our understanding is designed in such a way that we may be acquainted with the Scriptures. It is not that we may be made wise above what is written, but that we may submit ourselves wholly to the Word of God.