

“He Opened Their Minds”

Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed! Alleluia!)

Dearly beloved, Easter can't be limited to one day. The Resurrection of Our Lord changes everything! It changes our lives! That's why our liturgy has a little Easter in it year-round as we sing our Alleluias. That's why our life of Baptism is a daily death and resurrection in contrition, repentance and faith.

So today, as we celebrate the open tomb – we hear of another opening – one just as important as the open tomb. Coming to His disciples, Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” Without the opening of their minds – the open and empty tomb would be of no benefit to them. And without the Christ coming to them, they would remain in the darkness of unbelief.

You hear a lot about “open-mindedness” today, but it's not what Jesus is talking about in our text. To the world around us, this means being open to all kinds of thinking, all opinions and points of view. It means that truth is relative, an open question, dependent upon what each individual wants. There is no one, absolute, objective truth – you have to be open to all “truths.”

That kind of open mind is quickly filled with all sorts of worldly things. Rather than letting the Word of Christ dwell in your hearts richly – the world fills your mind with all sorts of “gods,” “truths,” and lifestyles.

The result resembles a landfill, or a cesspool – where anything and everything gets dumped. Worldly wisdom mixing with and polluting the “one true faith” – leading to confusion, doubt – not sure what to believe – because you don't know what is true.

That's the confusion we see with the disciples after Jesus' crucifixion and death. When He appeared to them, “they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit ... and doubts [arose] in [their] hearts.”

Their hearts were stirred up, muddled. All that stuff that had settled in their minds that horrible weekend had clouded their thinking. They didn't know what to believe anymore.

Why did God abandon Him – why didn't He come to Jesus' rescue? If Jesus is the Messiah, how could it all end like this? Could someone really live after being beaten and crucified like that – or where the rumors true – that someone had stolen His body out of the grave?

But now that crucified and risen body stands right before their eyes – and things are really confusing! Is this a spirit? Can this be the same Jesus – the same flesh and blood Jesus?

Such is the confusion that fills the world today – many questions, no answers.

When Jesus comes to His disciples and opens their minds – it's not to let more junk in – but to clean out the filth, and falsehood, and fear – and to fill their minds with His wisdom, His truth, His peace. He opens their minds to see how the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms all pointed to His death and resurrection – to open their minds to see that He has done all this “for you.”

In the same way the resurrected Jesus comes into our midst today to open our minds to understand His Word. This is not about meditating, achieving another level of consciousness, or studying other great minds and thinkers.

Only Jesus can open our minds to His Word – and by that Word, He shines the light of His truth into the darkness of our unbelief – filling us with repentance and faith that lives from His forgiveness.

Only when Jesus comes to us can we know and believe in Him. God must come to us – or we cannot be saved. And so He does, coming in the flesh of His Son, Jesus Christ – coming by way of the manger, the cross, and leaving an empty tomb. God comes in the flesh to open the tomb – to open our minds – to open heaven to us.

In your baptism Jesus is daily resurrecting you to new life – joining you to Himself, and His death and resurrection.

Daily He comes to you His children – calling you to repentance and faith by His Word – cleaning out the junk the world has dumped on you – washing and absolving your sinful thoughts, words and desires – and filling you with the new and everlasting life He brings.

Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm not saying that you don't listen to and think about other opinions and points of view. Not all worldly wisdom is bad – for indeed, God has blessed us with worldly wisdom and intellect – using it for our good.

But there is also much false wisdom and many false gods. The prince of this world takes God's good gifts and corrupts them – using them to deceive us and mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Rather than trusting in a crucified and risen Christ – the world promises other forms of deliverance and salvation.

There is only One who saves eternally – Jesus the crucified and risen Christ. The Jesus who promises to be with you always, to the end of the age – who promises that He will not abandon you or leave you as orphans – but He will come to you.

This is the Jesus who opens your mind – who comes to fill you with a world view in which He rules and reigns over all things – centering your life in the forgiveness He has earned and graciously gives – and leading you to look and trust in Him for all things.

He comes to you today – to give His gifts – to forgive your doubt, and give you peace. He comes to fill you with His resurrected and life-giving Body and Blood – giving you His very life and Spirit.

He who has paid the price for all your sin, declaring “it is finished” – delivering you from sin, death and the power of the devil – has opened the tomb, and opened your mind – so that you may know and believe that He has opened heaven “for you.”

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