

+ IN THE NAME OF JESUS +

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
The Third Sunday of Easter**

April 14, 2024

“OPENED TOMB, OPENED MINDS, OPENED HEAVEN”

LUKE 24:36-49

I. WITH UNOPENED MINDS, THE OPEN TOMB COULDN'T HELP THE DISCIPLES.

Christ's open tomb has also opened heaven to us. But Jesus has opened something else to us, as we hear from today's Gospel, and it is every bit as important: *"He opened [the disciples'] m_____ to understand the Scriptures" (v 45)*. This, too, is Good News, and it is critical, because, *unless their m_____ were opened, the open tomb couldn't help the disciples*. To c_____ the open tomb and what it meant for them, they needed their minds opened to God's _____! So Jesus opened them.

II. WARNING: THE WORLD'S OPEN-MINDEDNESS CAUSES CONFUSION AND DOUBT.

Don't misunderstand me. I don't mean open-mindedness as the world defines that term. *The world's kind of open-mindedness causes confusion and doubt*, and it is d_____. I heard the warning expressed this way: *"Don't be so open-minded that your _____ fall out!"* To the world, "open-minded" means *"a _____ g_____!"* The world's open-mindedness says that there is no a_____ truth. Everyone creates their own truth. We are supposed to welcome any and every different i_____ and l_____ – except, of course, those which flow from the Christian faith. This way of thinking opens your mind, then fills it with d_____ – worldly wisdom, so-called "e_____" thinking, and before long, our minds have become a l_____ of worldly thinking, and we doubt and question God's Word of truth.

That's the kind of c_____ that had overtaken the disciples after Jesus' crucifixion and death. When he appeared to them here, *"they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. . . . [And] doubts [arose] in [their] hearts"*

(vv 37– 38). When it says *"doubts [arose] in [their] hearts,"* it means their hearts were churned up, like m_____ water. All the crud of life that had settled to the bottom of their thinking had been s_____ up by the events of that horrible weekend. So their thinking was cl_____. They weren't thinking clearly. They had been listening to the _____, not to God; so all kinds of thoughts and ideas and worldly wisdom had been stirred up in their heads, until they didn't know what to think or believe anymore. *"Could someone really rise from the dead? Was Jesus really the One he claimed to be? If so, why had God not rescued him? And who (or what) is this standing before us? A ghost? How could it possibly be Jesus?"* Their minds were stirred up and c_____.

III. JESUS CLEANS OUT THE J_____ AND FILLS THEM WITH HIS _____.

He stands in their midst to clean out the cesspool of filth and falsehood, and replace it with God's truth and w_____. That's something only he can do. He alone can open the tombs of our m_____, clean out the muck, and fill them with the l_____ of his Word: repentance, faith, forgiveness. Only through him can we know and call God "_____." Only through Christ can we repent, believe, and be saved. So, to have our minds opened is just as important as the opened t_____. **JESUS, WHO OPENED THE TOMB, NOW OPENS OUR MINDS BY OPENING THE _____ TO US.**

IV. TODAY, THE RISEN CHRIST OPENS OUR MINDS AND FILLS THEM WITH HIS _____.

..., and that truth is amazing: *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 Jn 3:1)*. We have been b_____ a_____ through the water and the Word of Holy Baptism; born again to a new l_____ as we are joined to Christ's death and resurrection. Through water and the Holy Spirit, the t_____ of our minds are opened, cleansed, and filled with the truth of the risen Christ. And this is not something that happens for us only _____. Over and over, we are called to repentance and faith, called to

return to God's baptismal promise of _____, called to clean out the junk the world pours in and stirs up in us, called to be a _____ of our sins of thought, words and deed, called to be filled with the Spirit of Truth, with f _____ and h _____ and l _____.

But something else happens, too. As God works in us, we start to take a _____ ourselves – holy action inspired by God's Word and Spirit. As a child, you learned to talk by l _____; you learned how to behave by i _____ your parents. The same is true for us as children of the heavenly Father. As we l _____ to his Word, we learn how to pray, and learn how to g _____ him in our lives. So, after opening and cleaning out the minds of his disciples and filling them with his truth, Jesus sends them out as w _____ to speak what they have seen, what they know to be true. They are sent with his Spirit, to speak as they have been s _____ to, to love as they have been l _____, to forgive as they have been f _____, to open minds filled with confusion and doubt, sin and death, that the light of Christ's cleansing love might shine on all. And yet, even as they do all of this, it is not really _____ work at all, but the S _____ of _____, working through their word and witness.

V. NOW, THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST WORKS THROUGH YOU TO OPEN MINDS AND HEAVEN TO ALL AS YOU PROCLAIM HIS WORD.

We have to admit: Not all of the world's wisdom is b _____. God has blessed our world with many great _____ and wonderful intelligence and s _____, people (including many who do not know or acknowledge God) through whom God has richly blessed us with advances in medicine, technology, communications, and so forth. We th _____ God for them all.

But there are still two problems with this earthly wisdom: First, there is a lot of _____ mixed in with the good: false wisdom, false gods, and false t _____ from the evil one who clouds our hearts and minds, in order to (as Luther put it)

"deceive us or mislead us into false b _____, despair, and other great shame and v _____" (Small Catechism, Sixth Petition). The second problem is that, even at its best, the world's wisdom can never bring us to _____.

For that, we need God's higher w _____ to show the difference between true and false; between what is g _____ and what is of the earth. We need the wisdom of Christ, and of his Word. That's why we g _____ here, where the risen Christ places himself in our midst and, through his gifts, cleans out that worldly c _____ and fill us with his grace: Forgiveness of our d _____; Peace that the world cannot give; Power to l _____, and forgive, and bear witness to him. And now – now that you have r _____ – you go and g _____, with his life, his Spirit, his words, his truth, his love, his forgiveness. *The Spirit of Christ works through you to open and fill hearts and minds with the joy that comes in the knowledge of an open heaven.*

In that grace, God keep you. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE ✠ SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

FOR REFLECTION:

1. In what specific way do we need our minds to be opened?
2. What kind of "open-mindedness" is dangerous?
3. When Christ opens our minds, with what does He fill them?
4. What does the Spirit of Christ then work in you to do?