Easter 3 Luke 24:36-49
April 18, 2021 154-160-156/149-162

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 that 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 thee 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! ***"But they were terrified and frightened and thought they were looking at a ghost."*** A ***"ghost"*** – how dumb could they be?! There are no such things as ghosts. **Dumb** but MAYBE we better take another look at ourselves! People still have their SUPERSTITIONS – they still do and say **"dumb"** 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 also **"dumb"**?

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 live – 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 – **discouraged** – **unsure** – **worried** – **upset** – 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 it 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, ***"These are My words, which I spoke to 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 they 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** – envy – **petty jealousy** – grudges – it's ALL SIN. There was nothing pretty about the way 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 – hiding their faith in Jesus - 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 life** – 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 don'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 promise us in Your Word ***"must be fulfilled."*** All those promises – SO COMFORTING – so **reassuring** – are all ABSOLUTELY **trustworthy**. Every one of them is **true**. We can CONFIDENTLY depend 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 for us. 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 down**. 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 death 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 with a glorified body and soul **we Christians** will live forever with Him in that ***"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 TO You **in faith**. People changing their minds about **sin** – realizing how destructive and **deadly** IGNORING and DEFYING You really is. People SEEING their sins – AND SEEING YOU their Savior from sin, guilt, death and hell. Lord, You died and **rose** FOR ALL people. Help us to ***"understand"*** that ALL NEED You – need Your cross and **empty grave**.

Lord, help us to ***"understand"*** that You are counting on 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 – 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.

NICENE CREED