

Luke 24:36-48 **JESUS OPENS EYES, MINDS, HEARTS...** Unley, 14.4.24

The resurrection is not a one-day wonder. **Jesus IS risen!** We celebrate Easter for 6 weeks. In fact, we need to celebrate Easter every day. Luther says: *whoever has no Good Friday & Easter day has no good day in the whole year!* **Jesus IS risen** & we all say: He is risen indeed! Jesus is risen and we have a future & a hope. **Jesus IS risen**, and he is active opening blind eyes to see him, closed minds to grasp him, hard hearts to receive him, and closed Scriptures to understand him and his amazing ways. **Jesus IS risen**, and he sends us out to tell this Good News to the ends of the earth, beginning in our own homes and churches & communities. “An unpreached Gospel is no Gospel at all.”

1. The resurrection is a real eye-opener. But opening eyes takes time. Mary M. loved Jesus, but when he stood with her by the open tomb she did not recognise him until Jesus called her by name: **Mary!** His loving word opened her eyes to see. Two distraught disciples walked along the road with the risen Jesus, **but their eyes were kept from recognising him**, until he accepted their invitation to join them for dinner and he became the host, and gave thanks & took the bread and broke it: **then their eyes were opened & they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight.** Then they reflected: **were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?**

Many eyes are closed today – maybe more than ever. Some of them live in our own homes, some next door to us. We know a lot of them; we might even pray for them. We might even have invited them to church or a Christian event. We might have tried to speak to them about Jesus. And their eyes have still not been opened to see Jesus. Remember that Jesus is the one who opens blind eyes. Keep praying for them every day, and pray before you invite them or speak to them about Jesus. How did those first disciples recognise Jesus? Jesus was with them, and spoke to them lovingly, and shared a meal with them. Jesus did what Jesus does. That is what he calls us to do. Jesus calls us to be Jesus to people – to love them like he loved them; to share meals with them as Jesus did; to explain Jesus to them as Jesus did. And as St Francis might have said: preach the Gospel every way you can; if necessary use words.

2. **MANY MINDS ARE CLOSED TODAY.** Minds are closed and not just in the world out there. Many minds are also closed in the church. They have hardly thought a new thought since what their parents taught them, or what they learned in S/S, or even what they learned in Seminary. Too many minds are stuck shut since some time in the dim past, and they resist anything new that seeks to lead them into the future. Even Jesus’ disciples had closed minds to the resurrection. Over and over he told them that he would die and be raised again, but their minds were closed to it. Finally, after the resurrection: **Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them: the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead... and repentance and forgiveness be preached to all nations.** Finally, they understood, when **Jesus opened their minds to the Scriptures.**

Have we understood the Scriptures? Do we read the Scriptures, and study the Scriptures, so that Jesus can open our minds to understand the Scriptures? Jesus and the cross and the resurrection are the centre of the Scriptures. “When we understand the resurrection, we

understand the cross, and when we understand the cross and the resurrection the HS opens up the whole Bible to us.” We need a whole paradigm shift in our thinking about the Word of God. It’s all about Jesus. It all leads to his cross and resurrection for us. It is all about his love for the whole world and his desire that all people be saved, and that this message of the cross be spread to all nations, so all people are called to repent and be forgiven. As Paul said to the Corinthians: **Christ sent me to preach the Gospel... while I was with you I resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ & him crucified. We preach Christ crucified.** We no longer think like we used to think, he says, **but we have the mind of Christ.** And to the Philippians he said: **have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Lord,** open our minds to see Christ as he is, and fill them with the mind of Christ, so we may think and act like Christ.

3. MANY HEARTS ARE HARD TODAY. Jesus comes to crack hard hearts open with his passionate love for them. Jesus comes to show people their sins, and lead them to repent, and break open their hearts so he may enter in and live in us and with us. Lydia lived in Philippi. She worshiped God but did not know Jesus. When Paul preached Christ, **the Lord opened her heart... she was baptised... she invited Paul to her home, and it became a worship centre.** When Jesus explained the Scriptures to the couple on the road to Emmaus **their hearts began to burn.** The Scriptures open our minds but also our hearts. The passionate love of Jesus enters our hearts and sets them on fire with love for God and love for others, and with a desire that all the others also experience the love of Jesus. John the Baptist says Jesus comes to **baptise with the HS and with fire.** Wesley said that when he heard the Moravians reading from Luther how we are **saved by grace, through faith, his heart was strangely warmed.**

Has Jesus cracked open your cold heart and entered with his love to warm it and even to burn in it. When Jesus comes he brings the HS and the HS switches on the pilot lights in our cold hearts and the flame burns and we become new people in “heart and mind and spirit” as Luther says. “This faith in Jesus is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God.” This is the life Jesus brings to us through his death and resurrection and the sending of the HS. This new life is for you and it is for everybody.

I remember being at a church meeting where one member accused another of having a hidden agenda. Jesus gives the church an unfinished agenda on Easter Day. The resurrection is not a one-day wonder. It is to be lived and proclaimed to the end of the earth and to the end of time. **The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness will be preached in his name to all nations. You are witnesses of these things.** Does the task seem too big? **I will send you the HS and you will be clothed with power from on high.** In the power of the HS. we will go until Jesus comes. With opened eyes and opened minds and opened and warmed hearts we will go and open the Scriptures so people see Jesus, and repent of their sins and believe in Jesus, and live renewed lives.

Jesus gives no command here to **preach the Gospel to all nations.** He simply says: this is what will happen. When our hearts are set on fire by the HS we cannot help but share Jesus and the Gospel with others. Come, Holy Spirit, renew you church. Begin with me. Amen.