

Luke 24:36-49 | “Open-minded”
Easter 3 – April 14, 2024

These days the initials ‘pc’ stand for more than just ‘personal computer’ or ‘private corporation.’ Those two letters also stand for ‘politically correct,’ a phrase which describes not only life in politics, but life in American society in recent years. This pc attitude fits right in with what so many have described as a postmodern world. It’s postmodern because we have given up all notions of absolute truth. Truth, or right and wrong is whatever a person decides it to be. What’s true for you might not be true for me. Each of us has “our truth,” a worldview and mindset that fits our pre-conceived notions of what we want. And truth “evolves,” over time, they say. The standards of morality that served society in previous centuries are no longer adequate for a world that is thought to be much more enlightened, progressive and liberated from the past. Therefore, we need to be tolerant, the world says. Whether the issue be same sex marriage, abortion, transgenderism, the destruction of human embryos, or anything else that we Christians might regard as wrong, the world says, “*Come on. The times have changed. Don’t be so judgmental, so close-minded.*”

In a world that values ‘open-mindedness,’ we need to consider our Gospel for today. It is another Easter evening text. Jesus is described appearing to His disciples. As we know, the minds of the disciples had really been closed to the possibility that their Lord had risen from the grave, just as He had repeatedly told them that He would. But in verse 45 Luke says, “*then He **opened their minds** so they could understand the Scripture.*” Let’s describe two characteristics of this open-mindedness worked by Jesus. First of all, it gives us strong convictions about the real truth of who He is and what He has done for us. Secondly, it motivates us to action.

The open-mindedness given by Jesus gives us strong convictions about who He is. Simply put, it gives us faith in Him. As counter-intuitive as it sounds, the idea of open-mindedness circulating today really forces a person to hold no strong convictions. You can’t stand for anything when you’re open to everything. Life becomes a bunch of “*maybes*” and “*perhapses*,” rather than “*this is most certainly true.*” If truth is constantly changing it is no truth at all. Quite to the contrary, followers of Jesus held strong convictions about Him; convictions which were based on the truth that He revealed in His holy Word. Throughout all the Scriptures, from the Law of Moses to the Prophets and the Psalms, He is the One around whom the Scriptures focus. He was the promised Savior sent to take away the sins of the world. And that message of Law and Gospel is vital to a correct understanding of the truth of God’s Word.

I’ve mentioned through the years that nearly 50 years ago now, when I began my pre-seminary and then seminary education, the raging theological issue was the Battle for the Bible. That battle is still with us, and always will be. Critics look at the resurrection of

Jesus and all the assertions of Holy Scripture and say they were a product of the Early Church, not actual historical truth. They say one must distinguish the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith. The Jesus of history was a charismatic teacher whose body was probably still in the grave on Easter morning, they falsely assert. The Christ of faith, however, motivated the disciples to carry on His name and message of love and peace. The assertions that Jesus made about the exclusivity of Christianity, for instance when He said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father except through me,*” are, they say, symbolic statements of an underdo religion adopting a survival mentality to maintain some level of credibility.

All of that is simply evil and untrue. It’s of the devil. We need to be our guard against it. Those untruths rob Christians of the comfort, hope and certainty they have in Jesus. Christ did indeed rise from the dead. And if He didn’t, we are *still in our sins.*” Without the redeeming work of Jesus we are left with no grace, but only a reliance upon ourselves. People who think you don’t need Jesus to get to heaven are not open-minded at all. Their minds, in fact, are closed to the one most important truth of life. It’s a truth that only Jesus can bring to us. Notice the wording of the text. “*Then **He** opened their minds.*” We don’t do it or discover it ourselves. God’s Spirit works in our life to bring us to the light of our salvation.

One characteristic of the open-mindedness worked by God is that it gives us strong convictions regarding the truth of Jesus and what He has done for us. The second characteristic is that it motivates us to action. Our text from Luke is really his version of the Great Commission. The resurrection of Jesus points ahead to Ascension, Pentecost, and the work of spreading the message of what He has done for all humanity. Jesus says to His disciples that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. “*You are witnesses of these things.*” The world has nothing to fear from true Christians, even though the current term used to describe anybody who doesn’t subscribe to the new morality – really the new *immorality* – of the present age is “*hater.*” Let’s make it clear, disagreement is not hate.

Knowing Jesus doesn’t foster hate crimes, it fosters love. The most loving thing we can do to a person who doesn’t know Jesus is tell them the Gospel message, that we have a Savior who lives, dies and rose again for our sins. That’s the task each of us has. We’re not all pastors or teachers or evangelists. But we are all witnesses. Sometimes we witness with words, but many times we do it with our life and our actions. We do it by putting our faith into practice. Are you open-minded? Hopefully not, according to the world’s definition. But may all of us be open-minded according to Christ’s definition, so that we might know the truth about Him, and others might also know Him through us. AMEN.

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