

Jesus Opens the Scriptures.

Text: Luke 24:32

1) Before the resurrection

Suggested Hymns:

2) Jesus is the key to the Scriptures

500, 181, 157, 293, 541

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 24:32, ³² *And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Musicians realise that in performing music, the rests, are as important as the notes. Without careful attention to the rests, between the musical phrases, the music loses half its beauty.

What is true of music is also true of our Christian lives, for our spirits desperately need rest, moments of prayer, meditation, and quiet study of the Bible, times of simply leaning on the heart of Jesus. Such moments are these that we spend in God's house, in quiet retreat from the constant pressures of life, refilling with the inner resources that we need to face our difficulties and problems.

We dare not be led by thoughts like these into any wrong conclusions, as though our Christian faith were a kind of spiritual anaesthetic or tranquilliser to calm the shattered nerves and bring on deep sleep.

Mildness may be a virtue in some things, but certainly not in the faith we hold, as though it were a drowsy thing and very little disturbing.

Read the record of the early church as written in the Book of Acts, and you will discover that wherever the Gospel was preached, there was always a disturbance. Something happened!

People became Christian, or they became greater Christians, and they wrote the story that is written there in the book so appropriately called *"The Acts of the*

Apostles.” The fires of faith were kindled in their hearts and burned fervently within them.

The Bible text for your heart to ponder upon today is one that embodies all these thoughts. It is a quiet sort of text that associates itself with the beautiful prayer of the Emmaus disciples, *“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”*¹

It is a text that takes us back again to Easter afternoon, when gloom clouds still hung low over the hearts of disbelieving disciples. I want to call your attention to this very significant verse in the story of the Emmaus disciples, *“Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?*” Something happened in that hour spent with Christ. The hearts of the Emmaus disciples were set on fire as Jesus opened to them the Scriptures. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Before The Resurrection

It is an old familiar story in which this text is cradled. Late on the afternoon of our Lord’s day of resurrection two people who were disciples of Jesus were wending their way back to their home in Emmaus. They had spent the previous week in the Holy City, had witnessed the shameful things that were done to Christ, had even heard rumours of His resurrection, but were sceptical of the whole report.

And now with heavy hearts they spoke, as they walked, of all their shattered hopes. How clearly the Scriptures paint the hopelessness and complete defeat of people who do not know the resurrection of Jesus!

In each of the Easter stories there is always that contrast — the before and after of the resurrection, the complete hopelessness and despair of heart before this truth has dawned, but the triumphant courage and boldness and joy after it has dawned.

How much this resurrection means to us! How it seals our faith and guarantees our hope! Can you not understand, then, why we must always return to it again as the heart and soul of our conviction? It is the richest comfort in the face of death, that of our loved ones, and our own. How bleak the dawn in a world that knows no resurrection!

But as these Emmaus disciples with a heavy step trod their way homeward, all absorbed in their disappointed hopes and completely oblivious of their surroundings, a third pilgrim joined them.

It was Jesus, the risen Lord, but their eyes were restrained, we are told, so that they did not recognise Him. In reply to His questions concerning the reason for their sadness, they emptied the sorrow of their hearts: We had hoped that Jesus of Nazareth would redeem Israel, they said, but now He is gone. And some of our women have reported seeing an angel at His tomb who told them Jesus was alive, but it cannot be true.

Some of our men went out to investigate, and they found the tomb empty, as the women had said, ***“but Him they did not see.”*** Note those words, ***“but Him they did not see,”*** for they are of great importance in what the Spirit of God would say to us today. ***“Him they did not see.”*** That was the real tragedy, because it meant that although death had not been able to hold the Christ, it still enslaved them with all its defeat, fear, and hopelessness.

The events of the past days had completely baffled them. The promises of Jesus during all His ministry seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. The words of Moses and the Prophets concerning Jesus were meaningless to them, for ***“Him they did not see.”*** Their knowledge of the Scriptures, their revered Old Testament Scriptures, naturally, was also meaningless to them, for ***“Him they did not see,”*** neither at the empty tomb, nor in the written Word which testifies of Christ! They did not understand.

Such, then, was the plight of these Emmaus disciples. Notice now the approach which Jesus used with them. Perhaps it would have been easy for our Saviour to convince these people of His resurrection simply by showing Himself to them and simply by saying: *“Well, here I am! Now you see Me! Why are you so sad?”*

Jesus might have recalled to their minds His own promise, how He had said that He would rise again on the third day. But He did neither of these. His purpose with them was something else than simply to convince them that He was alive, and something more than merely to have them see Him. He wanted them to see in Him the fulfilment of all the Scriptures they so highly treasured, but little understood.

He wanted them to see Him on every page of God's Word. And so we read that He opened to them the Scriptures. He rebuked them first of all, "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!*" Do you understand what a rebuke like this must have meant to the disciples?

They were Jews, and the Old Testament was their sacred manuscript, a book that meant everything to them. But they missed the point of the Scriptures, and they were slow of heart to believe. As Jesus walked with them by the way, He began with Moses and the Prophets, carefully and pain-stakingly recalling for them all that the prophets had spoken. He opened the Scriptures for them and interpreted them in relation to Himself. He took them through the entire Old Testament, through all the Law and the Prophets, and penetrated the depths of those Scriptures by showing how the Saviour had come, not to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them.

He opened to them the Scriptures by demonstrating that all these Scriptures testify of Him. He lifted the veil so that they might understand that all these heartbreaking things of the past terrible days happened according to God's plan for our rescue.

2. Jesus Is The Key To The Scriptures

Jesus opened to them the Scriptures! We want to bring out this thought today because the Scriptures are opened for us only by the same Christ, and because the Scriptures remain a closed book until we see in them a picture of Jesus stamped on every page.

The rebuke which Jesus laid on the hearts of the Emmaus disciples is one that He might well lay upon our hearts, "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe,*" because people today often, and we among them, approach the Bible with the same darkened mind and heart. It is possible to revere the Bible as a treasured volume and yet to find no meaning in it whatever.

It is possible to read the Scriptures and so to learn them that you can qualify as an expert on a TV quiz program and yet, despite all of this, never to understand what the Scriptures have to say to us.

It is possible even to find a measure of meaning in the Holy Bible without sounding its depths. Christ must open the Scriptures for us, for they are they which testify of Him. He opens the Scriptures for us when we see Him on every

page, when we understand that every word of this sacred treasure centres in Christ in His cross and in the blood-bought salvation which He has earned for us all.

In all our study of the Holy Bible, whether we are in Genesis or in Revelation, we must see Jesus, for like a mighty orchestral composition, the ever-recurring theme around which all the Scriptures move is Christ, and Christ alone, as the fulfilment of God's eternal plan for our eternal life.

St. Paul tells us that when the Jews read the Old Testament, for example, there was a veil over their hearts, as we read in 2 Corinthians 3:14-16, ¹⁴ ***But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.*** ¹⁵ ***But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.*** ¹⁶ ***Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.***

Whether we are in the Old Testament or the New, both centre in Jesus, revealing that we are saved from sin and death only through Jesus who, in God's eternal grace, came out of heaven to be the Sin-Bearer for the world.

So it is Christ who opens the Scriptures for us, and until He does, until we see Him and His cross and His resurrection again as the theme of it all, the Bible remains a closed book. Until these Scriptures are the living voice of the eternally living Christ, we can never sound their depths nor uncover their meaning. Jesus opens the Scriptures.

Christ opens these Scriptures to each one of us personally and individually. The Holy Bible is not a book through which God speaks to the world in general. It is rather a voice with which He speaks to each of us individually in our own particular problems and circumstances. It is the voice of the living Saviour offering forgiveness to sinners, faith to overcome our doubts, and courage to overcome our fears.

The story of the Emmaus disciples is one that is repeated in the life of every Christian. The name of one of those disciples was Cleopas; the name of the other we are not given, but it might have been your name or mine.

In our Christian journey, as Jesus walks with us by the way, He asks our troubles and our sorrows and would have us pour out our griefs to Him. Then He opens to us the Scriptures, expounding them, explaining them, and applying

them to our own lives. Through this voice of the Scriptures He assures us of our personal cleansing, demonstrates that in the eternal plan of God He bore the burden of our sin and guilt to rescue us from death and damnation.

Jesus gives the most certain pledge that He is for us and that nothing can be against us, and that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. He opens the Scriptures for us.

Now go back to those words of the Emmaus disciples with which we began,³² *And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"* Jesus opened to them the Scriptures, and their hearts burned within them, and when He finally sat at the table with them in their own home and made Himself known to them, their joy and gladness knew no bounds or limits.

They had been sad because Christ had died, but now they were glad that He had, for through His death He had redeemed them as the Scriptures had promised, but in a much higher sense than they had realised before.

Now He was indeed risen again, and they saw Him, not only alive before their very eyes, but also very much alive on the pages of the Holy Word which they now understood. They were never the same after that, for how could they be? How could anyone, you or I be the same?

Life is never the same for anyone for whom Christ has opened the Scriptures. What was a dull routine becomes a challenging opportunity. What was utter defeat becomes glorious victory. What was fear and doubt becomes courage and conviction. What was selfishness and smallness and stinginess becomes service and sacrifice, all for Jesus. What was a heart as cold as ice becomes a heart on fire for Christ. It is Easter in our hearts when Christ opens the Scriptures for us.

Just a few short weeks ago we celebrated our Lord's triumphant resurrection. What difference has it made to us, for us, and in us? Has there been any appreciable difference? Is there a fire in your heart?

Perhaps if you and I could have been there to see Jesus alive, in the flesh, after the resurrection as the disciples saw Him, perhaps then the same fire that burned in their hearts would burn in ours, the fire of a fervent faith and a determined zeal.

But the story of the Emmaus disciples teaches us one thing, that Jesus is just as much alive today and for us as He was for them. He is alive in the living Word and in the living voice of God which speaks to us in the Word. Have you tuned your ear to the voice of the Master so that He can open these Scriptures for you and show you His grace and His forgiveness for even such as you and me?

If you will open your Scriptures, study them, and ponder over them, Jesus will open them for you, and you will hear of a peace through His cross that surpasses our poor powers of understanding, and your hearts will burn with sacrifice and with service for Him.

I commend to you this prayer of the Emmaus disciples, *“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”* Make that your prayer, for through His Word He will abide with you with the assurance of forgiveness and the promise of heaven as a gift of His grace. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 24:29