

Sermon – Easter Evening: Luke 24:44-48  
**He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures**

*Aha! Now I get it!*

Have you ever had that experience of discovering something that suddenly helps you understand? It's like something clicks into place and for the first time, a mass of information and facts that you have been trying to get your mind round begins to fit together and make sense.

For me this happens when finally I get my brain around how to assemble a piece of Ikea furniture that comes all in pieces in a box. It's just a jumble – bits and pieces, screws and brackets and hinges. Then finally somebody – usually Coralie – helps me sort it out. And there's that moment where I get it! Often what helps people come to say "Ah now I get it" is that somehow, through somebody or something, you gain an overview of the whole. Your mind is opened up so you can see not only the bits and pieces, but the bigger picture.

One thing I find a lot as I work with students, in teaching them and helping them grow in their understanding of the Christian Faith, is that they are struggling to piece together all the odd bits and pieces they have. It's like the two disciples here on the road. It does not make a lot of sense. They know Jesus died and rose to save us, but they have no clear picture of why he had to do this or what it means for them. They often have a sketchy picture of the Bible and how it fits together.

If you feel that you fall into this category (as I still do sometimes), you are in good company. Because as well as Cleopas and his friend here on the road, this is how the disciples were for most of the time they were with Jesus in the three years they spent with him. Read the Gospels and you see that the 12 have a very sketchy picture of what Jesus is talking about. Even after Jesus' resurrection, they have only "a bits and pieces understanding of what Jesus' mission is and what is happening".

As Jews, they would have known the Scriptures of the OT, and they would have known the five Books of Moses, and the History and prophets and all the promises of the Messiah God was sending to save Israel, but how it all fitted together with Jesus and with his dying and rising again they did not understand. They knew and believed in Jesus and they followed Jesus but they didn't understand him.

They didn't get it.

Now, this is a bit of a worry. These 12 guys are going to be the first missionaries of Christ. They are going to be, as Jesus says at the end of this Gospel reading, "witnesses" in all the world. How are they going to do this if they don't have the first clue what it's all about?

Here we see Jesus teaching these two disciples all about this. And as you read the post-resurrection accounts in the Gospels you see that Jesus, who

has now completed his work of redemption, opens up the minds of the 12 disciples, and others too. He opens up their understanding. This story is a story about the Word and how it speaks in our lives:

Here in Luke 24, Luke tells us that Jesus opened the minds of Cleopas and his companion to understand the Scriptures as they walked home to Emmaus. Jesus is the Bible teacher and interpreter – he the living Word teaches and interprets the written Word. He gave them that overview, big picture understanding of God's plan of salvation, explaining the OT and how He fulfilled it, so that at last those disciples could say "Ah, now I get it".

*Thus it is written....* says Jesus (referring to the Old Testament Scriptures) *that the Messiah has to suffer, rise from the dead, that repentance and forgiveness be proclaimed to all the world....*

Suddenly it all fits together. Jesus puts all the confusing pieces together into one whole for them. He did this so they themselves could see and understand and know the truth, but also so they could explain it to others and fulfill their calling to be witnesses, apostles, teachers and evangelists in the world.

And the deposit of this, the written form of their clear teaching and witness that Jesus gave them is what we have in our New Testament Scriptures – historical record of Jesus' death and resurrection, through which the Christian Faith has been passed on to us.

Jesus wants to open our minds too through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. He wants to lead each of us into a deeper understanding of His work and His Word, first of all for our own sake – so that we may know His love and His peace, through knowing His saving will; but also for the world's sake – so that we can be witnesses too: so that if and when we are asked and have an opportunity to tell the Gospel to somebody else we can.

Jesus wants to open our minds too, to understand the Scriptures. But how can he do this for us, when we do not read and study them?

One of the frightening things the Lutheran church found out in the National Church Life survey a few years ago was that we Lutherans read our Bibles less than most other Christians. Many Lutheran people I know are actually scared of reading the Scriptures or lack confidence because they feel they can't make head or tail of them.

And this is a concern, because unless we read the scriptures, we will find it hard to grow in our faith. We will tend to reach a bit of a point where our maturity stops and stays in the same place. If Jesus is going to open our minds, first we need to open our Bibles.

And the fantastic thing is that if we will just do that, Jesus will meet us right there. He will meet with us as we walk, and speak with us so that our minds

will be opened. He does this through His Holy Spirit, who is the inspirer of the bible, and the inspirer and teacher of our hearts too, the one who will make our hearts burn within us, with the resurrection good news.

He does this when we have our daily devotion and read the Bible passage for each day. He does it when we sit here in church and listen to the readings and the sermon. He does this when we sit down together to read and study the Scriptures in our groups and committees: as elders, and at Bible Study, where the Holy Spirit uses us sometimes to open one another's minds.

Jesus seeks to walk with us on the road..., revealing himself, teaching us to spend time, to have a place in the daily journey of our life, through his Word. And through this he wants to open and broaden our minds – not to give us some kind of technical knowledge, but to know and see his loving will for us, and for the world.

He wants to open our minds to the amazing possibilities of how he might be working in our lives, what he might be calling us to do. He wants not only to speak about the resurrection, but to enact his resurrection in us - broaden our perspective and our appreciation of his vast blueprint of salvation unfolded through history, so that we will be awed by it and have our hearts burn within us, like those two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

He wants us to “get it” – to receive and believe what He has done in his death and his resurrection, for us and for all people. He wants us to discover some of the hidden riches of his Word. He wants to put together for us more pieces of the puzzle so that we say “Ah, now I get it” (not that we will ever know everything in this world of course).

We are celebrating Easter today because the faithful witness of the apostles was written down and preserved, so that we too can receive and believe it. So that, as we read it, our minds and our eyes will be opened to see Jesus, the living word, made flesh, crucified, risen, Lord of all.

*Lord Jesus: open our minds and make our hearts burn within us as you open to us your living Word. Amen.*

*Pastor Stephen Pietsch*