

## **RIGHTLY RESPONDING TO THE RESURRECTION**

### **(Luke 24:31-32, 45-49)**

Have you ever embarrassed yourself by something you said, or something you did, or something you neglected to do? Sure, you have.

Just a few months ago, I embarrassed myself by not doing something I should have done. On a Saturday, I went and bought a new shirt. The following Tuesday, I went to a Men's Bible Study that meets every Tuesday at 7 in the morning. I arrived early wearing my new shirt. One of the men made some comment about Minnie Pearl. I remember the comedian Minnie Pearl, but I didn't understand his reference. He reminded me that whenever you saw Minnie Pearl, she was always wearing a hat with the price tag sticking out. There I was at the Istoria Ministries building just up the street from us, walking around at 6:45 in the morning with a store tag sticking out of my shirt because I didn't remove it before I put it on and left the house.

Have you ever looked up, saw someone waving, and you waved back only to realize they were waving at someone behind you?

I read about a woman to whom that happened. She wrote that she just kept waving until she hailed a cab. She had the cabbie take her to the airport. She reported that she is now making a new life for herself in Poland.

One lady spoke about the time she was standing next to a really, cute guy. He held up his fist to give her a fist bump. For some strange reason, she thought he was pretending to hold a microphone. She leaned down and said, "Hello." There is no way to gracefully recover from that mistake.

One of the things I love about the Bible, and one of the reasons you can know that it is true is that it is so honest about the failings and missteps of the ones we consider to be the heroes of the faith. The Bible doesn't gloss over or omit their blunders and faults.

That tells me that we should accept responsibility and own up to those times we mess up and fall down.

Years ago, when a basketball player was called for a foul, he would raise his hand so those at the scorer's table could see his jersey number and record that foul against the correct player. Today, it is the ref's responsibility to call out the correct number, but many players still hold up their hand after being called for a foul as a way of saying, "Yeah, good call."

Likewise, when the Holy Spirit points His finger in our direction and makes it known to us that we are the guilty party, we need to humbly raise our hand and admit, "Yeah, that's on me. Lord, forgive me."

We come today to the last chapter of Luke's Gospel, chapter 24. Last Sunday we were in chapter 23 which tells us about the crucifixion of Jesus. Chapter 24 tells us about His resurrection. It also tells us about the disciple's initial reaction and response to the news and the fact that Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb.

Before we consider their reaction, I want you to remember that before Jesus' death, He had forewarned His disciples numerous times that He was going to be delivered over to the Gentiles, mocked, shamefully treated, spat upon, flogged and killed. But with each warning, He added a promise. He said He would rise again. He would come back to life

on the third day. This was no secret. He had said it again and again.

Somehow, the followers of Jesus forgot that promise. Looking back, their response to the Jesus' resurrection was, frankly, embarrassing.

Luke 24 covers a great deal of ground. Let me give you a quick way to remember the contents of this chapter. You simply need to remember four words, each of which point to a location: a tomb, a road, a room, and a mount. The chapter begins in the Garden tomb after Jesus has already risen. A group of women have gathered.

The scene changes to a road leading from Jerusalem to a town called Emmaus. Two followers of Jesus are traveling that road, presumably going home.

Then, the scene changes again to a room, quite likely the upper room in Jerusalem where Jesus and His disciples had observed the Passover meal, just a few nights earlier.

Finally, the chapter and Luke's gospel ends with Jesus and His disciples on the eastern side of Mount Olivet from which Jesus will ascend back to heaven, bringing His earthly ministry to a close. This chapter concerns what is said and done at the tomb, on the road, up in the room, and up on the mount.

Now, let's consider the responses of Jesus' followers. We read in Luke 24:4 that when the women discovered the tomb was both open and empty, they were **perplexed**. According to v. 11, when the women told the apostles what they had seen, those men viewed their story as **an idle tale**, and they **did not believe** them. In the next verse, we learn that Peter went to investigate, and he **marveled**. He wondered, but we are not told that he believed Jesus did what He promised.

From there, we go to a road trip. Two disciples, one we have never met and another who is unnamed are traveling from Jerusalem to the town of Emmaus, about 7 miles from Jerusalem. On that trip, Jesus joins up with those two, but they don't recognize Him. Like the others, these two followers on the road to Emmaus **showed no evidence that they believed** anything miraculous had taken place. They only spoke of their **dashed hopes**.

After their eyes are opened, Jesus disappears and those disciple hotfoot it back to Jerusalem. They join up with the other disciples wherever they have gathered, so they can tell their story. Jesus shows up there, too.

According to v. 37 when Jesus showed Himself to the disciples in Jerusalem, they were **startled** and **frightened**. They thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus felt a need to prove He wasn't a spirit. He said, "Touch me." He asked for a piece of fish to eat. We learn from v. 41 that they had an odd mixture of **disbelief and yet joy**.

The chapter ends with Jesus ascending back to heaven from the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives where the town of Bethany is located.

Since that is far too much information to cover in a single message, I want to focus on a single word. Now, every word found in the pages of the Bible matters. Each word is important, but whenever you find a word that is used multiple times in a small section of Scripture, you need to pay special attention to that word.

There is one word here that is used only eight times in the NT. Half of those times it shows in Luke's gospel. Of those four occurrences, three of them are in this chapter. You will find this word in vv. 31, 32, and 45. In those verses we read of eyes, the scriptures, and minds being opened.

This Greek word for opened is the exact word that Mark uses twice when he tells the story of Jesus healing a man who was mute. Jesus placed His fingers in the man's ears

and commanded, “Be opened.” In the next verse, Mark reports, “And his ears were opened.”

The word means, “opened completely.” If this word was used of a door being opened, the door wouldn’t be cracked open to let a little light in. No. It would mean the door was thrown wide open.

So, in this chapter, Jesus opened eyes wide open, the Scriptures wide open, and minds wide open.

I want you, and I want me to rightly respond to the truth of the resurrection. I am convinced that prayer is the right response to just about everything. When you are in doubt, pray. When everything is coming up roses, pray and thank God. When things couldn’t get worse, thank God that they aren’t worse, and ask for His grace to meet you in your time of need.

From this chapter, I want to give you four things for which you can pray, and these four prayers will be a right response to the open and empty tomb.

Here is prayer #1:

### **Lord, Open My Eyes So I Will See Who I Need to See**

Here were these two disciples traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were not two of the 12 apostles, but they were two disciples. Luke gives us the name of one of them. His name was Cleopas. This is the only time his name appears in the NT. Luke does not supply the name of the other traveler.

I like what Joel Gregory said. He claimed, “Some older scholars think it was Cleopas’ wife . . . We do not know. I think the second is nameless so you can put your name there. I can put my name there.”

These two knew what Jesus looked like. They had seen Him often and heard Him often. They were His followers, but they did not recognize Him. Why? There may be several reasons. One, they weren’t looking for Him. If you aren’t looking for Jesus to show up, you probably won’t see Him.

Not only were they not looking for Him, they also had reason not to expect Him. In their minds, He was dead and gone, and He wasn’t coming back. I wonder, do you have any reason to expect Jesus to show up?

There was, however, something deeper, more mysterious at work. Look at v. 16. The NLT puts it, “But they didn’t know who He was, because God kept them from recognizing Him.” Why would God do that? Why would God keep them from recognizing Jesus?

There is a story in John 9 of Jesus and His disciples coming across a blind man. The disciples asked Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” Jesus replied, “It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in Him” (John 9:1-3).

On that road to Emmaus so long ago, God blinded two followers, so to speak, so that Jesus could do a great work and bless not only them but countless others through the ages, including you and me.

I am afraid, however, that many of us, including me, are often spiritually blind, and it is not anything we can blame God for because we are responsible for our own blindness.

We have not trained ourselves to look beyond our present circumstances and to look for the activity of God. We need to pray, “Lord, open my eyes so I can see You.”

There is a great OT story about the prophet Elisha. He had angered the King of Syria and that King sent his army to surround the town in which Elisha was staying. In the morning, Elisha’s servant awoke to see an army of horses and chariots and soldiers encircling the city. In fear, he cries out to the prophet, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”

Calmly, Elisha replies, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

I am sure the servant is thinking, “What’s he talking about? I don’t see anybody with us.”

We read in 2 Kings 6:17, “Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O YHWH, please open his eyes that he may see.’ So YHWH opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

We desperately need God to open our eyes so that we can see spiritual reality. Jesus is alive and well. Jesus is active in this world. We may think we are losing the culture war that is raging about us. We throw up our hands and think, “What’s the use? Things are too far gone for us to make a difference.” We fail to remember that greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world. We fail to see that the crucified One who conquered death is marshaling His forces, and He will most certainly prevail.

There is a second prayer for us to pray.

### **Lord, Open the Scriptures So I Will Feel What I Need to Feel**

It was Jesus who engaged these two men in conversation. He acted like He didn’t know what had transpired over the last several days. From their own perspective, He wanted them to tell what had happened. Look at their report. It begins in vv. 19 and runs through v. 24.

Look at his reply (vv. 25-27). I don’t know about you, but I would really wish I had been in that impromptu Bible Study that Jesus led that first Easter afternoon/early evening. As they walked, Jesus quoted OT passages and showed how those stories, events, and words pointed to Him. What did He talk about? We can only conjecture?

Maybe He talked about Genesis 3 and that He was the seed of the woman who crushed the serpent’s head. Nowhere else do we read about the seed of a woman. A woman does not have seed. A man does, but Jesus had an earthly mother but no earthly, biological father. Jesus’ earthly body was not sired by Joseph but rather by the Holy Spirit. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus crushed the power and plans of Satan. Satan is a defeated foe.

Maybe he talked about Genesis 22 where Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac. As you know, at the last moment, God stopped Abraham. Abraham had told his son that God would provide for Himself the lamb. Many centuries later, John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Maybe Jesus quoted from Psalm 22 and surely from Isaiah 53 that clearly portray one who was crucified and who suffered for sins not his own. Jesus was that One on whom YHWH laid the iniquity of us all.

Where else Jesus went, I don't know, but I sure wish I had been there.

Notice what the two said about that event as they reflected on it. Look at v. 32.

What causes your heart to burn, burn in a good way? I am not talking about spicy food and needing to take a Tums. What stirs your soul?

People often look for something or someone to bring an emotional high. It might be a movie or a video or a song or a drug or a romantic relationship. We need more than that.

Many view the Bible as something dry or uninteresting or not related to their life and their struggles. You would think differently if Jesus was your Teacher. The Good News is that He can be.

The night before He was crucified, Jesus told the eleven remaining disciples, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). The Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. He guides us into truth as we attend this Book. The Bible claims that Scripture is the sword of the Spirit. He wishes to wield His sword and do His work in your heart and life.

He does that as we pick up this Book and read it carefully and prayerfully.

Many people have been numbed by the world. That want to feel, but it is as though their heart has been shot with an anesthetic, and they are afraid they have lost the ability to feel. Nothing strikes them. Nothing excites them. But they keep looking for something that will start a fire deep within.

Is that you? Does that describe where you are? My wish for you and my counsel to you is that you take hold of this book and pray, "Lord, open the Scriptures so I will feel what I need to feel." And as you read this book and encounter the One who is its author, may your heart burn within you.

There is a third prayer.

### **Lord, Open My Mind So I Will Know What I Need to Know**

Later, Jesus entered the room in Jerusalem where His apostles and other disciples had gathered. He didn't go through the door. He just appeared as suddenly as He had disappeared when He was with those two disciples from Emmaus. He saw their frightened faces, and He asked some questions of them. Look at vv. 38-39. After eating some fish to prove that He had a real body, He spoke again. Look at v. 44. After reaffirming to them that everything the Scriptures foretold about Him had to be fulfilled, He did something wonderful for them. Look at v. 45.

Do you ever read a passage from the Bible, and your mind draws a blank. You scratch your head. You say to yourself, "What in the world does that mean?" What are you to do. The first thing you do is you pray. Remember, prayer is almost always the proper response to any situation. You pray, "Lord, open my mind. Help me to understand what you are saying."

Does that mean God will give you instant knowledge of whatever gap you have in your knowledge? No. Praying that Jesus would open your mind does not remove the need for study. It does not negate the importance of having a teacher. We still need to wrestle with the meaning of Scripture. I believe that with study and with the help of a knowledgeable teacher that, in time, understanding will come.

Elsewhere Jesus taught, and I paraphrase, "If you ask and keep asking, you will

receive that for which you have asked. If you seek and keep seeking, you will find that for which you have sought. If you knock and keep knocking, that door upon which you have knocked will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). Jesus is talking about prayer. We are to ask, seek, and knock in prayer. Let me add, sometimes we don’t get what we ask for; we get something better. Sometime we don’t find what we searched for; we find something better. Sometimes the door upon which we knocked doesn’t open, but a better door opens, one leads to a better future. But we have to ask, and we have to seek, and we have to knock.

Every follower of Jesus needs to grow. That means we need to learn truth what we don’t presently know, and learn skills we don’t presently possess. Learning requires that your mind be opened. You can close your mind on your own, but you can’t open your mind on your own. You need the Lord’s help, and His help is for the asking.

We have looked at the three times the word “opened” is used in Luke 24, but I think there are two times in this passage where the idea of something being opened is present, but the word is not used. The first time occurred early in the chapter. The tomb was opened. Who opened it? Matthew included a detail that Luke didn’t include in his account. According to Matthew 28:2, “An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.” The angel didn’t roll away the stone to let Jesus out. Jesus was already gone. He rolled away the stone to let us in so we and the whole world could see that Jesus was not there. He is risen.

Not everyone has seen the empty tomb; someone needs to tell them. Jesus told His followers, and that includes us today that we are His witnesses. That leads to the final time the word open is not used but implied, and a final prayer.

### **Lord, Help Me Open My Mouth So I Will Tell Who and What I Need to Tell**

Look at vv. 48-49. Halfway through Romans 10, Paul makes a promise, and then he tells us about a problem. We find the promise in v. 13, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” That means if you ask Jesus to save you, He will save you.

Then, Paul identifies a problem. The problem is simply this:

- people won’t call on Jesus if they haven’t believed in Him,
- and they can’t believe in Him if they have never heard of Him,
- and they won’t hear of Him unless someone preaches,
- and no one will preach unless and until they are sent.

Here is the good news, the solution to the problem: Jesus has already sent the preachers, and you are one of them. The word preach literally means “to announce good news.” You don’t have to go to seminary to announce good news. You don’t have to be ordained to announce good news. You don’t have to be called to pastor a church to announce good news.

What do you have to do to announce good news? You have to open up your mouth. Jesus isn’t going to open your mouth for you. He can open your eyes without your help. He can open the Scriptures without your help. He can even open your mind without your

help. He can't and won't open your mouth without your willingness. And you probably won't be able to open your mouth to share the good news without His help.

We have been given a commission. That is a co mission. Not only is it something we do with other believers, it is something we do with the help and guidance of the Lord. After giving this co mission at the end of Mathew's gospel, He added, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Let me close by addressing something in our text that I have not yet mentioned. In the story of the two disciples who talked with Jesus on their way home to Emmaus, when they arrived home, Jesus was going to keep walking on His own, but the two urged Him to stay and invited Him to stay with them. And He did. Jesus didn't invite Himself into their house.

Likewise, Jesus will not invite Himself into your heart and life, but He will respond gladly to your invitation. Last Sunday I closed with this verse. I will repeat it today. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said, "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me."

Jesus can open your eyes, and open the Scriptures, and open your mind, but you need His help to open your mouth. And He calls upon you to open the door of your heart. He won't come in unless you open the door. He's not going to break it down. He's not going to pick the lock. He may knock on it, but you will have to open the door from the inside.

Have you done that?

Will you do that today?