

Luke 24:36-49

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

I have often told the story of the little boy returning home from the Sunday school class

- His mother asked him what the lesson was about and he said 'it was about faith'.
- 'And what is faith?' Asked his mother. He replied, 'believing something you know is not true!'
- we all laugh at the story, but faith is the very opposite of believing what we know is not true
- It is trusting in what we believe is true, in fact we could restate that as trusting in *whom* we believe is true
- We must not, therefore, confuse faith with credulity, credulity is believing for the sake of believing
- Credulity is unreasonable, it flies in the face of reason; but faith and reason are not in fatal conflict
- No wonder then that Paul, when defending himself before King Agrippa,
- Responds to the allegation that his great learning is driving him insane
- 'I am not insane - what I am saying is true and reasonable' (Acts 26:24)
- Faith does not mean that you must believe that which you know to be untrue
- It's not believing a proposition that is clearly absurd but believing in a person, Jesus, the Son of God
- It is trusting in Jesus Christ, the one born for us, crucified for us, risen for us

Luke's resurrection accounts are very orderly - Jesus appearing in the upper room is his third resurrection story

- In the first story (of the empty tomb) Jesus is not seen, but the message is heard and the evidence viewed
- In the second story (the walk to Emmaus) Jesus (at least at first) is not recognised, but this is third story
- It is not surprising that the presence of the Lord Jesus startled and frightened the disciples
- The connection of this third resurrection story to the two preceding stories is clear
- It is while all the disciples are still talking about Jesus' appearance at Emmaus that Jesus appears
- Is it really Jesus? Is he resurrected (as we now understand it) or is what they see an apparition?

Not surprisingly there seem to be the elements of doubt that have arisen in the disciples' minds

- Luke is emphatic that it really is Jesus, not only does he say that it is 'Jesus himself'
- But also Luke records Jesus saying: "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! (It's really me!)"
- Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:39)

'Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your minds?' (Luke 24:38)

- The word translated here 'doubts' is different from the word that means unbelief
- There is a world of difference between wilful unbelief and doubt, but easy to confuse the two
- The sense of the word here is 'questionings' – they found the good news of the resurrection hard to take in
- 'And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement' (Luke 24:41)
- The good news of the resurrection was just too good to be true, and yet although it was true
- the fact that they had belief co-existing with doubts is shown by the mix of joy and 'amazement'
- Luke uses the word the NIV translates 'amazement' (GNB wondered, marvelled) in the Gospel 12 times
- People *wondered* why Zechariah stayed in the temple so long
- People *wondered* why Zechariah called the boy John, not a name from that family
- People *marvelled* at what the shepherds said about the angels' message and baby Jesus
- Mary and Joseph *marvelled* at Jesus' knowledge in the temple as a 12 year old boy
- People *marvelled* at Jesus' inaugural sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth
- Jesus was *amazed* at the faith of the centurion; The disciples *marvelled* as Jesus stilled the storm
- The crowd was *amazed* as Jesus performed an exorcism on a demon-possessed boy
- The crowd *marvelled* as Jesus gave speech to a man who had previously been mute
- A Pharisee was *surprised* that Jesus did not go through the ceremonial washings
- People were *astonished* how Jesus answered a trick question about marriage in heaven
- Peter *wondered* as he left the empty tomb on the first resurrection morning – Jesus responded as he:

I OPENED THEIR MINDS

‘Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures’ (Luke 24:45)

- Which literally means, ‘He opened their understanding so they could understand the Scriptures’
- The word translated understanding is the word ‘*nous*’ a word sometimes used in English
- Though a Greek word my OED defines it as ‘mind/intellect/common sense/gumption’
- This is so obviously different from believing something that you know is not true
- By implication the word clearly means patterns of thought or the mind

It is not possible to make the resurrection narratives into systematic theology, even when Jesus appeared

- The disciples are filled with joy, wonder, marvel, astonishment, surprise and doubts
- When Jesus wanted to explain to the disciples the things that they found hard to believe
- He turned them to the scriptures; I firmly believe it is one of those times when we must conclude
- That if such a method was good enough for Jesus it must be good enough for us
- The scriptures are the God-given means of bringing about an inner transformation
- Coming to a coherent and reasonable faith, in the one who is the truth in person
- For being a Christian is not really a matter of how many things you believe
- It is a matter of being sure of the one in whom you believe
- The Christian believes not so much in a series of theological propositions
- (Though far be it from me to suggest that theological propositions are unimportant)
- The Christian believes in Jesus, the way, the truth and the life - incarnate, in person
- The Scriptures Jesus opens are the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms
- This is a very comprehensive description of the Scriptures we call ‘the Old Testament’
- And yet for fear that a critic would say that such concentration on the ‘mind’ is too cerebral

II HE WARMED THEIR HEARTS

The story of John Wesley and the warmed heart is one that has fired the imagination of Methodists

- For over 200 years but one that has fired the imagination of Christians for over 2,000 years
- It is the message that we are charged to share with others today
- Yet we ought not to make too fine a distinction
- Between the disciples in the upper room, whose minds were opened
- And the disciples on the Emmaus Road, whose hearts were on fire

The heart is the chief organ of physical life; it is considered the centre of our personalities and emotions

- In the Bible, for the most part the heart is used to mean the centre of things, our inner being
- The heart is the whole person, the heart governs all our actions; character, personality, will and mind
- In the Bible 'mind' often means human capacity for contemplation, judgment
- There is then no forced distinction between the understanding mind and the warmed heart
- Both came through the opening of the scriptures
- There is very little point entering into conjecture about the content of Jesus' sermon
- In the upper room we have a brief summary of what Jesus told them
- 'The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day
- And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations' (Luke 24:46-47)
- On the road to Emmaus, we are not given any details as to what Jesus told them, save to say,
- Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them
- what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:27)
- It is good news that: opened their minds
- it is good news that warmed their hearts; it is good news that

III FILLED THEIR MOUTHS

As the Gospels come to a close it is clear that the disciples are not to keep the good news to themselves

- he opened their eyes, for he opened the Scriptures, and broke the bread (24:31)
- he opened their minds, so they could understand the Scriptures concerning him (24:45)
- but the disciples are then given the commission to make new disciples by witnessing to the gospel
- The briefest summary of the Christian message is here:

This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things

(Luke 24:46-47)

A witness tells what he has seen and heard – it is important that there is a place for testimony

- But if Jesus used the Scriptures, Moses and all the Prophets
- Then Christians who are all called to witness, but especially preachers, must be grounded in Scripture
- In City Road, London, is a room called ‘The Power House of Methodism’ (Wesley’s Prayer Room)
- Here’s a very short extract from a much longer quotation from John Wesley

Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven ... I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” And what I thus learn, that I teach.

Today, there is an urgent need for people who will be ambassadors for Christ

- Jesus told the disciples, to stay in the city until they had been clothed with power from on high (24:49)
- From the sequel to Luke which is Acts, we can see that the power from on high was the Holy Spirit
- It is true that without the power of God working in our lives, our efforts are in vain
- That is why we must be a prayerful people, praying for the presence of the Spirit of God
- But that does not mean that we must sit back and wait for the power of God to come
- Rather it means that we must renew our study of the Word of God

Presumably, Jesus could have given the Holy Spirit to the disciples there and then

- Instead he revealed himself as the Risen Lord and dealt with their questionings
- By opening their minds to the truth of the Scriptures
- By warming their hearts with his preaching and teaching of the Scriptures
- By filling their mouths with good news that the Scriptures had been fulfilled in him.