

## Message for April 26, 2009

Lessons: Acts 3:11-21, 1 John 3: 1-7, Luke 24: 36-49 - "Then Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures"

### Introduction

For us, as Christians, Easter is not a single day on the calendar. For us, Easter isn't even simply a season of the year. Easter, is the power of the resurrection of our souls and bodies, our 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Resurrections, as I preached and taught on Easter Sunday. It is our entire existence. It's our present reality. It's our state of being. Each and every day we live, Sun., Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sat., in the present tense, we live in that new day of the Gospel. In the present tense, we live in that continuous 8<sup>th</sup> day. In the present tense, we live in that eternal day that will not end, even when we die. The confidence that Jesus Christ has forgiven all our sins in the sight of God has defeated the fear and sting of death, and has opened the grave and rose to life again – it continues and continues and continues and continues.

### **CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!**

As important as Jesus' opening that garden tomb on that first Easter morning, just as important is the message of our highlighted verse of our Gospel lesson, Luke 24, which is the means Easter's resurrection continues every day for us: **'Then Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures'**.

And that is what I want to talk to you about a little bit on this Easter Sunday, this continuous 8<sup>th</sup> day, this eternal day which never ends, with the title and outline of my message being: **OPEN TOMB! OPEN MIND! OPEN MOUTHS!**

### I.

In order to truly understand the implications and ramifications of Jesus' resurrection we need our minds to be opened to the Word of God. In order to believe and in order to be saved from sin, from death, from hell we need our minds to be opened to the Word of God. Our minds need to be opened through the means of God's Word and Sacraments, God's spoken and God's visible Word, God's Means of Grace.

That kind of open mindedness through God's Word, however, is very,very different from what our world considers to be open mindedness. To the world open mindedness means to be open and accepting and tolerant to all kinds of thinking, all kinds of personal positions, to all kinds of personal opinions, to all kinds of views. And if you're not open minded as the world defines it, accepting, tolerant, the world then accuses you of being closed minded. To the world, open mindedness means there is no **one** truth, but we need to be open to all different interpretations and judgments of what is truth. To have worldly open mindedness is to let all sorts of things fill our minds, all kinds of worldly wisdom, all kinds of enlightened thinking, all kinds of newly discovered truths; such as:

... redefining marriage as being a man and a man or a woman and a woman = be open minded!

... or a woman's choice to abort her unwanted pregnancy = be open minded!

... or the evolution of human beings from an amoeba to an ape to a Homo sapien through survival of the fittest = be open minded!

... or living together without marriage is simply an alternate lifestyle = be open minded!

... or all roads lead to heaven, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jew, Christian, agnostic. We're all struggling to earn some Supreme Being's grace and favor = be open minded!

On and on and on I could go with all the world's open mindedness. However, I have found, and God's Word confirms this truth, that to be so worldly open minded creates a vacuum in people's hearts and souls. And a vacuum is empty space which will suck up all kinds of dirt. So, our modern minds resemble a spiritual, moral, ethical landfill, a cesspool, a vacuum cleaner bag. All those particles, those nuggets of worldly wisdom are sucked up into the vacuum of peoples open minds. And they mingle and mix and ferment together, causing confusion and doubt and fear and anxiety. Not knowing what to believe, people believe anything. Not knowing the truth, people believe this world's lies. Not standing for anything, people fall for everything. What a cesspool, what a landfill, what a vacuum I have found in people's hearts, souls and lives. Actually, one of the places I experience this worldly open mindedness is in, of all places, my catechism classes. Our young people, as a product of our world, are very, very open minded and even pride themselves on their open mindedness. But, I find they are very, very confused about the truth of life and death.

That seems to be the kind of confusion that also gripped Jesus' disciples after His crucifixion and death. When Jesus appeared to them on that first Easter, when the Emmaus disciples had reported, "How Jesus was recognized by them when He broke the bread," Luke tells us, "They were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit," a hallucination, and, "they were troubled and doubts arose in their hearts." That word *doubt* literally means to be agitated, or stirred up. Think of that landfill, that cesspool, that vacuum cleaner bag image that I used a few moments ago to describe the open mindedness of our world. When you agitate or stir up a landfill or cesspool or empty a vacuum cleaner bag, all that garbage, all that stuff on the bottom, under the surface, comes to the top, and it's dirty, and it let's out gasses, and it stinks. All the horrible events of Holy Week clouded the disciples thinking. Things weren't so clear for them. Things stunk. They didn't know what to think, or what to believe anymore.

Has this ever happened to you? Has this sinful world caused your open mindedness to become disturbed. It can, as you watch your TVs, read your newspapers and magazines, log onto your inter net and hear this world's prideful open mindedness. Not that these means of communication are wrong unto themselves. They are actually gifts of God for His churches use. We thank God for them. But, with the good comes the bad in this world. Numerous times over the years, my Catechism students - good kids, will tell me, "What you teach, Pastor, isn't what we learn any place else." There is a whole lot of confusion in open minds today. That's why we pray the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation. What does this mean? God tempts no one. But, we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world and our own sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair and other great shame and

vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory” – the NIKE! That’s your Pastor’s prayer for all of you, but especially for our young people with their open minds.

## II.

To answer that prayer, Jesus comes to His disciples, and, as we read in our Gospel lesson, **“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”** Not to let more junk and confusion come in, but to clean out the junk of fear and doubt and confusion and fill their minds with His Word, the Scriptures. Because only Jesus, God incarnate, can open the deadly tombs of our minds. Only Jesus can clean out the cesspool of filth and falsehood and fear and fill our minds and hearts and souls, our lives with His truth and His wisdom. Only Jesus can open the deadly, dark, decaying tombs of our minds and fill them with the Light of His Word, with repentance and forgiveness and faith, so that we may know Jesus Christ alone as our risen and living Savior and His Word as truth in this confusing falsely open minded world. That’s being truly open minded, though the world will accuse us of being closed minded. What will it be for you and your children and grandchildren?

Jesus opened the tomb on Easter. Jesus, now, wants to open our minds to His truth. As our epistle lesson, 1 John, says ‘see what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God’. Through water and the Spirit of Holy Baptism, through the instruction of our catechism of God’s Word, the tomb of our minds are truly opened and the cesspool of our souls are flushed clean. So over and over again, daily, as Easter resurrection people, in repentance and forgiveness the junk of this world’s sinful open minded thoughts, words, deeds, desires are all absolved. And our minds and hearts and souls are filled with the truth and the clarity of God’s Word, the Scriptures, ‘the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms’, everything written about Jesus.

And, then something else is also opened; God acts = open tomb, we receive = open minds, then we act = open mouths ‘you are witnesses to these things’. Just as children learn how to speak by being spoken to and imitate their parents, so as children of God, His Holy Christian Church, we speak and we act like those ordinary fishermen, Peter and John spoke and acted in our 1<sup>st</sup> lesson, Acts 3. You know what happened to them don’t you? They were arrested, because, as Acts 4 says, “They were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead,” and, as Acts 5 says, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’”

As Jesus’ present day disciples, Immanuel Lutheran, Plainview, we are sent to speak God’s truth as we have been spoken to from God’s Word. We are sent to speak the truth of God’s Word to this world’s open minds that are actually the ones closed with confusion, doubt, sin and death, ‘we must obey God rather than men’.

Marriage is not one man and one woman or one woman and one man, but marriage ordained by God is a man and woman for a life time = God’s open minded Word.

Abortion is not a choice of a woman, life is our only choice as Resurrection people = God's open minded Word.

Evolved animals? No, but planned and chosen crowns of God's Creation recreated in His image = God's open minded Word.

Sex outside of marriage an alternative life style? No, sexuality is fully expressed in marriage = God's open minded Word.

All roads lead to heaven? No, Jesus Christ alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life who gives us God's grace and favor, repentance and forgiveness = God's open minded Word.

### **Conclusion**

Do you remember the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves and the words of Aladdin, "Open Sesame," which opened a cave full of treasure? Without the words, "Open Sesame," there was no treasure. The same is true for all of Jesus' disciples, including us. The death and resurrection of Jesus has won for us all the treasures of heaven. But, without the means of God's Grace in His Word and Sacraments, this treasure remains closed like a tomb. Jesus comes and opens the minds of His disciples = open says Jesus and all the treasure truths of God's Word is theirs. Jesus is doing the exact same thing for us and our children and grandchildren: Open tomb! Open minds! Open mouths! Each day is our resurrection day, our Gospel new day, our continuous Eighth day, our eternal day through the truth of God's Word!  
CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA! We are truly God's opened minded people! Amen