

“Have an Open Mind – to the Word of God”

Luke 24:36-49

Christ is Risen!! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Reading our Gospel lesson for today should be comforting for us. By nature, the Gospel is comforting. But it is especially comforting for me to know that not even the disciples knew everything – not even close. They had spent three years of constant training; constantly listening to the words of Jesus; constantly watching Him, learning from Him. But it wasn't until after the resurrection that Scripture, and more specifically the understanding of Scripture, was open to them.

Understanding God and His Word, ultimately, is not found in man-made books, or in universities, or in philosophical circles, or in opinions expressed over a cup of coffee. Understanding God is a function of our faith and comes from Him as He opens our minds to His Word.

Our culture loves the concept of an “open mind”; “Have an open mind”; however what is usually meant by that is having an open mind to the sinful world. As the saying goes, some people have such an open mind it seems their brains have fallen out. The “open mind” promoted by our sinful culture requires you to close your mind to the Word of God.

St. Paul tells us that “the sinful mind is hostile to God.” Our sinful nature does not want His light of truth to expose our deeds of darkness. The sinful “open mind” wants to keep God's Word a closed book and allow

the sewer of sin to flow into you “open mind.”

But God has other plans for you. After He calls us into His family through Baptism, we are to grow in our understanding. But, like all growing processes, it takes time and there will be setbacks.

During their three-plus years with the Lord, the disciples made great progress. St. Peter made his great confession of faith saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” But progress is often two steps forward, one step back. It wasn’t too long after this that Peter denied the Lord three times.

We live in an odd existence as baptized children of God. We are blessed with faith in God Almighty. And in Baptism, we have everything we need for salvation. We are, as Scripture says, “sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” But, for the most part, we are pretty ignorant of who God is, what He says, what He has done for us, and sometimes we can be downright skeptical.

We begin our growth process at Baptism, most often as infants, but certainly like infants – even if you were baptized as an adult. And even after a while, all that we really have is a basic understanding. Even after Confirmation, understanding has only begun. As Paul says, “Who has known the mind of the Lord?”

I compare understanding God as He allows Himself to be known in Scripture to writing a book. Baptism is like learning the alphabet. Everything you need to write that great novel is there. It is of utmost importance, but is only the first step. If you stop there, what good is it doing you? Then throughout the Sunday School years, we learn to write.

We learn to construct complete sentences and form paragraphs. But still, we are not close to writing that great novel that will last for all time.

Participating in the Word of God is meant to be a lifelong endeavor – and what a joy it is to continually learn and grow in your understanding of how much God truly loves you. He sent His Son to suffer and die and rise so that, when your life ends, you too will rise.

Now, I said before that understanding the fullness of God is not found in man-made books, universities, philosophical circles, or over a cup of coffee, but those can be places where understanding is expressed – and we are encouraged to study and discuss the mysteries of God. I know that I have learned much through those means – except for the coffee. I have no use for that stuff.

I would like to believe that Diet Coke enhances our ability to comprehend the incomprehensible. However, the understanding of God we seek is granted as a gift. If this were not so, it would not so often be seen in little children. And then, all too often, those little children have that faith chipped away by man-made books, universities, philosophies, and conversations with those critical of God and critical of our faith in what is unseen.

Books and teachers and pastors can certainly lead us in the right direction, and without them, none of us would have more than a superficial view of God. God wants us to know more than just “Jesus loves you” – not that that is not important.

But we are to grow in our understanding of what it means to be forgiven – to be washed clean of your sin. How often do we carry guilt

with us of sins God has already forgiven? Understanding God goes far beyond just the doctrine of the Trinity and delving into the incomprehensible complexities of three Persons in one God.

Understanding God involves knowing the Scripture, which requires some time in the book, and seeing how God has dealt with people throughout the ages. After all, it is God's relationship with people, with you and me, that makes Him so important to us.

It's not just tornados, earthquakes, and wars that get God's attention. You get His attention. That never ceases to amaze me that God cares about what I do on a day to day basis. He understands you. And by His grace, and a little time in the books, you understand Him – not completely, for sure.

But faith is a wonderful thing. God is the One who opens our minds to His Word. He is the One who brings understanding. He opens your mind and reveals Himself. He opened your mind as He brought you to faith in the waters of Baptism, washed you clean, and raises you up as His dear child teaching you His Word. And one day He will bring this good work in you to completion in the resurrection and your mind will be open to the fullness of everything written in Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. Have an open mind – to the Word of God. Amen.

Christ is Risen!! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.