

“Now I See!” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Easter 3 – April 23, 2023

- I. **Luke 24:30-31** – ³⁰When He was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him.
- II. **Sometimes we struggle to recognize a person.**
 - a. It's pretty common that movie stars and other famous people are out in public and no one recognizes them.
 - i. Just the other day I read a story about the actor from The Office, Rainn Wilson, who played Dwight Schrute.
 - ii. He was on a flight and the guy next to him was watching The Office, so Mr. Wilson sent a picture out – “when the guy next to you has no idea who you are...”¹
 - iii. Granted, he was wearing a mask and headphones – it might be tough to recognize someone like that...
 - b. I also read a story that Elvis Presley used to go to a restaurant all the time called Lil Thompson's Steakhouse in Tennessee.
 - i. He was good friends with the owner... who actually used to give him free food before he got famous.
 - ii. When Elvis was at the peak of his career, Lil Thompson's had an Elvis impersonator contest.
 - iii. So, a huge crowd comes to watch, and even Elvis himself came and sat in the back... so he decides to shake things up a bit and be one of the contestants.
 - iv. Elvis was pretty confident... reportedly saying, “I'm going to mash this.”
 - v. The owner was worried the place would go crazy when everyone realized it was the real Elvis... but there was no need.... He sang “Love Me Tender” to polite applause and came in third place in the contest! ²
 - c. It's not always clear... or we don't always recognize the people around us... even when they're famous.
 - i. One last story – when Michele was working at the soda fountain in our home town of Steamboat, Colorado, a man came in and asked her for a lighter.
 - ii. She thought he looked familiar, and they bantered back and forth as she said, “You look like that guy on TV from Northern Exposure” – and he says, “Yeah I get that a lot...”
 - iii. After he left it became clear that it was John Corbett, the actor from the that TV series!
 - d. Jesus has a similar effect on people – but in a spiritual way.
 - i. He is constantly overlooked as the real Savior, while people are going along in their lives without seeing.

- III. **The road to Emmaus is a different type of “eye-opening” experience.**
- a. Not much is known about where the town of Emmaus is...except it was around 7 miles from Jerusalem.
 - b. Also, we don't know much about Cleopas and the other traveler who was not named... just that they were disciples of Jesus.
 - c. It says in verse 16 that they were “kept from recognizing Him,” which probably means that God kept them from seeing Jesus as the risen Lord for a time... but that might also include their own unbelief mixed with God's desire to bring them to a full understanding.
 - d. As they travel along, discussing the prior several days – starting with the crucifixion of Jesus, and then the news came from the women and others that Jesus was not in the tomb.
 - e. Jesus points out their lack of understanding – “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” (vs 25) and then begins to open their hearts to the prophecies of old, the Scriptures that pointed to the Savior and His work to free us all from the slavery of sin.
 - i. Jesus gives Cleopas and his friend the best Confirmation class ever!
 - ii. He teaches them with the heart of God, which the story tells us later... their hearts were burning within them. (vs 32)
 - iii. God's Word enters in and does what it does... brings people to faith.
 - f. Yet, one more thing was needed to complete the story and truly open their eyes – the breaking of bread.
 - i. Jesus is urged to stay with them rather than keep traveling ahead, and then sits down for a meal.
 - ii. The breaking of bread in the New Testament often means sitting down for a meal, along with the Lord's Supper or communion... now perhaps there was no celebrating the Lord's Supper at this point, but the meal was high point of this whole story, because...
 1. As Jesus blessed the bread, their eyes were opened, and they realized... or recognized it was Jesus.
 2. He instantly disappears – but then they started to put everything together, especially the words He spoke with them about the Scriptures... even that their hearts were burning.
 3. The only thing they can do at that point is run to tell the story to everyone they know – Jesus is alive! He really did rise from the dead! He is risen! **He is risen indeed, alleluia!**
 - g. I was reading the Concordia Commentary of Luke by Dr. Arthur Just, and he ties this eye-opening experience all the way back to Adam and Eve.³
 - i. In the Garden of Eden, they wanted to have their eyes opened to know good and evil – so they ate of the one tree God told them not to
 - ii. Their eyes were opened, and the world became full of sin and dysfunction... which is in us and all around us.

- iii. The road to Emmaus ends with these disciples eating with the Savior, and their eyes were opened to God's plan of redemption and how the Father went about answering the problem of sin.
 - 1. As Genesis 3:15 says, God promised that the offspring of Eve would crush the head of satan – that evil would not win the day.
- iv. One meal brought sin and death, while this meal brought faith and life, and salvation.

IV. **What causes our eyes to open and believe that Jesus is our Savior?**

- a. Some people believe that knowledge itself is enough to open our eyes to Jesus... read enough books, study the Bible, know all the answers in Luther's Small Catechism, and you will then open your eyes.
 - i. Some people believe that doing lots of good things in Jesus' name opens our eyes to Jesus as Savior... go out and feed the poor, care for the widows and orphans, and treat people with love and your eyes will be opened.
 - ii. Others think that spending lots of time in church... going to services and Bible studies will open their eyes.
 - iii. No, just knowing a lot about God or doing good things will not open our eyes... there are many people, maybe even some sitting here today, who do not have faith, but just go through the motions.
- b. However, we know the answer to what opens our eyes to Jesus – the power of the Holy Spirit by God's grace.
- c. Only God can open our eyes... just as Jesus did to these disciples after breaking bread with them.
- d. God opens our eyes through faith – the gift He plants in our hearts that causes us to see the story that Jesus is the true Savior – who was born of a virgin, lost His life on the cross to pay for our sins, and rose again that we might have forgiveness.
- e. There is no plausible explanation for believing that all these things are true – except that the Holy Spirit has come upon us and given us the gift of faith
 - i. Without God Himself blessing us with this sight, we would forever be wandering without seeing the true Jesus – missing out on all the gifts.
- f. My fervent prayer is that all people may have an Emmaus moment, when all the "knowledge" of God sinks right into the heart and faith springs forth.
 - i. As the realization through faith that Jesus is Lord and Savior causes us to say, "Oh! Now I see!" Amen.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/12/entertainment/rainn-wilson-the-office-flight-fan/index.html>

² Source: Blog, "The True Complete Story of Mark Hanks," 706UnionAvenue.com (Accessed 1/28/21)

³ Just, A. A., Jr. (1997). Luke 9:51–24:53 (p. 986). Concordia Publishing House.