



## Easter 3

April 15, 2018 – 9:00 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

**Theme: Are You “Open Minded”?**

### **Sermon Text: Luke 24:36-49**

<sup>36</sup> While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

<sup>37</sup> They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup> He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

<sup>40</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate it in their presence.

<sup>44</sup> He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Do you consider yourself “open minded”? The dictionary definition is: ***“willing to consider new ideas; unprejudiced.”*** Open-minded people are forward thinking, “big-picture” people. They’re a valuable asset on any leadership team since they tend to think outside the box and thoughtfully consider everyone’s input.

So, are you “open-minded” when it comes to what God has revealed in Scripture, or, are you “closed-minded” to God’s teachings? That depends on the perspective from which

you're conducting your self-analysis. If it's from the point of view of what you're like by nature, then you'd be forced cite the Apostle Paul's words in **1 Cor. 12:4**. There he writes: **"The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."** Before the Holy Spirit brought you to believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you were "closed-minded" toward God's Word—and so was I. It was **"foolishness"** to us. But after the Spirit made us full-fledged members of God's family by faith, He also **"opened [our] minds so [we] could understand the Scriptures,"** just like the risen Savior did with His disciples in the upper room where they'd holed up.

To that end, I pray that God the Holy Spirit would not only **"open [our] minds so [we] can understand the Scriptures,"** but that He would also open our hearts to those in need—whether physically or spiritually—so that we can bless them as we've been blessed by God: abundantly and undeservedly. After all, as Martin Luther said, **"We're all beggars before God"** no matter what our material assets.

We shouldn't be surprised at the disciples' reaction on that first Easter evening. They were just trying to sort out the facts. Several of their number, including the women who'd gone to His tomb at dawn, Peter and the two disciples from Emmaus had seen the risen Savior with their own eyes. Suddenly, **"while they were . . . talking about this, Jesus himself"** miraculously appeared, **"stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"** How'd they react? Just like we would've had we been there. Luke writes, **"They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost."** Here's where we see the tender heart of Jesus. Instead of balking at their reaction, **"He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'"**

What a gracious, loving invitation the risen Savior extended to His dear friends! **"When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence."** Now they had living proof that He had risen!

Then the risen Savior issued them these marching orders: **"This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."** The disciples were the first hearers of this incredible commission. At the apex of human history, the Christ died and was raised to life. The "Age of Resurrection" had begun, sins had been forgiven through Him, and the whole world was to be the audience of this tremendous good news! It is an incomparable story; no man-made religion has ever come close to matching it; no others have claimed resurrection to back up their teaching. The disciples—as witnesses—were entrusted as guardians of this truth and called by Christ to carry it to the world!

We, too, have been entrusted with the greatest truth the world has ever known. We, too, are witnesses of the Resurrection. No, we haven't seen it in the same way Jesus' first followers did, but we've certainly witnessed it, if Jesus lives in us by Spirit-borne faith. Like them, we have been radically changed by Jesus' resurrection. No one who's ever encountered the risen Christ can remain the same; we're compelled by His Spirit within us—His relentlessly searching Spirit—to go and tell. Having been freed from a prison of shame and incomprehensible guilt, we've been told to walk right back into the courtroom where we were once convicted. As witnesses in this world's trial, we're told to testify of what we've seen. There's no hope for these defendants other than the evidence of Christ's death, resurrection and the pardon those great redemptive acts of God have secured for all mankind, just like there was once no hope for us apart from Christ.

The charge against the world is sin, and we know of evidence that changed everything for us. That's the truth our crucified, risen and ascended Lord and Redeemer has commissioned us to share with others wherever and whenever we have the opportunity to do so. And such opportunities aren't that difficult to find. In fact, our gracious God provides us with them every single day. We pray that the Holy Spirit would open wide our eyes of faith to recognize them when they present themselves and that He would give us the very words we need to communicate God's love in Christ in a way that allows the Holy Spirit to work through us to **“open [the] minds”** of those we testify to **“so [they] can understand the Scriptures”** too. The Spirit can work through God's Word to kindle saving faith in the hearts of those we witness to. In fact, the work of conversion is always all His.

The risen Savior concluded His remarks that Easter evening by telling His followers: **“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”** —a clear reference to the overpowering of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost a few weeks later.

The disciples were **“clothed with power from on high”** at Pentecost, along with those who were with them. We, too, can ask God to equip us with the same Spirit of courage and boldness He gave them to preach **“repentance and the forgiveness of sins ... beginning”** in our own homes, here at Living Hope and in our own lives. Just after teaching His disciples how to pray in the words of **“The Lord's Prayer,”** Jesus encouraged them to **persist** in their prayers. He said, **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened”** (Lk. 11:9-10). We should **“pray continually”** (1 Thess. 5:17) Paul told the Thessalonians. Because of Jesus, the writer of Hebrews urges us, **“Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need”** (4:16).

Following His encouragement for us to **persist** in prayer, Jesus said: **“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”** (Lk. 11:11-13). And so we pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit on us in Word and sacrament! We ask that God would **“clothe us with power from on high”** just like He did at Pentecost. Imagine what courageous witnesses to our risen Savior we would be if we were each, individually, blessed with such an outpouring of the Holy

Spirit! So ask God. He'll **"give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"** I'm not saying that we don't already have the Holy Spirit living in us, for the Scriptures plainly state that **"no one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit"** (1 Cor. 12:3). I'm talking about the special measure of God's Spirit Jesus' followers received at Pentecost.

Are you "open-minded"? I hope so! I hope you're open to the spiritual gifts God gives to each one of us as He determines. I hope you're open to using those gifts to build up the body of Christ, working alongside your fellow believers to bless as many people as possible with God's love in Christ. I hope you're open to the opportunities God gives you every day to glorify Him in thought, word and action. And I pray that God's Spirit would **"open [our] minds so [we] can understand the Scriptures,"** apply them to our own lives and share them with others. Amen!