

An Opened Mind

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" 33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. 36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 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." 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence. 44 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." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 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. - Luke 24:28-49 NIV

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

Here there be dragons.

Ancient cartographers, mappers, used to have a practice when they reached the fringes of familiarity. Where they could no longer provide a map, they wrote the phrase,

"Here there be dragons." Christopher Columbus set sail for with an incomplete map, so designated.

The designation, of course, was a warning of the unknown. The purpose was to raise caution and even fear as a prohibitive measure to try to save people from perishing.

The motives were good but fear is a terrible lens through which to see life. It is a useful thing when we are younger and to not have a certain degree of fear, is potentially fatal for children.

Fear closes people's minds and shuts down creativity, discovery and many other desirable qualities. When we start to fear dragons at every turn, we have a problem.

In the scripture this morning, the disciples are huddled in confusion and fear, following the crucifixion. Jesus had tried to prepare them for what was to come but they seemingly missed it. After encountering Jesus on the road to Emmaus, these discouraged disciples return to Jerusalem to tell the others what had happened. Suddenly Jesus appears in their midst.

44 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." 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

What is the inference in the statement? *"He opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures."*?

1. Their minds were closed somehow and this prevented them from understanding.

How many Jewish people, steeped in the same scriptures that Jesus "opened" to his disciples, missed the Messiah

that they had been looking for, for centuries? Most all of them.

Their minds were closed to who Jesus might actually be. They were looking for a political deliverer and thus their minds were closed to every other possibility. Their expectations were false.

If a person is worried about dragons, outside of the church, and people were in my own spiritual youth, they were unconcerned with the dragons inside.

I was warned to change my old friends. How in the world was I to have any positive impact on them. While the motives were good, fear was bred into me, spiritually. The Jesus within me was not greater than the one who is in the world.

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.” (1 John 4:1–6, NIV84)

I don't think for one minute that we are to face the world around us with the belief that we have a fragile faith that can be shipwrecked or stolen by people that we live with, work with or spend time with ... people who do not profess our faith.

I jokingly say to people now that when I came to Christ, they warned me about my old friends but they forgot to warn me about my new ones.

It has been the internal dragons that have wounded me far more than the external ones. Friendly fire, if you will.

The bottom line is that there are dragons everywhere ... sometimes I may breathe fire and blow smoke myself ... that is scary and disappointing but I know that I have failed God many more times than I realize. The dragon-like nature can appear in all of us from time to time but God is greater ... never forget, God is greater and He has conquered the devil. It's done.

2. They had been reading scripture for years, without a full understanding.

Remember the old adage, "Give a man a fish and feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and feed him for a lifetime."

Preach a sermon to a man and feed him for a Sunday. Teach him to hear the scripture he reads and he'll feed himself for a lifetime of Sundays.

Sometimes we can close people's minds as professional preachers by telling people what the scripture means. Sermons can be a weekly process of telling people what the Bible says so much so that people feel no need to read the story for themselves.

If I wanted to recommend a book to you and then proceeded to tell you everything that it said, how much would you look forward to reading it?

“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what

he promised us—even eternal life. I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.” (1 John 2:24–27, NIV84)

(Cave exploring - Keith Drury)

3. An open mind is essential for understanding.

If we come to the scripture with our minds made up, it will be a boring exercise.

Come [to the Bible], not to study the history of God's divine action, but to be its object; not to learn what it has achieved throughout the centuries and still does, but simply to be the subject of its operation.

... Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751)

One of the things that I have done in recent times is to leave my qualifiers behind when I come to the scripture. This brings me blessing by times. Other times it causes me discomfort.

Here are a couple that make me uncomfortable:

*“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the **prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well**; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.” (James 5:13–15, NIV84)*

“Early in the morning, as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered. When the disciples saw this, they were

*amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked. Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. **If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.**” (Matthew 21:18–22, NIV84)*

Here are a couple that bless me greatly:

*“Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; **if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.**” (2 Timothy 2:11–13, NIV84)*

*“being confident of this, that **he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6, NIV84)*

*“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, **nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” (Romans 8:37–39, NIV84)*

4. We must always come to the scriptures prepared for them to speak to us in new ways. Otherwise they are an old message for a time past, disconnected from our daily life.

I am a different person than I was when I first came to Christ. I see and experience life differently. I have different cares and concerns. I am in a different season of life. Should it not stand to reason that my mind has been opened in numbers of different ways. In order to embrace life as it changes, we have to have minds that are open to change. And God speaks to me about different things than

He did years ago. He speaks to me in different ways than
He did years ago.

A mind that is closed to change, to God, to a greater
revelation of God than you had in the early days, is a mind
that chooses spiritual blindness. Did you ever catch yourself
in conversation and have an epiphany that you sound
exactly like older people did when you were younger?

I have.

***“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing
a new thing!*** Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a
way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.” (Isaiah 43:18–19,
NIV84)