

Third Sunday of the Resurrection

Epiphany of the Disciples

Acts 3:12-19, Ps 4; 1 Jn 3:1-7; Lk 24:36b-48

One of the last things that the resurrected Christ told his disciples is: “*everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.*” [Lk 24.44b]

In effect, Jesus says: “everything about me was already there in the Old Testament, if you only had “*the eyes to see and the heart to hear.*” [But] *you did not see and you did not hear.*” [Mk 8:18] In other words, he says, “you often mis-interpreted and wrongly used the Scripture **I** gave you, from the very beginning.”

Jesus makes it clear that, the Old Testament is really all about Him. It’s about Him, His story and His vision; it was there all along, but we failed to see Him and to hear Him there. We failed so badly that he had to come and personally explain it to us. He came: “*to open our minds to understand the Scriptures.*” [Lk 24.45] Remember, the “Scripture” to which Jesus refers is the Old Testament; there is no “New” Testament yet, there won’t be for another 70 years or so.

Not all of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Priests, Scribes, and Rabbis were unfaithful all those years. On the contrary, for over 2,000 years, they believed that they had seen, heard, and understood God’s Word because it was, as plain as “ink on paper.” Or so they thought.

And yet, Jesus repeatedly chastised the Jewish leaders and his own disciples for looking at Scriptures as some form of prescription for success, when they should have been looking at the underlying principles—the “whys”— that were embedded in the Scriptures. In other words, the old way of interpreting scripture had been one of prescription. What I mean is that, like a “prescription,” they saw Scripture as a list of things to do or not do. The Old Testament was routinely interpreted as a prescription for what to do so that all would be right with God, so that God would be pleased.

Perhaps a brief story can explain this: imagine a mother is fixing a fine dinner for her family, however she needs to dash to the store for one item. She does not want them eating snacks while she is gone, so when she leaves the house, she admonishes her husband and children “do not go into the kitchen!” Well, when she returns, she finds the family eating cookies and chips, to which she responds, “I told you not to go into the kitchen!” And they say, “We didn’t! We got food from the Hall Pantry!”

The family took the mother literally. They followed her injunction to: “not go into the kitchen” as a prescription for their actions. However, they misinterpreted and misunderstood the principle or the purpose behind the prescription—“don’t eat anything to spoil your dinner.”

It is the underlying principle or purpose that is important, not the more obvious prescription, which is what Jesus means by “*opening their minds to understand.*” Jesus says that the disciples’ interpretation of Scripture has been flawed. The underlying principle is God’s “Truth.”

And what is God’s “Truth”? It is Jesus! In John’s Gospel Jesus declares that He *is* the “Truth.” “*I AM the Truth and the Life....* [Jn 14.6]. Thus, the principles of God’s “Truth” were there in the Old

Testament all along, but we did not understand them because people only considered Scripture as a Prescription of “do’s and don’ts.”

So how do we understand God’s Truth? Well, we start with Jesus. We start with Jesus because all of our beginnings start with God and Jesus *is* God; the Alpha and the Omega. And it stands to reason, that since Jesus is God *in the flesh*—then maybe we ought to pay close attention to what Jesus said and did, and most specifically to how Jesus himself interpreted Scripture.

Jesus gives us new “eyes” to see both Scripture and the world. He allows us to see them through God’s own eyes. Thus, after the Easter Resurrection, Jesus spends the next 40 days *re*-educating his disciples; helping them to understand what was already there. Thus, as the resurrected Christ reveals his true self to his disciples, we might call that time: “The Epiphany to the Disciples,” the time when Jesus “*opened their minds to understand.*”

So, what does that mean for us? It means that we need to engage in our own “Epiphany to the Disciples.” We need to interpret the principles, the purpose of Scripture with the “eyes of Christ.” When challenges arise, we start by asking what did Jesus, God’s own self, what did He *say* about this? What did He *do* about this? And we must always remember that Jesus is firmly grounded in those principles of the Old Testament, which he came to “*fulfill and not to abolish.*” [Mt5:17]

The Principles underneath the teaching and actions of Christ should always be the model for action in our lives, whether it’s the little things in our personal and family lives or the big issues in our culture like: Racial Justice, Gun Violence, Health Care, or Ageism. We should be especially attentive to those things that Jesus was compassionate about like the divine commands to care for “*the poor, the widowed, the orphaned, and the alien among you.*” [e.g., Deut 14-15]

As Christians, our template for all thought and action must always be Jesus Christ. Luke said that Jesus “*opened their minds to understand.*” Why? Because it was not, as some would say: “as plain as ink on paper.”

Jesus radically challenges us, his disciples, to anchor ourselves in God’s Truth, Jesus Christ, to boldly anchor ourselves in God’s underlying principles. And to not take the easier, yet misguided, and spiritually immature path, of blind adherence to *prescriptively* simple “do’s and don’ts” and... “*thou shalt not.*” Jesus is in the “*Principles*” not the “*Prescriptions.*”

When someone says, “The Bible says....” I think our response should be, “But what does it mean? Where is Christ?” He said, he was there, that everything about him was already there, embedded in the Old Testament Scripture. The principles are all there, they have always been there, for those with “*eyes to see and hearts to hear.*” The Good News is that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we too can discern, if we only open our hearts and our minds to listen, and to hear, and to see, the *principles* underneath the prescriptions.

“When I call upon the LORD, he will hear me .” Ps 4:3b