

## Sermon 2023 99 99 Text

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Companion on the Journey. Amen.

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### **Luke 24.36b-48**

<sup>36</sup> While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' <sup>37</sup> They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. <sup>38</sup> He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate in their presence. <sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.

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<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

We need to begin our thinking that Easter is a Season, not a day; and that we spend the 40 days after the Easter event reflecting on the actions of Christ in a way that is similar to the 40 days before Easter Day.

We need to remember however, that the disciples who travelled the first 40 days after the resurrection of Jesus did so in a highly emotionally charged state. Their friend was dead, and then alive – they went from mourning to cheering in a constant pendulum of emotion and reflection.

This time the appearance of Jesus is different for “... he opened their minds to understand the scriptures...”

We need to glean the fact that Jesus is opening their mind to what we refer to as the Old Testament.

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But the opening of their minds does not allow them to understand the whole Old Testament in a single moment. It is allowing them the capacity to begin to comprehend the significance of this person who is also God, who is killed and hangs on the blood-stained cross, and who rises from the tomb.

But we need to be careful how we read those words.

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I do not believe that in a miracle of seconds, gives the disciples an absolute knowledge of the meaning of the whole of the Old Testament.

I believe it gives them the capacity to begin reading the Old Testament illuminated by the light of Christ. This is a starting point that enables the disciples to look back to the scholarship of faith, now more legible because of the light of Christ coming into the world.

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So we might ask, does this discredit and negate the thousands of years of scholarship devoted to the study of our Old Testament by the Jewish people?

No, it does not. What it does is make obvious a single thread woven through the tapestry of the Old Testament.

What it does say is that one piece of the Old Testament which was lost and then found and then lost again is now clear amidst the background of the overall work.

But the work of the study of the Old Testament is not completed, but there is now a brighter light to follow the thread of salvation from its beginnings to its end which is outside the woven masterpiece of the Old Testament.

And I suspect that Jesus is giving a warning to the disciples that the Jews wish to cut off that thread which seems excess and dangling outside the completed work of the Old Testament.

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And I believe the purpose of that single thread is to connect an entirely new piece of woven understanding which informs and gives depth to the New Testament which will now be created.

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But understanding is not an absolute – you can understand something to a level that is well below perfect knowledge.

Jesus gift to the disciples was, I believe, a key which unlocked part of the story; a light which illuminated, but still left shadows.

It allowed the disciples to start to construct a framework for passing on the gift of understanding given to them by Jesus.

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But there are still dark corners in the Old Testament that have never been explored because they are not necessary for salvation, but they do need to be illuminated if we are ever to create an image of God which is approaching perfection.

And then there is still the struggle to be fully illuminated in and by the New Testament. For the New Testament is about the interaction between God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the process of salvation and eternal life.

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So much about the relationship between God and humanity is outside the scope of the Old and New Testaments – and despite the writing and scholarship that is a constant journey for the people of creation, we are probably only a little closer to a perfect relationship with God.

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For our relationship is not just about salvation, our relationship is about how we give and receive to each other; about how in the dark hours of struggle we still find light; about how digging through old papers and thoughts we find fresh understandings – because we have reached a level of maturity that allows us to see more clearly or with a more informed mind.

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We need to be careful not to overvalue our interpretation of the gift of Jesus to the disciples of opening their minds and uplifting their understanding. WE need to hold that as a precious gift, but it cannot fill all our minds and it cannot contain the whole of the understanding of a creator, a redeemer and a companion on the way.

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