

Living with Eyes Wide Open
Luke 24: 13-35
May 3, 2020

We saw last week that the two disciples, one named Cleopas, met a stranger on the road to Emmaus. He seemed unaware of what had happened in Jerusalem over the past few days. So they tell him about the crucifixion and how it has devastated them. Then they share their confusion over recent news that some of the women reported that the tomb was empty and they had a vision of angels telling them he is alive. And to add to the confusion, some of their leaders went and indeed found the tomb empty.

It's not hard to identify their feelings and how unsettling this news must have been to them. No wonder they are walking along with their heads down, deep in conversation about what this could mean!

Eyes wide shut might be an apt description of their psychological/spiritual state. Eyes wide open, yet shut! Sometimes, yes, even for us today, we can live through periods when our spiritual sight is affected by circumstances in our lives. Is there anything in this journey story that can help us to find healing for our diminished sight? How can we move from eyes wide shut to eyes wide open? Is there a secret remedy we have been missing? Perhaps Luke can help us.

Living with our eyes wide open will mean that we do not merely believe in God and his Son Jesus the same way as we believe in apple pie and Mother's Day. Spiritual insight is born in our hearts, not in our brains. God's Spirit has to open up the pathways into our hearts through an experience of word, or sacrament, or nature. It's not merely intellectual insight that surprises us, as when an idea suddenly pops open. Spiritual insight is often mediated through a memory of God's presence, through God speaking to us in a fresh new word. It can be life-changing.

Years ago, on a visit to my home in Scotland, I find myself sitting on a bench (summer seat) looking out over the North Sea. It's where as a boy I had spent hours playing football or searching for crabs in the rocks. In that quiet moment, with the smell of seaweed strong in the gentle breeze, I'm in a reflective mood. I'm thinking on my life, where

I have come from and where God might be leading me. I wasn't in minister at that stage in my life. In such moments God sometimes nestles close. It is in moments like that, sometimes reading the bible, sometimes absorbing nature's wonders, sometimes in moments of reflection, stimulated by a thousand different memories, God slides up alongside and says hello. Eyes wide open, it's in moments like these that we are moved toward healing and sight.

In our story two things will bring about eyes wide open for these two disciples.

First, Jesus opens to them the meaning of the Old Testament scriptures about himself. In all this time, listening to his voice, looking into the stranger's face, and learning the bible as if it were a new book, throughout this entire time they didn't recognize Jesus at all. But they will later recount to each other how this experience affected them. They said:

Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?

The bible opened by the Spirit, whether in our private or public readings, through a sermon, through a friend's insight, can excite and refresh our spiritual sight. Deep in the darkness of doubt and confusion that flooded their hearts following this horrible weekend, they are energized and made alive by Jesus' interpretation of the ancient scriptures.

Second, it was only when they sat down in their home at table and Jesus broke the bread and prayed were their eyes opened and they finally recognized him. Luke tells us:

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

Now they could see him and recognize who he truly was. All the hour or so walking alongside him had failed to open their spiritual eyes. They remained eyes wide shut. But in this moment of sacrament, in the breaking of bread, suddenly and miraculously they see. They

experienced his presence in the breaking of bread. Their lives would never be the same again. They returned to Jerusalem with a new sense of mission. Their eyes had been opened. You could say that for the rest of their lives they would live with their eyes wide open. What would that mean for us today?

Paul has a marvelous prayer for the Christians in Ephesus which goes like this: *I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ...may give you a spirit of wisdom...as you come to know him, so that with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints...(Eph. 1:17ff)*

Living with our eye's wide-open means that our lives are infused by God's presence and that everything we feel, do and think is filtered through the prism of that relationship. Philip Yancey speaks of this in another way as a way of life that is one lived in companionship with God. Paul can even speak of this new relationship as one in which we have the mind of Christ. In short, living with our eyes wide-open means that we interpret life through this prism of scripture, Spirit, and Sacrament.

And because we now live with eyes open, we see things very differently from before Jesus became our Lord. The Emmaus experience of eyes wide open has to become normative, not strange or foreign to us and our congregations.

Eyes wide open doesn't mean membership in the church. Being part of the body of Christ, the church, can never be reduced to a set of beliefs we intellectually accept. Rather it is based on an experience of grace that opens our hearts and minds to God and salvation. Try to visualize the difference between their journey to Emmaus and the one back to Jerusalem. I imagine that these two must have almost danced their way back to the city.

This was the promise set out by Jeremiah when he spoke of the new covenant God was about to make with Israel. He says that this new covenant will be one in which God's law will no longer be on stone tablets but in our hearts. God will, by his Spirit, write this law on our hearts and that will cause us to live in relationship with God and

experience the forgiveness of our sins. This is a promise that goes all the way back into the Old Testament prophets. Jesus made that promise a reality.

Because our eyes have been opened, and because our hearts simply burn within us because of what Christ has done in our lives, and because Scripture is so alive and full of wisdom, we simply cannot help ourselves sharing this amazing story and our experience of it with our neighbor. So let us now refresh our faith and our sight by participating in this sacrament of communion. Share it with me wherever you are right now.

Amen