

Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation 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, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Luke 24:44-53

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." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 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, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Sermon

“Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures.”

I got my first pair of glasses when I was in the 8th grade. I was just a bit near sighted, but I didn't need them all the time. Today, I need my contacts or glasses all the time or everything is real fuzzy, out of focus, and I get headaches. I sure better not try to drive without them. One of the few things I can do is read a book without them. Maybe some of you are the same way, or maybe it is the reading glasses you need to look at the fine print of books and articles.

The funny thing about glasses is that they don't really make it so that we can see. I can see with out my glasses or contacts, at least to a point. No, what glasses do is they allow me to focus, to gain clarity of vision and to see details that, without them, I would not see.

Jesus has one final conversation with his disciples before he ascends into heaven. It seems that as this day has been getting closer, that Jesus has been turning more and more to this topic. He want to open the eyes of the disciples to see that all of the Hebrew scriptures, from Moses and the Law, to the psalms and the prophets, all point to Jesus' coming. But what does this mean for the disciples and what does this mean for us today?

At the most basic level, Jesus is giving us a new way to see the Hebrew scripture. We do not throw away the Old Testament, but we look and read the scriptures with Jesus in mind. Ultimately Jesus is making a theological point, that God's purpose, God's plan has always been to send Jesus into the world so that God might be revealed through him. And so, when we read the stories of creation and the flood, of Abraham through Joseph, of Moses and the Exodus, of the Kings and psalms, the wisdom literature and the prophets, we are right to ask ourselves, how does this help me see God's plan of salvation? How does my understanding of Jesus help me think about his scripture. We should have the lens of Jesus as we come to scripture, but we also should have the lens of Jesus when we come to how we see life, how we see other people and creation.

And Jesus gives us a reminder of just what we should see if we are putting on Jesus' glasses. We should see resurrection in the midst of suffering, we should see forgiveness in the midst of repentance. Hope and redemption, two of the most important aspects of Jesus' ministry, important part of our continued ministry. So I wonder, where do you see resurrection in the suffering? Where do you see forgiveness in repentance?...

Last week I was in a classroom in Chicago. One of my fellow classmates, Marietta, shared her story of losing her grandson to violence in the city. She shared the pain and suffering that her family continues to struggle with and her fear for their lives and hers as well. It was also Marietta that shared music from her church choir with us in class and, at the end of one class, lead us all in singing “This little light of mine”. In the midst

of Marietta's suffering, she had found resurrection in singing with her choir and sharing music with us.

I also got to know Will a bit better. Last time I had a class with Will, a year ago, he was going through a divorce. This year, he shared his own journey of anger and pain, to a sense of peace in forgiveness. This peace did not come easy, but came with a long period of anger with his ex-wife, and with himself. Will admits that the anger still comes from time to time, but he finds peace in the sabbath. He takes Sunday morning walks and turns off his phone in the afternoon. He plays board games with his children and is supported by his congregation. In the midst of this, Will continues to work out forgiveness for himself and his ex-wife.

How are you seeing resurrection and forgiveness? How are you witnessing God's resurrection and forgiveness to others? Jesus told his disciples "You are witnesses of these things." A witness is one who sees and shares. How are our eyes open, looking through the lens of resurrection and forgiveness, do we have our Jesus glasses on, or are we walking around in life with everything a bit fuzzy and out of focus? God's purpose is being fulfilled each day, we must have eyes to see, ears to listen, a heart to care, and mouths to tell Jesus' story that continues through his Spirit. For God's story is not fully written, not yet. May we continue reading and sharing God's word as we look at life through his eyes. Amen