

Resurrection Morning: “He Interpreted to Them in All the Scriptures the Things Concerning Himself”

Readings: Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 53:10-12; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47 (text)

Rev. Nollie Malabuyo • April 1, 2018

Beloved Congregation: In our text, Jesus is not like the typical street preacher today who stands in a street corner with a sign saying, “Repent, for Jesus is Coming with a Vengeance!” Rather, he came alongside two disciples and walked with them for seven miles along a hot and dusty desert road. While he walked with them on the road to Emmaus for two to three hours, Jesus patiently explained God's eternal salvation plan to them – from Genesis to Malachi. He did not leave them groping for answers to questions about the disturbing events in the last Passover celebration in Jerusalem.

And when they reached the village, the two disciples urged the stranger, “*Stay with us,*” for the evening was at hand. So he stayed, and even shared a fellowship meal with them. It was only as he broke bread with them that they recognized him as Jesus. After he left them, the two went back to Jerusalem to break the news to the other disciples that Jesus has appeared to them and even ate a meal with them. And as they talked about these amazing developments, Jesus again appeared among them, and at that late hour of night, he again ate a meal of fish with them.

This Easter Sunday, we will focus on Jesus's preaching of the Word of God: **The Subject of His Preaching, The Basis of His Preaching, and How His Preaching was Understood.**

The Subject of His Preaching

As the two disciples walked on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, they were discussing the terrible events of the past few days, ending in the crucifixion of Jesus their leader. They were sorrowing over Jesus, who performed mighty signs and wonders, but somehow could not escape his own death. They had hoped that somehow, he would lead the Jews to freedom from the Roman oppressors.

So when a stranger came alongside them on their journey, they were amazed that he asked them, “*What things are you discussing about the events of these last few days?*” They told him about this prophet Jesus who was crucified and laid in a tomb. But now, even more astonishing is that some of their friends are saying that he has vanished from his grave because he has risen from the dead!

Since the two did not yet recognize him, Jesus listened to their sad account of the story. After they were finished, Jesus rebuked them because they did not believe the prophecies about the sufferings, death and resurrection of the Messiah (verses 25-26, 46). Three times before, Jesus told them about the sufferings and death that awaited him at the hands of wicked Jews and lawless Romans (Luke 9:22; cf 9:43-45; 18:31-34). But they did not believe and understand his words.

Why did Jesus say that his suffering, death, and resurrection are necessary? What are they necessary for? In his death on the cross as the Messiah, he “*has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities*” (Isa 53:4-5). Therefore, the Messiah himself would first be the Suffering Servant of God before he enters into his glory. He will first

make an offering for guilt. Only after this will he “*see his offspring and prolong his days*” (Isa 53:10-11). Jesus is then glorified when he is raised from the dead (Luke 9:22), ascends into heaven (Luke 22:69), and returns from heaven (Luke 21:27). His sufferings, death and resurrection were all necessary to justify sinners and save them from sin and God's wrath. All those who believe in him are his “offspring,” and his days will be “prolonged” to eternity.

What then did he preach? Simply, himself – the Christ, the Son of God – who lived, was crucified, and was raised from the dead for their salvation from sin and God's wrath.

The Basis of His Preaching

How did Jesus know what to preach to his disciples? His preaching came, not from the teachers of the law – scribes and Pharisees – but from his knowledge of Scriptures. He knew the books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings from cover to cover. Knowing that all Scriptures were about himself, his interpretation of Scriptures was sound (verse 27). All of the Old Testament writings were pointing forward to his person and his redemptive work: “*Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled*” (verse 44).

Luke does not tell us which Old Testament texts Jesus explained to the two disciples, but we can make an educated guess on a few. Beginning with Genesis 3:15, he might have mentioned that he was the Seed of the Woman who was bruised by the serpent in his death, but he crushed the serpent's head when he arose from the grave.

Jesus might have quoted Psalm 16:8-11, which talks about him as the “*Holy One [who will not] see corruption*” because God raised him up from the dead (Acts 13:34-37). He might have reminded them of Psalm 22:1, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” that this lament of David were actually his words on the cross. He might have mentioned himself as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:7 who was “*a lamb that is led to the slaughter,*” the Passover Lamb that was sacrificed on the cross.

Again and again, Jesus would have pointed out to the two disciples that every passage of the Old Testament relates to God's grace given to his people only because of his atoning sacrifice on the cross. Jesus's interpretation of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings – the three main divisions of the Old Testament – is a demonstration of gospel-centered, redemptive-historical interpretation and preaching. The Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 19 repeats Jesus's words to the two disciples, that all the Old Testament were foreshadows of himself, the Messiah to come whom

God Himself first revealed in Paradise, afterwards proclaimed by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law, and finally fulfilled by His well-beloved Son.

So if the Israeli march around Jericho is nothing more than an effective tool to do a “Jericho Walk” around a neighborhood; or if Queen Esther is about overcoming fear; or if the book of Daniel teaches a diet plan; or if the Parable of the Prodigal Son is about how we are to be good fathers; then the preaching has failed.

When a pastor fails to preach Christ and his redemptive work in history, he has failed in his duty to faithfully expound God's Word and will be accountable to God for misleading his flock.

This is because Jesus himself declared that all Scripture is about himself and his work: the Old Testament people and events were foreshadows of Jesus the Messiah; and the New Testament was the fulfillment, the realization, of these Old Testament foreshadows.

How His Preaching was Understood

These two disciples were not convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead. But the Word of God interpreted by Jesus began to burn away the fog, and slowly they came to recognize the Savior. So after they recognized him and he left them, they said to each other, *“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”* (Luke 24:32).

Why was it difficult to convince the two disciples? Because they – and all mankind – are sinful, their minds are darkened and their eyes are blinded by Satan who has enslaved their whole being to sin. So there are many who study the Bible and listen to the preaching of the gospel for years and yet never come to any understanding of God's salvation by faith in Christ.

Paul says that an unregenerate sinner *“does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Cor 2:14). He is unwilling and unable to accept and understand spiritual things of God. Apart from God's sovereign intervention to change our hearts by the work of the Spirit, we are dead in sin and unable to respond to the preaching of salvation from Scriptures (Eph 2:1–3; John 3:5; Rom 10:14–15).

Jesus alone is able to open the darkened minds of sinners. True understanding of the Bible and how all of its words, verses, chapters and books fit together in one redemption plan from eternity, is a gift of God. When Paul preached in the city of Philippi, there was a woman named Lydia who listened, and Luke says, *“The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul”* and she believed (Acts 16:14). Who opened her eyes? Did she believe out of her own “free-will”? No, it was the Lord alone who opened her heart. Lydia – and all other believers – were graciously elected by God for salvation, and at their appointed times, believed in Christ.

How does one believe? By the working of the Holy Spirit in his heart. So faith, repentance and forgiveness are all gifts of God, not the work of our own will, so no one can boast, “I did it my way” (Eph 2:8–9). He gives us new hearts of flesh, enlightens our darkened minds, and opens our blinded eyes.

Unbelievers are *“darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart”* (Eph 4:18). How can the wisdom or charisma of the preacher, or the creativity of human gimmicks and entertainment, draw people to Christ? Paul was not a good verbal communicator. He did not preach *“with words of eloquent wisdom”* (1 Cor 1:17). His detractors scoffed at his lack of personal appeal, *“His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account”* (2 Cor 10:10). But his preaching led many unbelievers to faith in Christ, and churches all throughout the Roman world were founded through him.

Therefore, it is only by the preaching of the gospel that a person is saved, *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ”* (Rom 10:17). Preaching the Word of God is the appointed means by which man is saved, through the Spirit who regenerates our hearts to believe this Word.

Dear friends, the hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus began to burn within them as they walked with Jesus and heard him open the Scriptures to them (verse 32).

This Resurrection Day and always, may your hearts burn with love for Christ your Lord and Savior who alone has words of eternal life. May your hearts burn for the Word of God daily because all of it concerns Christ and his redemptive work. May you always hunger and thirst for Christ's words and his finished work for the forgiveness of your sins.

May you have renewed zeal for the Old Testament just as Jesus did because you will never have a sound understanding of his work in the New Testament without it. Why would you neglect the Old Testament that the New Testament writers always refer to as they reveal that Jesus is the Messiah of the Old Testament?

Receive God's Word with all eagerness, always examining what your pastors and other teachers preach and teach by the light of all Scriptures, even if they are the most popular preachers and teachers in the world. The most important criteria is this: Is the crucified and risen Christ preached using Scriptures, or is the latest self-help moralistic bestseller being preached?

It was when Jesus ate a meal with the disciples in Emmaus that they finally recognized him. For, *"When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them"* (Luke 24:30). This act of taking, blessing, breaking and giving bread reminded them of the night in which he shared the last supper with them before he was betrayed.

The risen Lord first gave them God's Word. Then he communed with them in a meal so that their hearts burned with love and rejoicing for Christ and his gifts of faith, repentance and forgiveness. This is why we never serve the Lord's Supper without the preaching of the Word. The Word gives context to the Lord's Supper. It is the "visible Word," says Augustine. May this communion in the broken body and shed blood of Christ in this the Supper of our Lord keep your heart burning within you for the crucified and risen Savior.