

"EYES THAT OPEN"

A Communion Meditation  
By

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### INTRODUCTION

I heard a story recently about a very rich man who passed away. His wife expected to receive all of his wealth. She gave him a lovely funeral and bought a very expensive headstone. A few days later, at the reading of the will, she was given a horrible surprise. Her husband gave all but five dollars of his fortune to his secretary.

Naturally, the wife was furious. She drove to the tombstone company and asked for the inscription on her husband's monument to be changed. The man at the company said,

"I'm terribly sorry, ma'am. You told me to inscribe 'REST IN PEACE' on the stone and that's what I've done. I can't change it now, unless, of course, you want to buy another stone."

She thought for a moment and realized that she would spend no more money. So she said,

"Right after 'REST IN PEACE' I want you to chisel these words - 'TILL WE MEET AGAIN'".

There will be some sparks in heaven when those two next meet. Not all reunions bring good will and cheer.

But the appearance stories of Jesus did bring good will and great cheer. And the Lesson for this morning is no exception. Let's take a closer look at it.

### THE STORY

The story is simple enough. The news is that Jesus is alive. It's in the days following the Resurrection. But no one has yet seen Him. The facts are confusing and bewildering. Two men, one named Cleopas, leave Jerusalem and begin walking to Emmaus. Along the road, they run into another man.

This third man is Jesus, but the other two do not recognize Him. They tell Jesus the news - as if He needed to be told. Their despair is summed up best when one said, "But we had hoped that He (Jesus) was the one to redeem Israel". Nearing home, these two men invited Jesus to eat with them.

Tradition is broken. The guest says the blessing. And then Jesus "took the bread, and broke it, and gave it to them." It is that moment when the ordinary becomes extraordinary. "And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him".

That is a beautiful statement. "And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him". Two men had just walked a long, dusty road with Jesus and talked with Him. But they had not recognized Him. And then, suddenly, unexpectedly, the men recognized Jesus while they were eating a common meal.

What opened their eyes? Was there something special in this common meal? Why had the men not recognized Jesus earlier? Such questions come to our minds.

Frankly, we don't know. Scripture does not answer these questions. We can guess and hypothesize. But the story leaves us reading between its lines. What is indisputable is that two men's eyes were opened and they finally recognized Jesus.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO OPEN YOUR EYES?

What does it take to open up your eyes? What has to happen? What makes you stop and take notice? What makes you change? What makes the common, ordinary things around you become extraordinary? Let's think about it...

Sometimes our eyes are opened when we are spared a disaster. More than just a few have prayed,

"Oh God, get me through this struggle and I'll follow you the rest of my life".

Eyes have a way of being opened when help comes to our helplessness.

Other times, our eyes are opened when good fortune comes our way. We all know what it's like to have something good happen to us when we haven't really worked for it or deserved it. And when this happens, eyes can be opened in gratitude.

But we don't escape complete disasters every day. Neither does good fortune come as often as we'd wish. So I ask again: what does it take to open up your eyes? What has to happen? What makes you stop and take notice? What makes you change? What makes the common, ordinary things around you become extraordinary?

AN ILLUSTRATION

William H. Hinson, Senior Minister of the First United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, tells a story about himself. He loves the game of golf and one year had a chance to see the Masters Tournament. The Augusta National is certainly one of the most prestigious of tournaments.

A long-time competitor has been Arnold Palmer. During the play of this tournament, Palmer hit his ball near the edge of a creek. His next shot would be a tricky one. William Hinson was near the play and he turned to a complete stranger near him and said,

"Now Arnold's problem is he has to hit a two iron to get it out of the edge of that water, but if he hits it hard it will go all the way across the fairway. He'll be out-of-bounds and that's a two-stroke penalty. Arnold is in a real bind."

The man looked at Hinson and asked, "Fellow, is this your first time at the Masters?" He told him that it was his first visit. The stranger continued, "If you'd ever been here before, you would know Arnold's not in trouble. He's going to hit the ball hard, but he won't hit it out-of-bounds. He'll hit it toward the crowd".

What happened? Well, the stranger was right. Palmer took out a long iron and hit the ball hard. It went straight toward the crowd. Someone in that

crowd got in front of the speeding ball and let it hit him. The ball bounced around and eventually landed right back on the fairway. It was then that the stranger turned again to Hinson, shook his head and said,

"As long as there's a crowd at Augusta National,  
Arnold Palmer will never hit it out-of-bounds!"

Maybe there's more to this story than what we initially perceive. It's not just a story about a once-great golfer who still to this day has an army of devoted fans. There is a deeper meaning.

Arnold Palmer has a gallery of supporters wherever he goes, because there is still a hope for victory that rests in the hearts of the people. Today he is an average professional golfer whose greatness lies behind him. His charging-come-from-behind victories are now history. But whenever he plays, people watch him and think that maybe, just maybe, today might be that day when he'll win again; that maybe today this man might explode into his once extraordinary greatness. Arnold Palmer's greatness today is not so much his raw talent, as it is the raw hope that his fans place upon him.

And maybe, when we get right down to the truth of it all, that same principle applies to all of us. For Jesus provides all of us with raw hope.

#### WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO OPEN YOUR EYES?

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stop and take notice? What makes you change? What makes the common ordinary  
things around you become extraordinary?

Nothing opens up our eyes! Nothing really happens to us that changes us by itself. Certain things might stop us and make us take notice: a crying child, a scream, a revengeful act, or even an unexpected act of kindness. But such things by themselves change no one. And nothing ordinary becomes extraordinary by itself.

Our eyes are only opened when we choose them to be opened. Nothing really affects us until we want it to affect us. Nothing in this great big world changes us unless we want it to change us. Ordinary things remain ordinary, until we begin to see them as being extraordinary. We will be blinded to the very things we don't want to see, until we want to see them. If our eyes are to be opened, the inside of us is first opened.

#### CLOSING

Cleopas and his friend were confused and bewildered. But the important fact is that they had heard Jesus was alive and they wanted this story to be true. They were looking for him yet they did not recognize Jesus along the road. It wasn't until the bread had been blessed, broken, and eaten that their search came to an end. Somehow, something inside them had to change. God had to come inside. The ordinary became the extraordinary. But the important thing is that these two men saw Jesus because they wanted to see Him. When they were willing to find God, God had already found them.

Arnold Palmer is but a once great golfer...unless you stand near him and cheer him and hope to see again a glimpse of his greatness. And even if he

doesn't win or make a charging finish, and what you think of him before the game begins is what you'll see him be in the tournament of play. And so it is with all people and all things.

One of the most deeply moving moments for me this Summer occurred on a Sunday in July when I worshipped at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The great cathedral was crowded. I took Communion which was something I had never done before at St. Paul's. And after the service was over and during the organ postlude, I moved from over on the side where I had been sitting to a seat on the very front row near the center aisle. I sat there and feasted on the majestic visual beauty of the Cathedral as well as on the majesty of the organ postlude which was Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. Tears came easily as I felt lifted by the sight and sound. Moments later I was walking down the side aisle and stopped once again to look at one of my favorite paintings, Holman Hunt's "The Light of the World". You may be familiar with it. It shows Christ standing at the door, knocking, a lantern in his left hand, knocking on the door with his right hand. The door represents a person's life and there's no latch visible on the door, reminding us that the latch on this door is on the inside.

It has to be opened from within.

Communion is served today. The wine will be blessed and the bread will be broken. It's just an ordinary meal, except for those who want their eyes to be opened. It's God's way of saying, "'Till we meet again". Come and see. I pray that you will want your eyes to be opened to the deeper truths at work in all of this, in the deep mystery of these moments which we now share together.

Yes, "Behold I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me."

PRAYER Help us, O God, to see through the veils of material things to the presence of our Lord Christ in this meal...so that we who sometimes are weary and worn by our striving after that which is unattainable may be rested and renewed by Him who comes amongst us to tarry with us, even Jesus Christ our Lord and Master. Bind us closely to each other and to Him and lift up our hearts and minds to Thee, that we may go out renewed in body and soul, fed, nourished and made new. In His name we pray. Amen