



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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April 26, 2009
3rd Sunday of Easter
Mark 8:31-38
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Acts 12:1-19
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 118
Second Lesson: 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6
Gospel: Luke 24:36-49

Now I Know

Opened mind and opened eyes
Lead to an educated open mouth

One of the blessings of the ministry is sharing God's Word with people and teaching people. Sometimes one of the things you are blessed to see is that little light go on right behind people's eyeballs. Whether it's an adult information class or a kids' confirmation class, it's pretty neat when you see people finally get it. It's a blessing to see the Spirit at work in their hearts. It's kind of the "aha" moment or "eureka" moment.

There are some times in our lives though when we have that same thing happen to us as adults. Have you ever found yourself some place, at a ball game or a grocery store or some event, and you are talking to someone and it's painfully obvious they know who you are, but you have no clue as to who this person is? You talk and talk without trying to say things because you are trying to figure out who it is. Then finally you figure out who it is and your face betrays you and they say, "You didn't know who I was, did you?" Now you know and it shows on your face, just like with kids in confirmation class.

I kind of wonder what Peter's face looked like as he was walking down that street and the angel was gone and all of a sudden he goes "Now I know. This isn't a vision. This is real. God has in a miraculous way delivered me from everything Herod was planning for me." After Peter had seen that James got a haircut right above the shoulders, he probably thought that was the same thing that was coming for him, right? Herod arrests him, throws him in prison, and he thinks this is it. "The Lord had said that we are going to suffer like he suffered and here it is. The Feast of Unleavened Bread and everything, just like when Jesus was seized."

This would have been about 10 years after Jesus' suffering and death – a decade that sees an incredible change in Peter. "Now I know" just wasn't something that Peter said about this angel delivering him. I think "now I know" became a way of life to Peter in that decade because a couple of things had happened.

One thing that had happened is that he shut his mouth and opened his ears. Before Pentecost, before Jesus' suffering and death, remember how often Peter was telling God what he was going to do? Even right after he made this beautiful confession, this confession that Jesus said he was going to build the church on, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God;" Peter made this bold confession and then a little bit later, in the

same conversation even, Jesus had said plainly to them he was going to suffer and die and Peter said, "I will never let that happen." So Jesus had to say to him, "Get behind me Satan;" again, Peter talking about himself.

The night Jesus was going to be betrayed, he said "Everyone is going to leave me. I'm going to be betrayed. I'm going to suffer and die." "These guys will all leave you. I will never leave you" Peter says to Jesus. And then he goes out and denies him three times, even saying "May I rot in hell for eternity if I actually know the man." He called down curses on himself we are told.

So what has changed? I just read to you a long section of Scripture and Peter didn't say "I" once, except when he said "Now I know what God has done for me." In fact, he talks to himself, and when he talks to the people that finally let him in the door, he talks about God. He told them everything the Lord had done for them. Peter was a changed man. Now he knew that it was more important to talk about God than to talk about himself.

How did that happen? Did you notice our Gospel? What did Jesus do on Easter evening? He had something to eat of course, right? That's what you have to do anytime you get together with other Christians. He had something to eat. But then what did he do? He had a Bible study. He said to them, "This is what is written. This is what is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. Did he just snap his finger and all of a sudden it just all became crystal clear to them? No. He talked to them about what was in the Bible. He had them look at it. He had them remember everything they had read and had heard and he went over and said, "Remember this in Isaiah, remember this in the Psalms, remember this in the Book of Moses, remember this about the Prophet – that's me. Remember about not letting the Holy One see decay" that we sang last week in our Psalm of the Day, Psalm 16, "That's what happened. I rose from the grave." But he spent Easter evening not just saying "Look, it's me guys. Let's have a party." He spent Easter evening having a Bible study.

He did the same thing with the Emmaus disciples. Do you think maybe he is saying to us that we should close our mouths sometimes and open our ears and listen to his Word? I would assume so.

Think about what would have happened if Peter would not have had this strengthening from God through the study of the Word and the outpouring of the Spirit and all these other things. Ten years later, do you think he would have been doing what he was doing? Sleeping soundly while chained to a couple of soldiers trusting God would take care of him, or do you think he would have taken matters into his own hand and tried to "MacGyver" his way out of the situation with the lint he found in the floor or something?

Peter didn't remain a spiritual infant. He grew in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and you and I are blessed because of it. You and I are

blessed to see how God worked through him when he grew in his faith and he didn't just stick with what he had learned way back when.

This is one thing I've always found interesting. If we spend our entire lives quoting only what we learned when we were 12 and 13 in confirmation class, if that's the peak of our knowledge, if that's where we go back to climb the mountain of the great knowledge we had when we were 12 and 13 - try that in your work life. Where's that going to get you? Yet we think in our spiritual life that's good enough.

God's got a word for that. It starts with an "I" and ends with an "idiot." If we think we know enough that we can't grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are a fool.

When Peter had his opened mind and opened eyes, his mouth opened in a way that was educated, in a way that served God, in a way that shared the Gospel wherever he went. He was a changed man because he had grown in faith. He trusted in his God. He served his God, not himself. The "I" statements were gone. The "Lord" statements arrived. And through that the Lord built a church, not on Peter, but on the confession that Peter spoke about the Lord.

The Lord longs today to build a church. He is going to do it through people like us and where we might say like Paul we're not competent in and of ourselves like Paul said in our Second Lesson, we would be right. But like Paul, our competence comes from God who strengthens us through Word and Sacrament so that we can not only live for him, but so that we can speak for him. We are his voice.

So grow in knowing what to say so that when you open your mouth, the Word of God flows through you.