

**“Open Minds”- Luke 24:36b-48 - Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs**

*“Peace be with you!”* These must have been powerful words and necessary to be offered to the frightened disciples. Some churches “Pass the Peace” as a part of their service, we do more of a time of greeting, but this morning we will take another moment to do what Jesus did and share the Peace. In the name of the Prince of Peace, just look around and connect with one another by eye contact. And then just say, “the Peace of Christ be with you.”

Jesus did not seem to show up to show off, though he showed the disciples his hands and feet, and presumably his scars. I believe he came to show them how to live as disciples, not of a martyr or a former leader. This is not a dead faith. This is a life-giving faith! What did he say? *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.”* (Luke 24:45-48)

This is like back in grade school – Show and Tell! Because then Jesus opened the minds of the disciples. He had already blown their minds by showing up and eating a little fish bite to show them he was not a ghost but flesh and blood. And as they are trying to wrap their minds around that one, right then and there, he holds a Bible study! Or at least it was some-of-the-Bible study. He pointed out things in the Law and Prophets and Psalms that they should know (or maybe even should have known) about his suffering, dying and rising on the third day. He took something old – the Old Testament and used it to interpret something new – the resurrection! Don’t you just wonder, what might Jesus want us to understand about living our faith in the world today based not just on those Old scriptures, but on the Newer ones of the Gospels, Acts, Letters and Revelations.

During Lent we shared a series of sermons from Rev. Adam Hamilton about what all it says the we believe in the Apostles’ Creed. I did say that it did not say everything that we believe but some things. One of the things it does not say, if you think about it is, “I believe in the Bible”! The reason for that is that the approval of the 27 books of the New Testament would not be set until later in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, so there was no Bible to believe in yet. I believe not just in the Bible but our traditions, and our experiences and by using our minds we can understand what God is saying to us today.

Today I wanted to share with you a “New Creed” that was adopted at the last General Conference of the UMC in 2016. It is included in the bulletin and up on the screen. It is wordier than the Apostles’ Creed. And though as you read in the notes at the bottom of the insert that it is to be used in worship, I believe most of you have never seen it or read it, but we will now...

This creed comes out of our tradition as Methodists from back in 1908 when the first Social Principles were adopted by the General Conference. I have asked that we start praying for the delegates as the conference that did not meet in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, will be meeting at the end of this month into early May and I expect they will approve a newly worded version of this creed for us to use next time.

Let me say that a lot of changes are happening. You may have noticed somethings that have been happening here as we move into the future. Well the same is happening in the larger church this year in our district and conference and the global church as each tries to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Friends, I believe that the same thing was happening 2000 years ago

for the early church and these first disciples. To prepare them for that Jesus offered them peace and then he opened their minds! I hope you realize I have been trying to do that for the last nine months since I arrived.

I am reading some things about how people view and understand the Bible. From a longer article in an evangelical magazine, I read that, *A new poll released by Gallup shows that among all U.S. adults surveyed, just 20% say the Bible is the literal Word of God, an all-time low. Gallup's Frank Newport noted that this survey shows for the first time that there are significantly more Americans who say they believe that the Bible is not divinely inspired than there are who say they believe that the Bible is the literal Word of God. The percentage of Americans who say the Bible is just a book of history and fiction has risen, to 29% today. Meanwhile, the middle-ground option that, "the Bible is the inspired word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally." has risen to 49%. You can read the full article here: [Gallup: Less Than Half of Evangelicals Believe Bible Is 'Actual Word of God' \(decisionmagazine.com\)](http://decisionmagazine.com) or the original Gallup Poll results here: [Fewer in U.S. Now See Bible as Literal Word of God \(gallup.com\)](http://gallup.com)*

Jesus calls for a change of “Heart and Life” And why this change? – for the forgiveness of sins!!! This is to be proclaimed to all the world in Jesus’ name. We are witnesses. Eye witnesses. Ear witnesses. Heart witnesses. Life witnesses. We are to go and be witnesses. Did you write down your story after last week’s message? Now we are called to share it. We are witnesses for Jesus – if Christ could forgive – why can’t we forgive ourselves and others in his name?

I came across this thought that I want to pass on to you: ***Jesus did not command the whole world to go to church. Jesus commanded his church to go to the whole world.*** I believe we come to worship the Lord, and we go to serve the Lord. The word of the Lord for sharing this morning is to share forgiveness. How open are we to that? We may talk about Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Doors, but really some seem to be stuck, and not easily opened. Some seem to be open, but only a crack. Fully and faithfully, open your life to Christ and allow Jesus to fully open you to reach out to others. In the name of Jesus, be Open! Alleluia and Amen.

### **Teach Us, O Lord, Open Our Mind**

Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs 4/9/24

Teach us, O Lord, open our mind,  
That in your scriptures we might find,  
As we understand what you say,  
That you wish us to learn today.

You taught disciples something new,  
When you told them, “Peace be with you.”  
May we know everlasting peace,  
When doubts and fears and turmoils cease.

You have called us to change our ways,  
That we might follow you always.  
As those forgiven, we forgive,  
That in your name we all will live.