

CLOSED AND OPENED EYES

"But their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Luke 24:16.

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him." Luke 24:31.

It was the day of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. The women of the company of disciples had gone in the early morning to the tomb. They found it empty, but an angel said to them, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you" (Matthew 28:5-7). The women ran back to the company of disciples and related their experience. Peter and John ran to the tomb to see whether or not the words of the women were true. They also found the tomb empty. But they did not see any angels or the risen Lord.

Among the disciples who were in Jerusalem when Christ was crucified were Cleopas and his unnamed companion. Having obtained the information that the tomb was empty, these disappointed and disconsolate disciples took to the road which led from Jerusalem out to Emmaus, a distance of seven and one-half miles, which was their home.

As the disciples walked along together, discussing their blighted hopes, a Stranger overtook them and listened to their conversation. Jesus Christ was the topic of their conversation. At length the Stranger politely asked: "What are the words that ye are exchanging with one another as ye walk?" The disciples were astonished at His question and stood with downcast faces. Cleopas was quick to express his surprise. He inquired if it were possible that He had been dwelling in Jerusalem and had not known the things that had taken place there during the last few days. Christ asked, "What things?" The disciples told the Stranger of the greatness of Jesus of Nazareth, of the fate which had befallen Him at the hands of the high priests and the rulers, and of their own disappointment. But they did not recognize Christ.

I. The Closed Eyes.

1. A sad fact.

"But their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Christ was near and with them, but they did not recognize Him. Until the "trumpet" sounds, and we are "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," we shall have the presence of the Lord with us. He has told us, "I will not leave you orphans." To all who go forth to do His will He says, "I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age." So the great privilege of every Christian is the realization of the presence of the living Lord by his side. But the Lord's presence is not always recognized. What a sad fact that is to us, and how unspeakably sad to our Lord Himself!

These two men were believers in Christ. They believed Him to be mighty in deed and in word. They knew that He had been put to death, but they did not know anything of Him as the living and victorious Lord. There are so many today who do not know the abundant life which is to be found in the risen and victorious Redeemer and Lord. It is a great thing to know that Christ died for me and bore my sin away in His death, and to be able to say:

"Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die,
Another's life, Another's death,
I stake my whole eternity."

But there is more for us. We may not only know Jesus Christ Who died for us, but we

should know Him as a living, victorious presence by our side. That is the great reality which our Lord would have us experience. He longs to be vastly more to us than any of us have ever dreamed. Many of us fail to realize this great fact.

Many did not recognize the Lord Jesus when He was here in visible presence. John the Baptist had a number of inquirers come to him and ask whether or not he was the Messiah, and he said there was One standing among them Whom they knew not. He was the very One of Whom they had been making inquiry. A tearful woman was at the tomb on the very morning of the Saviour's resurrection, with the risen Lord close by her side, and she did not recognize Him. Later, there were seven toilers on the Sea of Galilee, and they had spent all night in fruitless toil, and only one of them recognized the Lord Jesus on the shore in the morning. So there are many today who do not recognize the Lord Jesus, and therefore they do not have any bright and blessed fellowship with Him day by day. Is not that a sad fact? Is it a fact in your life?

2. A strange fact.

These two disciples were acquainted with the Saviour. They had often heard Him speak, they had gazed into His face, they had felt His gracious and strong hand upon them. But now, strange to say, they did not recognize Him when He was close by their side. They were disciples of the Saviour and yet they did not have any vision of the risen life of their Lord. There are many of the Lord's people like that today. How strange! The strangeness is more apparent when we remember that He was very near them, close by their side. Our Lord is traveling with us along life's way, and yet we do not recognize Him. Remember that, after his deep sleep at Bethel, Jacob said, "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not." So our Lord is often very near to us and yet not recognized by us.

Moreover, Christ was unveiling the Scriptures to these disciples, and yet they did not recognize Him. He was giving them a wonderful exposition of the Word of God, and they were mentally delighted with the exposition; it was so new, so fresh, so luminous, so convincing, they felt it must be true. They went along with Him as He expounded the Word, and yet they really missed Him. And it is quite possible for us to be delighted with expositions of divine truth and yet not see the living Lord. To be intellectually instructed is not enough; meeting with the Master is the great thing.

The reason for their not recognizing Christ was that "their eyes were holden." Why? By what? We are not told. Was it due to sorrow? Certainly their hearts had been overwhelmed with great grief. Very often sorrow dims the vision of the soul. It often fills the mind so that the glory of the Lord is not seen. Unfortunately some people think more of their sorrow than they do of the Lord. If they would reverse their thinking, it would make a tremendous change in their experiences. Tears are not meant to dim our vision of the Lord, but to wash our eyes and clear our vision in order that we may see Him more vividly. Was it due to lack of spiritual harmony with Christ? Whatever the reason for it in your case, you probably know what it is.

The effects of their failure to recognize Christ were sad. There was a deep sadness in the hearts of these men. They looked sad, the Scriptures tell us. There are a great many sad people today, people who carry about great burdens of anxiety. If they do not recognize the living Christ, one need not wonder at it. Those sad men wondered why their brethren were so credulous as to believe what the women had said, namely, that Christ had risen from the dead. That He had risen from the dead was "too good to be true." And yet it was true. Why is life in the joyous presence of the Lord Jesus Christ regarded as "too good to be true." It is blessedly true, thank God! But these two men could not utter any glad testimony. Their words were sad when they might have been glad. Is that true of you? If so, are you not tired of it, and eager for something better than the sad life you have lived apart from the recognized presence of the Lord?

II. The Opened Eyes.

"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him."

1. The steps which led to their eyes being opened.

(1) They stood still, looking sad.

(2) They told Christ all they had in their hearts.

Our Lord was not repelled by these things. His followers can lay bare everything to Him and not fear. He invites us to tell out our doubts, our unbelief, and our prejudices. He would have us to tell Him the whole story.

(3) They listened to their Lord.

They listened even when He rebuked them and said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" They listened carefully as Christ opened up passage after passage about Himself.

(4) They were quickened into an eager desire.

As they listened to their Master, desire awoke in their hearts. They were aroused from their sadness, they saw new possibilities opening up before them, possibilities that their Lord really, after all, might have risen from the dead. Their hearts began to burn; there was a great furnace of desire in their souls.

(5) They entreated Him to stay with them.

They were so completely fascinated by what He said to them that they did not want Him to go on. He accepted their invitation to abide with them.

(6) They gave Him His rightful place.

He was invited to be their Guest, but they gave to Him the place of the Host, for at the evening meal "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them." Instantly they recognized Him as the Christ.

2. The manner in which their eyes were opened.

It was through a change in them and not through any change in Him. He was the same at the table as He was by their side along the journey. The change was in them. If you are to recognize the presence of Christ by your side in the common walks of daily life, the change must take place in you.

The revelation took place through their attentive gaze. Their eyes were upon Him as He took the place of the Host. They forgot about themselves, and were wholly absorbed with Him.

3. The certainty that their eyes were opened.

In a moment the veil was gone. "Their eyes were opened, and they knew him." Oh, wonder of wonders! The unexpected had taken place. It was the Lord Himself Whom they saw and recognized.

4. The results of their eyes being opened.

There must have been a deep hush that came over those disciples. A sense of awe stole over their spirits. They had a sense of wonderful joy that they could not express. In imagination we can see them looking into one another's faces with a deep, unutterable sense of wonder and joy. The results of their eyes being opened may be stated in this fashion:

(1) A new sight.

When "their eyes were opened" they saw Him as they had never seen Him before. He was grander by far than they had ever dreamed. They had known Him as a Prophet, mighty in deed and word. Now they saw Him as their living Lord, victorious over sin and death, the triumphant Redeemer.

(2) A new energy.

They rose up and went back to Jerusalem with great joy. They had gone out from Jerusalem with sad, reluctant steps. They returned with eager steps. There was a holy rapture in their souls. The joy of the Lord was their strength as they went back to Jerusalem to tell the good news that they had seen the Lord. Our work for God depends upon the new energy that we get from a vision of the Master's presence.

(3) A new fellowship.

They went back and told the rest of the company what had taken place. Some of them had seen Him also, so they listened to these two as they told their story. The new experience had widened their fellowship. As we get a vision of the Master's presence, our fellowship will be widened amazingly.

(4) A new eloquence.

They told what things were done in the way. What a contrast that must have been to the sad words that they had spoken on the way to Emmaus! They had a new joy as they delivered the message, such as they had never known before. The risen Lord was a new glory to them, and they were eloquent about it.
