

JJ¹

You're out with some friends down in Green Bay and they take you out for dinner. They say, "Oh, you're going to love it! It's one of our favorite restaurants. It's called *Nakashima*. It's a Japanese restaurant." You walk in and go to the dining room on the right, not knowing what to expect until the waitress hands you the menu and on top is says, "Sushi." Your friends see the weird look on your face that says you've lost your appetite. And they tell you, "Common, you won't know until you try it. Have an open mind."

Whether it's with sushi, or many other things in life, more and more our culture is telling us to have an open mind. It tells us to have an open mind with trying new food, experiencing different cultures and most especially what the world defines as "alternative lifestyles." But there is a difference in having an open mind to things like food or certain aspects of culture and having a so-called open mind when it comes to things that stand against God's clear Word.

Those who say we should have an open mind and be accepting of things God has clearly marked as sin actually reveal a closed mind. You see, by nature, each one of us has a mind that is closed off to anything and everything that truly is good and right before God. By nature our

minds and hearts are locked inside a spiritual can of darkness. Neither can we see God's ways nor can we understand them.

This is part of the reason why we find the disciples having the trouble that they are on that first Easter. They have hidden themselves away in a dark room because a darkness has been overshadowing their hearts. Their grief had locked up their hearts and minds from remembering everything Jesus had told them. The devil had tricked them into thinking that all their hopes were lost when Jesus died.

That's why instead of immediately rejoicing when Jesus appears that they are startled and frightened and thought Jesus was a ghost. First he shows them that he is alive by inviting them to touch him. But we're told by Luke that "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement." Their doubts are still holding onto their minds and so he eats some food, but then he rebukes them. But don't think of Jesus doing this in anger. He probably says these words in disappointment: "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Jesus is basically saying, "Guys, common! I told you all about this time

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

and time again! Weren't you listening? Don't you trust my Word and the Word of all the Old Testament Scriptures? All of this needed to happen."

And that's when Jesus took a can opener to their minds, as Luke writes: "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'"

Now what was the can opener Jesus used to open their minds? Did he just zap them with brain drano? Did he get out the duster to clean up all their mental cobwebs? No! Friends, he used what John spoke about last week, and Luke relates to us today. **The Can Opener of the Mind** is the gospel. The gospel is what Jesus used to unlocked the Scriptures to the two men who were traveling with him on the road to Emmaus. Friends, it was the gospel that opened the minds of the other disciples too. That's why Jesus said to them, "The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."



Friends, it is this gospel truth that is the **Can Opener of Your Mind Too!** To hear that Jesus suffered for you, died for you rose again to life for you is what gives you an open mind to see the glories of God's love and receive his promises.

We are the fulfillment of Jesus' words right here today. Jesus told them, "You are witnesses of these things." That was the chief reason why he appeared to them and many other believers. So that they would be eye witnesses of his resurrection. So that they could go and tell others, "Yes, it really happened! Jesus really did die. Jesus really did rise from the dead! I touched him! I put my fingers in the nail marks in his hand and put my hand into his side! I saw him eat. And I'm here to tell you that he's your Savior too! He has sent me to you so that your mind would be opened too!"

Friends, their message, Jesus' message, has been brought down through the ages all the way to us. And by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel, God has taken a can opener to your mind and mine! Our minds and hearts aren't closed off to the will of God any longer. We've been set free to see what is evil and what is good in God's eyes. The world says that we're closed

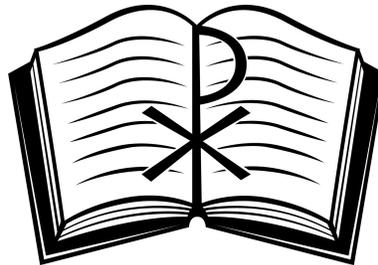
mind, but we're far from it. God has opened our minds so that we would know the path to heaven and the path to hell and be able to warn those whose minds and hearts are still closed with unbelief.

Friends, we've had our minds and hearts opened to the truth that when we do fall into the darkness of sin, we have a Savior who has died for that sin and through repentance, we receive forgiveness! Our minds and hearts have been opened by the can opener of the gospel so that we can believe that as we receive bread and wine today in the Lord's Supper, we also receive Jesus' body and blood in a miraculous way. A closed mind denies that, just as much as it denies Jesus' bodily resurrection.

It is the peace of forgiveness that you and I receive through the gospel in Word and Sacrament that also brings us the joy and love to be God's witnesses today. No, we haven't seen Jesus with our own eyes, but we don't need to. We have the very words of those ancient eye witnesses written down for us! Yes, it seems insignificant. They're just words. But remember, was it seeing Jesus with their eyes or hearing Jesus' words that was the can opener for their minds? It was Jesus'

words. Friends, that's all we need today too.

Will the opening of people's minds always happen the first time we bring the Word? No. Usually it takes some time. Look at the disciples. Look at yourselves and see how much we still struggle. But friends, let's never let that be our reasoning to give up. God has given every person on this earth a time of grace—a time to hear his Word and believe it. Go with the message that was written: "The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations..."



Dear friends, rejoice that God has taken his can opener of the gospel to your mind! Rejoice that your mind and heart is no longer closed off to him, his will and his love. Go with your opened mind and bring the can opener of the gospel to others! Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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