



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, April 18, 2010

Earth Wind & Fire

How Do You See God? (Week 1 of 4)

Luke 24:13-16, 28-35 *The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)*

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. ...

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

How do we see God?

E. Stanley Jones, the great writer and missionary to India states, ***"All religion is humanity's search for God. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only story of God's search for a relationship with us."***

Any study of the nature of and experience of God begins with what is called "the Trinity." God can not be understood with one single truth. The nature of God is far beyond human comprehension. In the Christian faith, we understand God as Father or Creator, Son or Savior, and Holy Spirit – Sustainer. Each of these gives us only a partial understanding of the nature of and action of God in creation and in our lives. But at least it is a beginning to understanding the immense presence of God.

Even in the Trinity, our knowledge is limited. We are still left with questions about how God relates to and interacts with creation. Finally we are left with descriptions like "mystery," "holy," "awe inspiring," or even "unknown." The scripture promise that one day we will see all things clearly, as if ***"face to face"*** (1 Corinthians 13:12)

During these four weeks, we are going to explore the existence of God, the need for God's presence in our lives and God's desire to have a relationship with us. We begin in the book of Luke, on a road to a place called Emmaus, where two friends unknowingly experience the presence of God through the resurrected Jesus. This is an experience that would change their lives forever.

The key to finding God is to realize that God through Jesus Christ is seeking us. We are not alone in this search for God. God is always trying to break through our self concern and need for independence to reach us. We want a relationship with God on our terms, but the God of all creation does not work like that. Our eyes must be opened to see the revelation of God's love – the life-giving Creator, the life-restoring Savior, and the life-empowering Spirit.

The Travelers of Emmaus - Luke 24:13-35

Some see this as the most dramatic resurrection appearance of Jesus in the New Testament. It is found only in Luke. Luke makes it clear that the event took place on that very day, on Easter. The site of Emmaus has never been positively

identified; four modern villages have been considered as possibilities. According to the story, two disciples are walking from Jerusalem to this town. One of them is called Cleopas, who is sometimes identified with Clopas, the father of Simeon, who succeeded James, a leader of the Jerusalem church. Luke's intention is to give the story a quality of history; the name of one of the two is known.

As they walk along discussing the recent happenings in Jerusalem, they are joined by the risen Jesus, who they do not recognize. We are told that their eyes were kept from recognizing him. This probably does not mean that some miracle of blinding has occurred, but that their own lack of understanding and faith keep them from seeing Jesus for who he is. When Jesus expresses ignorance of the recent events, Cleopas is surprised — the event of the Crucifixion is widely known — how can he not know what is happening?

To answer Jesus' question the two disciples tell the basic elements of the message of Jesus. They have accepted him as a prophet. The chief priests and rulers of Jerusalem are guilty of his death. The disciples hoped he was the Messiah, but now their hopes have been dashed. The reference to the third day hints knowledge of Jesus' prediction of his resurrection. To be sure, women have found no body and claimed a vision, while others have tested their report. Yet for all the evidence of an empty tomb, no one has seen the risen Lord.

Jesus criticizes their lack of faith, using the whole Old Testament to prove that the Christ should suffer ... and enter into his glory. Specific texts which make these points are not easy to find, but Luke believes the total witness of Moses and all the prophets is that the Messiah's role involves a suffering which leads to triumph.

Arriving at the home of the travelers, Jesus is invited to share their hospitality. Suddenly the stranger assumes the role of host. Taking bread, he blesses and breaks it, and the disciples' eyes were opened. The breaking of bread is reminiscent of the feeding of the five thousand (9:16) and the Last Supper (22:19). This indicates that the miracle of seeing the risen Christ occurs in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This is not to suggest that his reality is to be found only there, or that the fellowship of the church somehow creates the resurrection faith. It is simply observed that in this event of the church's worship the risen Christ is made known (verse 35).

When the two disciples exclaim, "***Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road?***" they confess that the experience of the Resurrection illuminates their whole past. The scriptures, once so hard to understand, now are opened through the risen Christ.

When the pilgrims return to Jerusalem, they find that the eleven have already heard the good news. The report that the Lord . . . has appeared to Simon confirms Paul's account of the Resurrection (I Corinthians 15:5).

What opened their eyes?

The difference between the confused and distressed travelers on the road and the inspired and believing travelers at dinner is argued. In what way were they changed that enable them to see the risen Christ and to experience God in all God's fullness? Was it simply the breaking of the bread, reminiscent of the Lord's Supper? Was it the willingness of Jesus to now reveal himself after hearing their story? Or was it the travelers willingness to submit themselves to Jesus as servant and Lord when he broke the bread?

The answer to these questions may be different for each one of us. One thing is certain. God is not just waiting on us. God is working to reach us. God is using every means possible to touch our hearts to "***burn within us.***"

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The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only story
of God's search for a relationship with us.***

— E. Stanley Jones

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!

As we consider today how we see God, remember that God is always infinite, always present and always accessible to us — the Father Creator, the Son Redeemer and the Spirit Comforter.

Consider these attributes of God in your prayers this week and be thankful.

- Thank you that you are in every place even when I am not aware of it (Gen. 28:16)
- Thank you that you are who you are. Your name is I AM because you need nothing; you are self-existent. You are not dependent on anyone or anything (Exod. 3:14)
- Thank you that you are near whenever I pray (Deut. 4:7)
- Thank you that you live forever; I know that you do because you declare that you do (Deut. 32:40)
- Thank you that the heavens cannot contain you and neither can anything that I have built — either materially or in my mind (1 Kings 8:27)
- Thank you that the one thing I should seek is to be close to you, to gaze at your beauty, to worship you, and to fellowship with you (Psalm 27:4)
- Thank you that I can never get away from you. No matter where I go you are there, your hand always guiding and upholding me (Psalm 139:7-10)
- Thank you that your power and understanding have no limit (Psalm 147:5)
- Thank you that you are the first and the last. Apart from you there is no God (Isa. 44:6)
- Thank you that you fill heaven and earth. Nothing is too big for you to take care of, therefore, I can relax (Jer. 23:24)
- Thank you that you have life in yourself and you are not dependent upon anything else (John 5:26)
- Thank you that I know Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that I can come to you through him. (John 14:6)
- Thank you that you don't live in temples or churches built by hands, but that you do live in my body because I am your child (Acts. 17:24)
- Thank you that when I seek you and reach out for you, I will find you because you are not far from me (Acts 17:27)
- Thank you that although I was once far away, now I have been brought near to you through the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13)
- Thank you that I can approach you in confidence and receive mercy and find grace to help me in my need (Heb. 4:16)
- Thank you that I can draw near to you when my heart is sincere and I come in faith (Heb. 10:22)
- Thank you that when I come near to you, you will come near to me (James 4:8)

From *Praying the Attributes of God* by Rosemary Jensen

Daily Readings

Today we look at how we see God. Over the next three weeks, we will get to know the Trinity of Our Lord — God the Father and Creator; the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; and Jesus, the Son and Redeemer. The passages below look at God the Creator. This study guide allows you to dig deeper in preparation for next Sunday.

Monday, April 19 – Read Genesis 1 — This is the first of the two stories in Genesis of the creation. Focus on Genesis 1:3-4 — *And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.* How is God still working as the Creator in our lives? Can you see the light in a relationship with the Lord? Are you in darkness when you neglect that relationship?

Tuesday, April 20 – Read Genesis 2 — This is the second story of creation told in Genesis, and it differs slightly from the first. However, the fact that God called everything into being is not disputed. Genesis 2:4-17 defines how man’s relationship with God should function. We see God’s great desire to hold an intimate relationship with man, which in turn becomes man’s supreme purpose in life. How can our relationship with God be fortified according to Genesis?

Wednesday, April 21 – Read Isaiah 51:1-16 — The people of Israel are looking for a demonstration of God’s power, and he replies with a message of his grace. Verse 16 says, *I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who say to Zion, ‘You are my people.’* If the Lord is capable of creating the heavens and the earth, isn’t He then capable of handling our problems if we let Him?

Thursday, April 22 – Read Ephesians 17:32 — ... *to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* We are created in the image of God. We are called to true righteousness and holiness. When you look in the mirror, how much of God do you see in your image? In what ways is He calling you to holiness?

Friday, April 23 – Read Psalm 139 — David is in awe of God’s handiwork. He marvels at how he has been created in his mother’s womb. What does this mean for how we are to perceive others? What does this mean for how we perceive our own creation? As we allow God into every corner of our lives, we can trust in Him to lead us in the *way everlasting* (verse 24).
