

## “Are Your Eyes Open to the Love of God?”

Luke 24:13-33

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Last Sunday, we explored how we will rise with Christ to be strong through the reflection of Apostle Thomas. God commands us to believe and rise strong from all questions, shadows and challenges of our lives as did He for Jesus. God wants us to move forward being connected to the mighty and loving God. The love of God is the source of our power and strength. We know that life is not an easy highway. Sometimes we encounter unexpected bumpy spots, have to drive untraveled roads or from time to time we see a road sign, “this road is closed. Detour.” We are frustrated when things are going as not expected. There are also times that we are not sure about God’s presence in us and experience a faith crisis. Then the situation always makes us doubtful with God, no matter what you call it either evil’s power or Satan’s whispering in your ear. Brothers and sisters, if there is God, there is always the opposite side of power and temptation. It is still strong and powerful to challenge us to doubt on our faith and challenge us to give up on God. Our loving God always encourages us, guides us and give us strength keeping us moving forward, not even one step back! Do you believe in God who personally talks with you and walks with you like your close companion? Originally, Christian faith is not about the great highest teaching which we call “Religion” but it is a “relationship”. It is about your personal and spiritual relationship with God who loves you and cares about you all the time. Relationship really matters. “How is your relationship with God?” This morning, I want to challenge you with another question for your spiritual check up: *“Are Your Eyes Open to the Love of God?”*

Today’s Scripture reading is fairly long, but the essential point is in verses 30-31. “When Jesus was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed it, and gave it to them. ***Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him (Jesus).***” While walking back to their home, the two Jesus’ disciples were not able to recognize Jesus even though he was walking with them. But they were suddenly able to recognize Jesus, their risen Christ in the middle of communion. They experienced a ‘spiritual awakening moment’ such as “A-Ha moment” to discover God’s presence in them in the midst of their daily routine. Jesus’ resurrection story is a powerful message to wake up our souls, awaken our faith and restore our relationship with Christ Jesus and the love of God. God loves us *this much* and promises to be always with us. When was your last “spiritual eye-opening experience” that you felt God’s presence in you?”

Life is a never ending learning process coming from your personal experience. A month ago, I had a strange experience with my first son Jacob, who is only six years old. One evening he asked me a serious question about life and death. Certainly he doesn't know what death exactly means. He asked me what will happen if I as his father turn a hundred years old. I was watching TV. I had to turn off the TV and tried to respond to him. At first I thought he was being silly. So I answered him that I will die. And all of sudden, Jacob started crying, crying and crying. When he stopped crying, he asked me other questions such as "What does it mean to die?", "Where is heaven?" and he wondered "Can I carry my toys there?". I did my best to explain using my theological knowledge and information. But most of all, I was surprised to hear these questions from a six- year old, especially from my son. But definitely I see that he has grown older and become a boy with a new enlightenment and anxiety about the reality of separation!

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther, a Catholic priest and scholar had a great spiritual eye-opening experience in his faith. He discovered the love of God instead of the righteous God in the Catholic tradition. By this, he began a new Christian tradition, called Protestantism out of the Catholic Church. Simply speaking, the love of God VS the righteous God. He discovered a new meaning in Romans 1:17, "The one who is righteous will live by faith!" Luther said, "Paul is not talking about the righteous God Himself, but a righteousness that God gives freely by His grace to people who don't have righteousness of their own. Namely, it is the righteousness of Christ."<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther as a Catholic monk, he had tried every Catholic rituals and disciplines to achieve his righteousness, kneeling in prayer, fasting and even climbing a Roman staircase on his knees. But he realized that he couldn't claim righteousness. He hated the word, righteousness. The Roman Catholic is taught to come to faith by good works; the Protestant, to come to good works by faith.<sup>2</sup>

Every time we take communion, we receive the bread and wine as the body and the blood of Jesus. When we break the bread, it reminds us that Jesus' body is broken for us. The Roman Catholic Church believes a unique theology on communion: The doctrine of 'Transubstantiation' which means the substance of wheat bread and grape wine changes into the essence of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. The Eastern Orthodox churches share Roman Catholic's perspective but they prefer to define communion as 'divine mystery'. Our Methodist, Episcopal and Lutheran churches often define communion as 'God's real presence'. Even though there are some different theological perspectives on

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/justification-faith-alone-martin-luther-and-romans-117/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.the-highway.com/articleJan98.html>

the meaning of the bread and the wine, there is a common belief among us. Every time when we take the bread, we experience God's real presence and accept Jesus Christ as the love of God for us. Communion is not merely a ritual that we just repeat every once per month. It is a profound challenge but an extended invitation to experience the loving God in Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther said, "God is present for me in my neighbor. You will find Christ in every street and just outside your door. Do not stand around staring at heaven say, "Oh if I could just once see our Lord God, how I would do everything possible for him."<sup>3</sup> Even he challenges us to find Jesus' resurrection outside the box. He also said "Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime."<sup>4</sup> If we open our eyes, we can see God's presence in our daily routine. The God we believe in is not a philosophical Being who dwells in the universe but a God who closely watches over us. I hope that you keep your eyes open and see around you to find the love of God who dwells in you and guides your life forward.

I want to share a special video clip that I received from my mother in Korea. Early this week, she posted this one on her Facebook to share her new English lesson. But I guess that she expressed her heart with me and my family. I was impressed to hear that she recently has been taking English lessons to communicate with Jacob and Joshua. While I was watching the video, I felt her love not only for me but also that love was overlapped with God's love for all of us. I hope that you will enjoy this video to open your eyes to the love of God. Truly, God loves us with no charge! Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* p.133

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.prayingthegospels.com/rare-quotes-by-martin-luther/short-quotes-martin-luther/>  
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