

Quinquagesima (Esto mihi)
St. Luke 18:31-43
March 3rd, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael & All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Receive Your Sight

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost created man and woman. Into the Garden of Eden, he placed this creation of man and woman to cultivate the garden. Adam and Eve, however, only cultivated death, they sowed the lies and deception of the devil into this world, and they became spiritually blind. All of their children, including us, have inherited this malady. We are all born spiritually blind; unable to see the goodness and love of the Lord God, our Creator and Maker.

We have come to the end of the season known as “Gesimatide.” If you have been paying attention to the preaching during this small season you would notice that each Sunday has a particular theme. On Septuagesima we learned about how the Lord + Jesus has called us out of the marketplace of the world to receive His gifts for us in the garden of the Church. Last Sunday, on Sexagesima, we learned from our Lord + Jesus Christ that he is catechizing us with His Word as He sows it into the world through the work of the Holy Ghost. Today, on Quinquagesima we hear how our Lord + Jesus opens our spiritually blind eyes—how He gives us faith to believe on Him—when He enlightens us and brings us out of the darkness of sin and death.

In the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke we are presented with a contrast between two groups and one man. The Gospel reading began by our Lord + Jesus instructing His Apostles by telling them all about the events that will soon be coming. They were heading to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, our Lord + Jesus will be handed over to the Gentiles—to Pontius Pilate and the Romans—He would be mocked, insulted, spit on, scourged and killed. But, on the third day He would rise again from the dead.

We, as the Body of Christ—the Church on Earth—are also headed to Jerusalem. We are headed to the cross of our Lord + Jesus Christ. We will hear, as the Church does every year, as a memorial, as a way to remember what our Lord + Jesus did for us, of our Lord’s suffering and death on our behalf. He had perfectly fulfilled the Law of God for us, and now He goes to the cross to suffering and die for us. He takes on our punishment—the suffering and death that we deserve for our rebellion and sin against God—so that we may go free and receive the rewards that He wins for us on the tree of the holy cross.

We understand these things well, since we the benefit of hindsight. We have the benefit of faith. Our eyes have been opened through the preaching of the Word and the Blessed Sacraments so that we have been gifted faith through the work of the Holy Ghost. We hear these things—our Lord’s suffering and death—and we believe that He did these things for us. We have been gifted with faith, hope and love. The greatest of these is love, for love flows out of faith and hope. Our Lord + Jesus shows us what is true love by suffering and dying for us, and the whole world. He suffers and dies for a world that hated Him, and still hates Him. In His suffering and death, He shows the love He has for His lost creation. He shows how much He loves the creation that was deceived by the devil and sowed sin and corruption and spiritual blindness into this world and into mankind.

We have been enlightened to see the goodness and love of the Lord + Jesus through the Word that has been preached into our ears. The Apostles at this time, however, do not. The Evangelist St. Luke emphasizes the point three times that the Apostles did not understand what the Lord + Jesus was telling them. *“But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.”* When the Greek language repeats something, it is done for emphasis. The concept that the Son of God, the Messiah, our Lord + Jesus Christ was going to suffer and die in Jerusalem, and not triumphantly take over the throne of His father David, was beyond the understanding of the Apostles. They remained spiritually blind.

The crowds that followed the Lord + Jesus were also spiritually blind. For when this mass of people passes by a blind man begging by the side of the road, he inquires what is going on. The crowd’s response shows their hearts. For, they address the Lord + Jesus as *“+ Jesus of Nazareth.”* In their minds He is just another man. There were those who thought He was a great prophet, or Elijah, the forerunner, but there is no confession of Him being the Messiah. Certainly, some of them may have even hoped or longed for Him to be the Messiah, but this is not how He is addressed by the crowds. They remained spiritually blind.

Then we have the physically blind man. He shows no pretense; no hesitation or doubt about who the Lord + Jesus is. He cries out with a loud voice, *“+ Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* There is no doubt in his mind who this man + Jesus is. He is the Son of David. He is the longed-promised Savior of the world. This man + Jesus has come into the world to give sight to the spiritually blind of this world. He came into this world so that we might see Him with the eyes of faith and cry out in our miseries and sinfulness, “Lord + Jesus, have mercy on me.”

This sinful world continuously tries to stifle our cries, just as the crowds rebuked the blind man for crying out for mercy. The world wants us to remain in our lost condition. It desires that we remain trapped in sin and despair. And if it cannot have us in despair, then it will lead us into pride and self-righteousness; thinking that we are better people than everyone else because of our self-imagined righteousness and sinlessness. The world does not want us crying out to our Lord + Jesus for spiritually healing and forgiveness, even as we do every time we gather in this place to pray the liturgy. It wants us to remain spiritually blind just like they are.

The blind man, Bartimaeus the Son of Timaeus, shows us how we should respond to the lies and deception of the crowds of this world. What does he do? He cries out even more loudly, *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”* The blind man shows his faith. He shows that nothing is going to deter him from receiving the gifts that the Lord + Jesus is willing to deliver. Nothing should stop us or hinder us from coming to this sanctuary and hearing His Word and receiving His Blessed Sacrament so that our faith can be strengthened and renewed; so that we can have the spiritual blindness that haunts and pervades every fiber of our being removed so that we can see our Lord + Jesus clearly with the eyes of faith. Our Lord + Jesus desires to remove the stain of sin from us. He does that every time we gather together and receive the gifts He won for us on the tree of the holy cross.

Our Lord + Jesus desires to be our true love; our rock of refuge and fortress of defense. He does not want to leave us helpless in the dust and confounded. He gives us His Word so that our faith may always be grounded in Him and we may have our spiritually blind eyes opened to see that goodness and love that He has for us.

You will notice that there is another name added to the title of this day: *Esto mihi*. This is the ancient title of this day's Propers. And these Propers have been in use by the Church since at least the fourth century, for St. Augustine uses them in a sermon he delivered from middle 300s AD. The title, *Esto mihi*, is taken from the first two words of the Introit: "*Be my...*" In other words, the Propers of the Day are like a valentine: be mine. "Oh, Lord + Jesus, be for me the source of my faith, hope and love. Be for me the love that that You showed for us on the holy cross by suffering and dying in our place. Be for me the love that You showed us by opening our blind eyes to receive faith and trust in You. Oh, Lord '+ Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me' and be mine."

Just like blind Bartimaeus, your faith has made you well. Not because faith is any kind of work that you do, but because your faith trusts in and looks to the proper Person who can restore your sight. Faith looks to the Lord + Jesus who went to Jerusalem and was mocked, insulted, spit on, scourged and killed for your redemption from spiritual blindness. By these works of love our Lord + Jesus has called us into the Church, He has instructed us with His Word, and He has opened up our spiritually blind eyes and given us faith to trust in Him alone for our salvation.

The world, however, remains in spiritual darkness. Our Lord + Jesus has given us His Word and His Blessed Sacraments to continue to invite, instruct and enlighten all those in this world who may hear and believe. Our Lord + Jesus' love for us, and all His creation, secured our redemption. With our eyes of faith opened, we can cling to our Lord + Jesus and receive the healing we so desperately need. He removes our despair and fills us with such joy that we can do nothing other than follow after Him glorifying Him and giving Him praise for healing us of our sins. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!