

Quinquagesima (Esto mihi)
St. Luke 18:31-43
February 14th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

For He Will Be Delivered to the Gentiles

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who didst manifest Thyself, with the Holy Ghost, in the fullness of grace at the baptism of Thy dear Son, and with Thy voice didst direct us to Him who hath borne our sins, that we might receive grace and the remission of sins: Keep us, we beseech Thee, in the true faith; and inasmuch as we have been baptized in accordance with Thy command, and the example of Thy dear Son, we pray Thee to strengthen our faith by Thy Holy Spirit, and lead us to everlasting life and salvation, through Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

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

When the Israelites began to conquer the impenitent tribes of the Canaanites, they crossed over the Jordan River and camped at Gilgal to prepare for their first battle in the land of Canaan against Jericho. Jericho was a strong fortress for the Canaanites. If Jericho fell, then all of Canaan was ripe to fall as well. The Israelites defeated Jericho by simply walking around it once each day for six days and having the priests blow the trumpets after the completion of the cycle each day. Then on the seventh day they walked around the city seven times, blew the trumpets, the people shouted with a great shout, and the walls of Jericho fell. Clearly establishing that it was the Lord God Who gave them the victory, and was not the result of any man's might.

Jericho was utterly destroyed. All that was in the city both man and woman, young and old, ox, donkey, sheep and all livestock were destroyed with the sword, and the city was burned to the ground. Only the gold, silver, iron and bronze were kept to be put into the treasury of the Lord. This destruction served at least two purposes: it put the fear of the Lord God into the rest of the land of the Canaanites, so that they feared the nation of Israel and their boldness and confidence fell, and it served as an example of what happens to those who reject the Lord God as the One and Only True God. As we learn in the Small Catechism under the Ten Commandments, the Lord God threatens to punish all who transgress His Commandments and does not live according to them. All those who break the Law of God and are full of sin deserve His eternal wrath and displeasure; they deserve the same fate that happened to Jericho.

Joshua even made a proclamation that Jericho was to remain a pile of rubble forever. Whoever rebuilt Jericho would do so at the loss of both his firstborn and his youngest sons. We are told in the sixteenth chapter of the Third Book of the Kings, commonly referred to as 1 Kings, that in the days of Ahab King of Israel, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid the foundation at the expense of his firstborn, Abiram, and set the gate at the expense of his youngest, Serub, according to the Word of the Lord, which was spoken by Joshua the son of Nun. This is why St. Luke, the Evangelist tells us that our Lord + Jesus is entering into Jericho, even though this city was destroyed, and was supposed to remain so

forever. This city, Jericho, had been rebuilt in the days of wicked King Ahab, whose wickedness spread even to those under his rule.

This city, Jericho, was rebuilt on account of the sinfulness of man and because they had rejected the Word of the Lord God. Therefore, rebuilt Jericho stood as a testimony to the sinfulness of mankind. It was a reflection of the darkness of sin that fills all mankind. It is to this city that our Lord + Jesus comes today. But there are some events that lead up to our Lord's arrival in this city.

The first event is our Lord + Jesus pulling aside His Apostles and telling them the events that will soon be happening. These events transfer us from Gesimatide into the season of Lent. Our Lord + Jesus tells His Apostles that they are going up into Jerusalem. There the Lord + Jesus will endure the suffering and shame that atones for our sins and the sins of the whole world. He will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again from the dead. It is after our Lord + Jesus tells them the good news of their salvation through His suffering and death that the Evangelist St. Luke relates for us the first instance of blindness in this pericope. St. Luke tells us that the Apostles did not understand any of the things that the Lord + Jesus was telling them. In fact, St. Luke tells us in three different ways that they did not understand what the Lord was telling them. "They understood none of these things." "This saying was hidden from them." "They did not know the things which were spoken."

The Apostles, at this point, are filled with just as much darkness at the city of Jericho was, and as the blind man who soon enters our narrative. Our Lord + Jesus heals all of them of their blindness. He is the Light that comes into this dark world and fills it with His eternal Light. Our Lord + Jesus brings light to the Apostles by telling them of His Passion. Our Lord + Jesus told His Apostles about His upcoming Passion three times. This is final and third time that He warns His Apostles about His impending trial and persecution. He does this three times for His Apostles so that they would know that these events were supposed to happen, so that when they did, they would know that He indeed was the True Messiah come into the world to redeem His people. They would never doubt Him again after His trial, death, burial and resurrection. When they saw all these things happened, they believed on Him and preached to all the world the good news of our Lord's saving work of redemption on the tree of the holy cross.

After telling His Apostles what is about to happen, He then sets His sights on Jerusalem the place of His cross and our atonement for sins. Like the Israelites of old who crossed over the Jordan River and came to Jericho, our Lord + Jesus also drew near to Jericho. The city that was destroyed because of its rebellion against the Lord God; because it rejected the True God and chose to worship false gods and idols, was once again rebuilt. Mankind's sinfulness prevailed once more. This city now represented the willful blindness of mankind and their rejection of the Word of God, and the rejection of the Lord God Himself. Once again the Lord God comes to this city, but unlike in the days of Joshua the son of Nun, the destruction of this city of sin will not take place by causing its walls to fall and through putting every living thing to the sword and burning it to the ground. The destruction of sin and rebellion will take place outside the city of Jerusalem as our Lord + Jesus offers up His Body for destruction on the cross to make payment for the sins of mankind once and for all.

The city of Jericho is the second instance of blindness that St. Luke mentions in this Gospel reading. The Apostles represented all those who have and heard the holy Scriptures, but still did not understand them; that the Messiah must suffer many things, and be killed for the redemption of the world. Jericho represents the blindness of the rest of the world; the sin that dwells in all of mankind on account of their rejection of the Lord God and the salvation found through Him. The third instance of blindness comes from an actual blind man. In another Gospel we learn that this man's name is Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. We also learn in another Gospel that there were two blindmen, which is depicted on the cover of the bulletin. St. Luke chooses not to relay to us what this man's name is,

and he chooses to focus only on the one blind man, and not the two.

This is for our benefit, though, because it focuses our attention on the needs of one man. We can see ourselves in this blind man. We may not all be physically blind, but on account of our sin, and the daily trespasses that we commit we are certainly filled with spiritual blindness. We allow the world to take away our joy of salvation on a daily basis, and sometimes the devil, the world, and our flesh deceives us into great sin and shame on a continuous basis. We are constantly under attack by our enemies. They desire to take away our joy and our faith, hope, and love. They succeed often.

St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Church at Corinth talks about love. If we do not have love we are like a clanging cymbal, or nothingness. All of our words and works mean absolutely nothing if we have not love. Many people will take these verses and use it as an encouragement to go out and fill yourself with love. "Just do what St. Paul tells you and all will be fine for you." Again, we learn from the Ten Commandments that the requirement of each Commandment is the fear and love of the Lord God. In other words, these Commandments which we cannot keep each require love from us. Therefore, we cannot love as is required by the Law of God. Through our striving and working we remain without love; we remain in darkness.

But the love of our Lord + Jesus Christ does not fail. He enters into the kingdom of our spiritual enemies and sets Himself to go into battle to defeat our enemies once and for all. He comes to bring us Himself. He comes to be love for us. He comes to fulfill the requirements of the Law which we are unable to fulfill. And He comes to suffer our punishment on the tree of the holy cross. He does all of this out of His great love for us. For He is indeed our rock of refuge and fortress of defense against all the powers of darkness in this world who war against us constantly.

He has come to bring light to the world. He brought light to the Apostles by telling them that He would suffer and die for them in Jerusalem and be risen again on the third day. He brings light to the world by coming into this sinful world and fulfilling all the requirements of the Law. He gave sight to the blind man, so that He could see Who his Savior was. He gives us that same light by opening our ears and hearts to receive Him as our Lord and Savior. He preaches into our ears, as He did His Apostles, that His suffering and death is for us. He comes to us in this holy house to give us His Word and Sacraments so that in the world filled with sin and shame we have a place to find comfort and healing, a place we can and must frequent often. And He removes the scales of blindness from our eyes so that we too, can see Who is our Savior, and what good things He has done for us.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us go with our Lord + Jesus up into Jerusalem as we travel with Him through the holy Scriptures during the upcoming Lenten season. Let us examine ourselves according to the Ten Commandments and realize just how empty we are of love and confess this to our Lord + Jesus both in our hearts and before our pastor in private confession. Let us also turn our focus to the cross of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, for He has suffered and died for us on the tree of the holy cross out of His great love for us, so that by His Holy Ghost working through us, we too, may be filled with love for Him and for our neighbor. Our sins have been forgiven by Him because He has come into this world to defeat our enemies by His death. Open your eyes and see your Savior, for your faith has made you well. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who through Thy Son Jesus Christ didst mercifully open the blind man's eyes, restoring his sight, we beseech Thee, with Thy Word so enlighten our hearts that, knowing Thee through Christ, Thy Son and our Redeemer, we may in all temptations and afflictions look only to Thy mercy, and at all times find comfort and deliverance; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!