

Quinquagesima (*Esto mihi*)
St. Luke 18:31-43
February 11th, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald Dulas

They Understood None of These Things

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“And He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, ‘Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of Man. For He shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully treated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.’ And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said.”

Prayer in Pulpit before 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.

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

My dear friends, we are justified by faith. This is most certainly true. Faith, however, is not something that we do. Even this is pure gift given to us through the means of grace: the pure preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments according to our Lord’s institution of them. The Holy Ghost works through these means to open our blind eyes to see and believe in the promises found in them. Our blind eyes are opened to see our one and only Savior in the Person of the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Faith justifies because it clings to something outside of itself. It justifies, that is, makes us right with the Lord God, because it clings to the promise of salvation found in the works and merits of the Christ.

Our Lord + Jesus begins today’s Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke by telling His twelve Apostles about these works and merits. That we have this pericope today means that we, as the Church, are also being told about these works and merits of the Lord. The Lord tells His Apostles what He is about to endure. We as the Church are about to enter into the penitential season of Lent. We will in these coming days and weeks also hear about what our Lord + Jesus endured for our salvation. Our Lord tells us today that, “He shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully treated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.”

This is the whole purpose for why our Lord + Jesus came down from Heaven to be one of us; to take upon Himself our flesh and redeem us by His obedience to the Law of God and by His innocent, suffering and death upon the tree of the holy cross. These works of our Lord are nothing but pure love. This is what St. Paul wrote about in the Epistle reading from his first Epistle to the Church at Corinth. That description of love from the thirteenth chapter was a description of our Lord + Jesus. He embodies the perfect example of love. If one desires to know what love is, one only need look to the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus. He humbles Himself for us, for the ones He loves, by setting aside the use of His divinity, and taking upon Himself our flesh. He perfectly fulfills the Law for us poor sinners because we fail daily and often. Moreover, our very nature is corrupted by sin, we have inherited it from our first parents, Adam and Eve. Our Lord takes upon Himself our flesh, but without sin, so that He can perfectly fulfill that which we cannot. And then He offers up His life in the place of our lives. He suffers the torments and shame and death that we rightfully deserve on account of our manifold sins and trespasses.

This is true love. It humbles itself. It sacrifices itself. It is never puffed up as St. Paul wrote. It does not seek its own. It suffers long. Love does not covet someone else, or his things. It keeps its focus on the object of its love. Therefore, we can see that the picture of love that St. Paul writes in the Epistle reading for today is a description of our Lord + Jesus. He does all these things for us—He endures the torments of His Passion—because of His love for us. We love Him in return through the faith that clings to Him, the same faith that has been gifted to us by the means of grace. It is only through the enlightenment of faith that we can believe on and trust in the Lord + Jesus and His love for us. It is only through faith that we can be justified, that is, made right with the Lord God.

But the Evangelist St. Luke writes that after the Lord + Jesus told His Apostles all the things that He must suffer and endure for their salvation, that they did not understand it. In fact, they so lacked understanding of the what the Lord + Jesus was telling them that St. Luke repeats this fact three times in three different ways. “And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hidden from them, and they perceived not the things that were said.” Our Lord tells them about their salvation by His works and they remain ignorant. They remained blind.

And then the Evangelist St. Luke introduces an actual blind man into our narrative. This man only needed to hear the name of the Lord + Jesus, that it was He Who the multitudes followed after for Him to put his full faith in the Lord + Jesus. Upon hearing the name of + Jesus of Nazareth, he cried out after Him. The blind man, who we are told in another Gospel is named Bartimaeus, cries out after the Lord with words that confess His belief in Him. “And he cried, saying, ‘Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.’” This blind man knows exactly Who the Lord + Jesus is. He is the Son of David. This name was associated with the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One of God. That the blind man calls our Lord + Jesus the Son of David, means he believed Him to be the Messiah, the One sent from the Lord God to deliver mankind from sin and death; from the power of the devil.

Our Lord tells him when He heals him that his faith hath made him whole. Once again, the faith is not directed back on itself, that is, he did not trust in his faith, as is often heard today. How often have we heard someone say that they needed to trust in their faith, as if their faith was the object of his trust. This is true when someone gets cancer, or some other illness, and they say that they will just trust in their faith to get them through. To be fair they probably have not learned that this way of confessing their faith is backward. It is as if they want to confess that it is the Lord + Jesus upon Whom they rely and trust, but are afraid to say the actual words.

This is why the blind man’s faith is praised by the Lord + Jesus. This is why our Lord tells him that his faith had made him whole, because this blind man directed his faith to be in the Lord + Jesus. Bartimaeus’ faith clung to the Son of David. He believed on the Messiah. He believed on the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits. This blind man did not even have the benefit that we have today. We

know about our Lord's suffering and death, His Passion for us. We can cling to these works and merits of the Christ, His perfect, innocent, suffering and death for us poor, miserable sinners that wins for us forgiveness, life, and salvation. We can cling to these works and merits of the Christ. But this blind man trumps us, he trumps the Apostles, for his faith is grounded in the Lord + Jesus as the Messiah having only heard about the miracles that He had done up to this point. Bartimaeus knows that the Lord + Jesus can heal him of his blindness, for he believes that the Lord + Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One of the Lord God sent to us to be our Redeemer and Savior.

And so, the physically blind man sees spiritually with the eyes of faith clearly and perfectly. He has perfect 20/20 spiritual vision to see that the Lord + Jesus is the Messiah, and that He will indeed make him whole because the Lord has already shown His love for the people of Israel through His many works and miracles. But many people remain spiritually blind even though the works of the Christ have been presented to them. If the Apostles could remain clueless about our Lord's purpose after He told them plainly what He must do for mankind's salvation, it is no wonder that we often balk at our Lord when we endure suffering and shame. We do not understand any of these things. We do not understand how bad things can happen to us.

But the real mystery is that any good thing happens to us at all. We are deserving of none of the good things that happen to us every day. We do not deserve the food we eat, the air we breathe, the clothes we wear. We only deserve the Lord God's eternal wrath and displeasure. The unbelieving world will never understand this. It will remain hidden from them. They will not perceive the truth for as long as they continue to rely on themselves and their works; for as long as they believe that they can do something to earn their own salvation. For as long as they place their trust in themselves, or they place their faith in their own faith, they will continue to remain ignorant of the grace of the Lord + Jesus.

For saving faith clings to Him and Him alone. This is why, my dear friends, we are justified. For we cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ. We cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus. For our spiritually blind eyes have been made whole through the work of the Holy Ghost in the means of grace to that we see clearly that salvation is found solely in the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus. It is His suffering and death that has won forgiveness, life, and salvation for us. We have been enlightened by His works to cling in faith to Him alone. For His works show His great love for us. He has humbled Himself and sacrificed Himself for us because we are the object of His love. We return that love by trusting in His works and merits. For we no longer see in a mirror darkly, but see perfectly with the eyes of faith that we have salvation in our Lord + Jesus and are justified by the free gift of faith He has given us. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, 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!