

QUINQUAGESIMA / ESTO MIHI

Text: St. Luke 18:31-43

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

*“JESUS, SON of David, have mercy on me!”* Such is the prayer of a Christian. It is for this reason that Christian worship begins with the penitent supplications of God’s people in the Kyrie, *“LORD, have mercy upon us. CHRIST, have mercy upon us. LORD, have mercy upon us.”* That is the true reason for you to be here this day; to receive from the SON of God the benefit of His innocent suffering and death on the Cross of Calvary to save you—you are here to receive God’s mercy.

Everything that we do as Christians flows from this one great fact: JESUS died for us, to save us from sin, Satan, and the grave. All things that are written by the prophets concerning our salvation have been accomplished. The FATHER’s will is fulfilled in His Son and His terrible wrath is appeased. *“It is finished,”* and the Foundation for the House of God, the Temple not made by human hands, is now complete. There, God has taken on human flesh, coming as our own High Priest to be the Sin Offering and Sacrifice of Mercy for His people.

This is the message of Holy Scripture. This is the *“Good News”* of the Gospel. It is the message of our redemption and is, therefore, the very foundation of Christian faith. If one gets this wrong then everything else in one’s life and worship is tainted by error. For from the misunderstanding of this one great truth springs all doubt, all fear, all heresy, false worship, and unbelief. A wrong understanding of this Gospel causes man to strive to achieve salvation by his works, to acquire the forgiveness of his sins through his own merit, to build a ladder to heaven through the means of his own self-righteousness.

Yet, does your heart not tell you that this is nothing more than fig leaves and foolishness? The Word of God tells us that our own efforts are worthless, that we owe much more than we could ever hope to repay. God’s Word is quite clear that we are spiritually bankrupt before God, and even if we could repay our debt of sin, ultimately the price of sin is still death. For through the Apostle, Saint Paul, God tells us, *“the wages of sin is death,”* and for *“him who works, the wages are not counted as grace, but as debt.”* So it is, that in the end, when we have done all that is commanded of us, all we can say is, *“We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.”*

Therefore, the plea of the blind man in our Gospel text is indeed, the plea of the Church; his prayer is our prayer; it must be. For there is no prayer that pleases our God

more than when His children turn to Him, seeking from Him His free grace and favor, and thus, His mercy, and His love. Such a prayer is God-pleasing, because such a prayer asks our LORD to do exactly what He took on our flesh and died upon the Cross to do—to save us, to give us His mercy.

For this reason our LORD JESUS sets His face toward Jerusalem. He looks to the city that murders the Prophets and stones those sent to her. He goes to fulfill all things that even the blind shall see and the deaf shall be made to hear. He goes up to the City of Peace in order to give peace to all those who will believe. For to fulfill all things means to pay your debt of sin, *“not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious Blood and with His innocent suffering and death.”* (Luther’s explanation to the Second Article of the Apostle’s Creed, The Small Catechism)

JESUS goes up to Jerusalem to die, to contend with Satan in combat stupendous, to wrench free from His hideous grasp those who are slaves to sin and all unrighteousness. JESUS goes to appease the wrath of His FATHER so that He can declare the guilty innocent, releasing them from the chains that bind them, to shine the Light of Truth and Hope into the dark recesses of their misery.

Consequently, we must see ourselves as blind men. We must see ourselves as having no way out of our dark despair, as being powerless to save ourselves. Then, and only then, can we receive what our LORD JESUS so urgently desires for us. Only when we enter the courtroom as condemned criminals confessing that we are indeed guilty and without hope of redemption or escape from eternal punishment, can hope of redemption be born. For this is what it means to be justified. It means to be declared innocent when all the evidence weighs against you. It means to be set free when you should be condemned to death.

So, we walk upon the road to Jerusalem with our SAVIOR and there, enter the City of Peace for our peace. For there, JESUS will be mocked. There, God will be treated with contempt. He will be betrayed by the very people He came to save. The soldiers of Pilate will beat Him nearly to death. There, JESUS will be nailed to the Cross of sorrow and disgrace, deserted by His friends, mourned by His Mother, hated and spat upon by the very people He came to save.

JESUS will be blasphemed. The Roman soldiers will offer Him sour wine on that Cross and say, *“If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.”* The religious authorities will mock Him saying, *“If You are the SON OF GOD, come down from the cross.”*

But CHRIST will not save Himself and come down from the Cross, for what His enemies meant for evil, CHRIST means for good—your good. Thus, was JESUS counted among thieves and murderers, with the most wicked of men, and endured the most

shameful, painful, and evil of deaths. For you see, for you to be set free, He had to be bound. When you were given life, He was given your death. When you were declared innocent, He was declared guilty in your place.

This is what it means when JESUS tells His disciples *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the SON OF MAN will be accomplished.”* For the sole concern of the SON OF MAN was to do the will of the One who sent Him—His FATHER, and our FATHER, in heaven. The will of our FATHER, and therefore, the will of His SON, JESUS, is that you be saved, and in saving you, all things written by the prophets must be accomplished. Not one thing must be left undone. For the way of the Cross of JESUS is the way of God’s grace. And if you would know the grace of God and the love of God, then you must stand at the foot of the Cross with Saint Mary, the Mother of God, and with Saint Mary Magdalene and Saint John, the Apostle whom JESUS loved, and look up into the bloody, disfigured face of your SAVIOR, CHRIST JESUS and know the lengths to which our God would go to save you.

Though now we see but dimly, though now our vision is not yet complete, nor is it as clear as it will be, we can be assured of this; our hope has been fulfilled. This is not some distant, vague wish, but a confident and fervent knowledge of a promise fulfilled—a promise fulfilled by our LORD and our God. Our LORD JESUS *was* crucified and He *did* die, but He *did not* stay dead. The grave could not hold Him, for with His death He conquered death, and we who are Baptized into His Name share in His victory over the grave. Now we wait for His call to join Him in the Heavenly Jerusalem and there to be given the gift of eternal peace.

Until that sacred Day our God has provided the gifts of His true Body and Blood in the blessed Sacrament of the Altar to strengthen us in times of fear and doubt, to strengthen our weak hands and make firm our feeble knees and our weak faith. Thus strengthened, with eyes no longer blind that they may see, with ears unstopped that they may hear, we shall leap like deer and our sin-parched tongues shall be released to sing with the angels, and archangels, and all the saints of heaven.

Therefore, let us now approach the precincts of Heaven praying, *“O CHRIST, Thou Lamb of God who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us ... [and] grant us Thy peace.”* For the LORD is good and His mercy endures forever.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

✠ ✠ ✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠ ✠ ✠

Rev. Raymond D. Parent II

Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Crestview, Florida  
2/11/24 A&D