

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus told them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.”

Apart from faith, the Lord’s prediction of his death and resurrection seems outlandish at best and downright ridiculous or foolish at worst. Who knows what is going to happen to him and such terrible things and then goes ahead riding right into it? Who does that? Well, Jesus does, and he did. The reason he did it was to redeem you and he has done it; it is finished.

You hear those words today in faith. You know your Lord and what he has done. You know exactly what this all means. You are on this side of Holy Week and Easter. Lent starts on Wednesday, and you know what all happens. Jesus is telling the disciples he is going to suffer, die, and rise from the dead. This isn’t the only time Jesus has done this in Gospels, he’s done it on numerous occasions. Even three weeks ago on the mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah spoke with the Lord about his departure how all of this must occur.

Not only do you know what all of this means but you know the purpose in it as well. That word Jesus used which the ESV translates as “accomplished” is related to the word Jesus cried out on the cross in John’s Gospel, “it is finished.” This life, suffering, and death of Jesus is your redemption. His resurrection is your justification. Jesus was telling the disciples in these words what would be the cost of their and your salvation. Listening, then, to this all now and knowing what this means and the purpose for which it was done sees something else in this all which is revealed to you in the second part of the reading with the blind man.

Listen again to that miracle, “As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.’ And he cried out, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ He said, ‘Lord, let me recover my sight.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.”

The blind man believed in Christ and he shows you what faith looks like as he clings to the promises of Jesus and Jesus healed him. His words are words of praise, they call upon God’s mercy. He teaches you, then, how you know God and look for him to act in Christ, God is merciful to you. It’s no wonder in the services of the church there are almost always some form of the “Kyrie” where God’s people say or usually sing, “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.” Really, there is a whole theology of worship and prayer right there in those words. The highest worship is to receive the forgiveness of sins. This is all so grounded then and so near and dear to you as you are sitting here this very instant and have all that God has done for you in Christ. This is the confidence and trust of faith the blind man shows and what the Lord has given to you as well.

The tempting thing for you when it comes to faith is to want to locate it in yourselves rather than seeing it as the instrument which receives Christ and his salvation. This is perhaps even one of the greatest dangers for you when so much of what you see and hear regarding faith does this and it sounds so very pious, but it redirects faith to where you don’t have those promises of God given to you. An easy way, or general rule of thumb is to ask yourself where are you being directed for your faith and to ask the question how is faith being spoken of and about?

If faith is wanting you to try to trust your faith for its own sake, then be careful lest you go down the dark road of despair when the day comes, and your faith is waning. Faith isn’t some abstract notion; it always has an object. Faith is

a real thing with a real object. The blind man “looks” to Jesus because he knows he is the only one who can show him mercy.

Also don’t ascend into the heavens but look to Christ crucified and behold your redemption. This all isn’t some exercise in academic theology but gets to the point of what you see in the blind man. Jesus was right in front of him even if he couldn’t physically see him. He was told Jesus of Nazareth was passing by and he knew who Jesus is, so he cried out to him who was there and close enough to be touched and for him to physically come and heal him. He called upon God to show him mercy, which is to say he praised God.

See all of this today in your God given faith. See what was necessary for Jesus to do and what he did willingly all for your sake. See that his life in perfect obedience to the law of God is counted to you. See his mocking and suffering is for your benefit. See his death on the cross as the atonement for your sin and see that your sin is forgiven, and God’s wrath has been satisfied as it has been poured out upon Christ in your place. See the glorious resurrection from the dead as the proclamation that all has been fulfilled and accomplished and see that’s what you will do on the final day as the Lord will raise you up. See from the blind man where you are to look here and now with all of this having been done.

At the end of the Gospel reading today, St. Luke recorded, “And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.” I don’t think you have to wonder what that looked and sounded like on that day. The people heard this praise two times a few verses earlier when the man blind man called out to Jesus, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Seeing the Lord heal this blind man who now physically sees, although he was indeed still “seeing” prior to this in terms of his faith, the people very well can join in this praise, “Lord, have mercy upon us!” That’s the same for us today as you gather around God’s word and sacraments this morning and as you go through this life until the day the Lord calls you to himself and raises your body on the last day. The Lord is near and comes with healing. You cry out in praise to our Lord and know who is and what he does in Christ, “Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy us. Lord, have mercy us.”

Your persistence in faith should be the same. It’s an uncomfortable thing to think about but something that must be asked. “What do I believe? Do I really believe Jesus and take him at his word?” Faith in Christ has been given to you by the Holy Spirit worked through the means of grace. When Jesus teaches you, then, about your sin and its consequences do you persist in your sin, or do you persist in trusting Jesus by repenting of your sin and clinging to Jesus for forgiveness? When Jesus tells you that you must abide in him, that blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it, and that he is found and promises to be where his word is preached, and his sacraments are administered are you persistent in going to receive these gifts as often as possible? If you actually believe Jesus, do you want what he gives and promises, or do you simply just want to have “faith?” When you talk about the Christian faith and confess it to others do you talk more about “my faith” or do you speak and talk about the object of your faith, Jesus?

Martin Luther’s last words were found written in his pocket and are translated as “we are all beggars, this is true.” What a telling thing to define our lives in Christ just as we see with this blind man. You are beggars who because of your sin stand outside of the kingdom of God. It’s only because of what Christ has done is there a place for you and only because of your God given faith worked by the Holy Spirit do you have these benefits of what Jesus has accomplished. To see faith in terms of begging, then, is how you go through your life as a Christian. You cry out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me” and no one or nothing is going to stand in your way from Jesus and what he gives.

The amazing thing in all of this, too, is that there is great confidence in this weakness. This blind man’s faith was great because it looked totally outside of himself to Jesus. As he begged blindly on the side of the road he was completely all about Jesus, who he is and what he has done. He saw Jesus by faith and then saw him with his own two healed eyes. What Jesus has done for you is that he has redeemed you and called you his own in the waters of your baptism. You behold Jesus by faith and the day is coming when you will see him face to face with your own eyes. As you go through

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this life, cling to him for mercy always and know that you have what he says. Have the confidence and know that Jesus is yours so cast all your sin and burdens on him whose yoke is easy, and burden is light.

Your God loves you and has shown you mercy. Your Lord knew what he must do when he said, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” He had a purpose for doing it and it was all accomplished for you. You have confidence today and you see what your Lord has done and still does as he is here for you. Rejoice with the blind man, sing praises to the Lord who is near right now. Your faith trusts in Christ as you are baptized into him, as you are here listening to his word, and as you take into your mouths the very body and blood of Jesus given and shed for you. So, listen, and taste and see the Lord is good and how lovely is his dwelling place on this side of the grave.

Look forward to that day as well when your faith will end, and you will see the Lord face to face with your own two eyes no longer stained by sin and all it entails. That will be a glorious day indeed to be before the Lamb on his throne and join with all the saints in the unending hymn of glory that will not fade away. That’s what you have and what awaits you as you look here and now and know Jesus has done it and he is here at this font, lectern, pulpit, and altar. “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.” Fix your eyes on Jesus crucified for you and cling to his promises today that he is yours and has saved you by his blood. Cry out to him at times knowing that he hears and answers you and will never forsake you. Look toward Jerusalem as Lent approaches hearing and seeing your Redemption accomplished by the one who stopped along the way to heal a blind man. Hear and understand that this was done all for you and go for your faith has saved you.

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