

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

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.’”

The Gospel reading today begins with a conversation with Jesus and his disciples. Listen again to what St. Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote. “And taking the twelve, he said to 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.” But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.”

The thing about this conversation is the fact it’s nothing new. Jesus pulls them aside and tells them what he has been telling them and preparing them for throughout his whole ministry. To add to it, this conversation has been occurring all the way back since the Garden of Eden right after the fall into sin when God said the seed the woman would crush the head of the serpent. The patriarchs and prophets said what Jesus told his disciples as do all the Psalms and the entirety of the Scriptures. This is not new information but the very plan and purpose of God in Christ. The disciples though did not grasp what Jesus said.

Now 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. 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/paid in full.” 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 you see something 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!’”

The blind man knows Scriptures. He knows what you heard in the Old Testament reading, “Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.” Only the Christ would give sight to the blind. The blind man cries out for the Christ to show him, this poor blind man on the side of the road, mercy. The blind man shows you how to see.

Consider your place in life and who you are as a baptized child of God. Hearing all this today, you are called to be faithful. Salvation is received by grace alone through faith in Christ alone through the Scriptures alone. Don’t take this for granted or grow complacent. Hear and understand what all this means as you now stand on this side of the cross, empty tomb, Ascension, and Pentecost. To be the people of God is to be a people of faith. It’s to be faithful in receiving the means of grace for without the means of grace you are not God’s people and there is no faith in Christ. Perhaps another place we do well to examine our lives today is seen in the persistence of faith. Faith wants what God gives. It keeps wanting it, coming back to it, and receiving it. This is a living faith. Through this faith, which receives and holds onto Christ and his benefits you are saved (translated made well in the text).

Your faith, though, isn’t some things. For instance, faith is not an excuse to sin. A Christian doesn’t say, “well I have faith” when he is confronted with his sin. Faith also isn’t in itself. The Christian doesn’t try to see his faith for its own

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sake as a way to separate himself from God and his gifts. Your faith must have and will always have an object and is never for its own sake. I've mentioned it before that for me as a pastor when I talk with someone who hasn't been to church in a while faith gets used as means unto itself. What is the first thing the person tries to tell me? It's always, without fail, "I have faith." The response to this I have given is "how?" The puzzling looks given me are a telling thing because it clearly shows that faith has no object or faith has been turned into something defined by the person. When there is a discussion, it often turns into a lot of language of "my faith does this, my faith is faith because I know in my heart I have faith" or "I know who Jesus is." Simply saying "have faith" or "love is love" make nice bumper stickers or social media posts but beyond that they say nothing. Faith apart from God's appointed means or believing something different than God's word is not the Christian faith.

In these instances, faith has become a quality in a person rather than what we see in this reading and all throughout the Bible or just knowing who Jesus is does not constitute faith. Even the demons believe in Jesus, but they shudder at this. Contrast all this as you go back to the Gospel reading for a minute and what did the blind man want? When told Jesus of Nazareth was passing by he simply didn't just say, "I have faith." No, instead, what did he say and do? He cried out for Jesus to have mercy on him. He wanted Jesus to come to him and do something. He wanted Jesus to give to him and heal him not just be a nice sentiment in his heart or be an excuse he could pull out in his life.

The blind man believed in Christ and shows you what faith looks like as he clings to the promises of Jesus and Jesus healed him. His words too 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. This is the confidence and trust of faith the blind man shows and what the Lord has given to you as well.

God teaches you today this Sunday before the start of Lent about faith in him. Conform your hearts and minds to what the Scriptures teach you. Examine your life, see where you have sinned and repent. Confess your sin and look to Jesus. See with your ears looking to the Lord who loves with a perfect and everlasting love and is faithful at times. He is the one who has gone to the cross for you taking your sin upon himself and gives you forgiveness, life, and salvation in return. This is yours given to you in the waters of your baptism.

The Lord is here today and not just passing by on his way to somewhere else. You are not someone ignored. You, the people of God, are crying out, "Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us" and he has heard you. You are his people and he stoops down even now to hear and answer your prayers. He says, "I forgive you all of your sins" and "take, eat this is my body given for you. Take, drink this my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." Jesus comes today with healing, and your faith has saved you/made you well because he does all things well.

Likewise, notice the boldness that comes from faith too. Have the confidence to go every day walking by faith as you go through this veil of tears. Look at the world differently, see everything through the lens of his word and have his word be that which shows you what is truly reality and what is good, right, and true.

Your God loves you and has shown you mercy in Christ. 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.

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

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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.

As you experience times of joy, suffering, trial, and even death face them as ones who see them with faithful eyes knowing that these things have been overcome by Jesus who endured these things in your place and promises you the day is coming where all sin, suffering, death, and the crafts and assaults of the devil will come to an end. Your prayers now are heard and answered by your Great High Priest who sits at the right hand of God interceding for you. Jesus is here for you and doesn't pass you by rather he takes your cries of mercy to the throne of God.

Thanks be to God this day for the faith in Christ given by the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God for his great compassion in Jesus, the Son of David, who has mercy on you. Fix your eyes on him 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.

Confidently and with eager anticipation 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."

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