

# HE HAS OPENED MY EYES!

Quinquagesima Sunday

February 14, 2010

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## *The Versicles and Gloria Patri*

Make haste, O God, to deliver me.

Make haste to help me, O Lord. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and every shall be, forevermore.

Amen.

## *The Confession of Sins*

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, I have sinned against You through my own fault, in thought, word, and deed. For the sake of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, forgive me all my sin, and bring me to life everlasting.

Amen.

## *The Responsory*

O Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy upon us.

O Lord Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

O Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy upon us.

Arise, O Christ, and help us.

And deliver us for Your name's sake.

Sermon Text; Luke 18:31-42

I don't know how much more plain, clear, and simple Jesus could have said it, than in today's scripture reading. And, this is actually the fourth, of five little sermonettes Jesus gave to His disciples, describing to them, in detail, that

- He would be arrested.
- He would be put on trial.
- He would be punished.
- He would be tortured.
- He would be spit on and mocked.
- He would die.
- And, He would rise, again.

Five times Jesus gave a little sermon like that to His disciples. In fact, throughout His ministry, Jesus, in many times and many ways pointed forward to His death and His resurrection. For example,

-Jesus said, **“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”** He foretold He would lay down His life for His sheep.

-Jesus said, **“Greater love has no man than this. That He lay down His life for His friends and you are my friends.”** Jesus foretold that He would lay down His life for them.

-Jesus said to the Pharisees, **“Destroy this temple (talking about His body) and in three days I will raise it up again.”** He foretold His death and His resurrection.

-Jesus told the Pharisees who wanted a sign, *“You want a sign. I will give you a sign. I will give you the sign of Jonah.”* **“Just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the belly of the earth for three days and three nights.”** He was foretelling that He would be buried and He would rise from the dead.

-Jesus foretold His death, when He was talking to Nicodemus. He told Nicodemus, **“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the**

**desert** (remember the Children of Israel had to look at that snake on a pole to live), **so the Son of Man must be lifted up.**” He foretold His own crucifixion.

-Jesus told the parable of the wicked tenants. He told the parable about how a man had a vineyard. He rented it out to some tenants. He sent his servants to gather the rent, and the wicked tenants beat his servants and sent them all away. Finally, the owner of the vineyard said, “I will send my son. They will respect my son.” But they killed his son. Jesus told that parable, foretelling His own death.

It is like Jesus, throughout His whole earthly ministry was painting this picture, this huge picture, for the disciples about what was going to happen. And now, in today's scripture reading, I don't know how much plainer He could have said it. Listen to His words. He says, **“He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him, insult Him, spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. On the third day, He will rise again.”**

Could He have said it any more plainly than that? But, look at the disciples' reaction. It says, “The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what He was talking about.”

The only thing Jesus could have done to make it any more plain and clear would have been to draw a picture and list the specifics! *“This is going to happen a week from now. It is going to happen under Pontius Pilate. I am going to be arrested in Gethsemane.”* He could not have gotten more plain and clear.

So, how could it be that the disciples did not understand what He was talking about? This shows us the sinfulness of our human reason. When human reason is confronted with the cross of Christ, human reason's natural reaction to that is to reject it and say, *“I don't understand that. It does not make sense to me.”* And so, what does Scripture say?

**“The cross is foolishness  
to those who are perishing.”**

The Bible says,

**“The sinful mind does not accept the things of God  
nor can it do so.”**

And so, here we see the disciples hearing the very words Jesus said, simple, plain words, *“I am going to be spit on. I am going to be mocked. I am going to suffer. I am going to die. I am going to rise from the dead.”* And, they did not understand it. They were blind. They were blind to the cross.

How about you? I want you to see, in today's scripture reading, how our eyes are enlightened so that we really see the cross and we see what it means to us.

It does not happen,  
until you become a 'beggar'.

I don't know how many of you realize that four days from now, which is February 18<sup>th</sup>, it is the anniversary of Martin Luther's death. (It just so happens that Sunday, 1546, happened to be February 14<sup>th</sup> just like now.) Martin Luther preached his very last sermon on a Monday, in his little home town, in Eisleben. During his sermon, he started to have severe fatigue and chest pains. He had to stop his sermon abruptly, go to a home across the street, and lay down. He laid there for a couple of days, until Thursday, early in the morning, 3:00 in the morning, on February 18<sup>th</sup>. Then, Luther began to repeatedly recite Psalm 31, verse 5.

“Lord, into Your hands, I commit my spirit.

You are my redeemer.

O Lord, my faithful God.”

He repeatedly began to say that.

Then, he repeatedly began to say John 3:16.

“For God so loved the world  
that He gave His one and only Son,

that whoever believes in Him shall not perish,  
but have everlasting life.”

And then, he said the Nunc Dimittis,

“Lord, now let your servant depart in peace,

for my eyes have seen your salvation

which you have prepared before the face of all people.”

And then, he fell silent. His friend, Justus Jonas, who was sitting at his bedside, said, “Reverend Doctor, are you ready to die, trusting in Jesus Christ, confessing the doctrine you have taught in His name?”

Luther said, “Yes.”

With that, he fell asleep and died.

What I want to draw your attention to is after he died, found in his pocket, was a little scrap of paper. It is believed this is the very last thing Luther ever wrote, with his own hand. On that little scrap of paper, just a little bit was written. The very last two sentences said, “We are all beggars. This is true.”

**“We are all beggars.**

**This is true.”**

Look at what happened in today's scripture reading. As Jesus was passing through Jericho, the Bible says there was a blind man, who sat by the road, begging. He was begging. And when he heard that Jesus was passing by, he began to beg Jesus. He said, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” He repeatedly said,

**“Son of David,**

**have mercy on me!”**

**“Son of David,**

**have mercy on me!”**

Those are the words of a beggar, a beggar, begging for mercy. I challenge you to go home, today, and get out your Bible. Look at every single time somebody came to Jesus, begging for mercy. Every single time someone came to Jesus, begging, begging for mercy, what was Jesus' reaction? Jesus always sent them away with

nothing but His blessings.

-When people came to Jesus, because they had leprosy, begging for mercy,

-when people came to Jesus, because they were blind, begging for mercy,

-when people came to Jesus, because someone they loved had died, begging for mercy,

-when people came to Jesus, because they were crippled, begging for mercy,

-when people came to Jesus, because they were sinners,

**our Lord Jesus, always gave His full mercy to those beggars. They were blessed.**

But, what about when people came to Jesus, not begging for mercy? For example, the young man who came to Jesus and said, "Lord, I have kept all of the commandments." That young man was not sent away with Jesus' blessings. If you are not a beggar, then Jesus is not your Savior.

**If you are not a beggar,  
Jesus is not your Savior.**

Jesus does not force anybody to come to Him and ask for His mercy. If you are not a beggar and you don't seek that mercy, then you will be left on your own to deal with your own sin, your own death, and to confront Hell on your own.

If you are not a beggar,  
Jesus is not your Savior.

When we began today's service we said, "Lord have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us." We were coming to the Lord as beggars, crying out for His mercy. When you come to Jesus as a beggar and you cry out for His mercy, the Lord Jesus opens your eyes and He shows you the cross. We are not blind to the meaning of the cross, anymore. There on the cross, we see the mercy of God. There we see the mercy Jesus had for us. There we

see that He died, the mighty God died, in weakness and death, to wash away all of our sins.

Probably the greatest Lutheran hymn writer of all time, a man by the name of Paul Gerhardt, wrote this Lenten hymn. It is hymn number 100 in our hymnal. I love the first verse of *A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth*. I want you to listen to the very last phrase.

*A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth.*

*Our guilt and evil bearing.*

*And laden with the sins of earth.*

*None else the burden sharing.*

*Goes patient on.*

*Grows weak and faint.*

*To slaughter led without complaint.*

*That spotless life to offer.*

*Bears shame and stripes and wounds and death*

*Anguish and mockery and saith,*

*“Willing, all this I suffer.*

***Willing, all this I suffer.”***

When it became evident, finally, to the disciples what happened on the cross, they realized this was not happenstance. Jesus did not happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This had been planned from eternity. This had been planned from the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. This was now the seed of the woman crushing the serpent's head. This was the suffering servant of Isaiah. This is the One who in Psalm 22, cries out,

“My God, my God,

why have You forsaken Me?”

This is the Lord, who willingly, in mercy, came for beggars who cry out for His mercy. And, He dispenses it to us freely. Thank God, for His mercy!

We are all beggars.

This is true.

Those who have received mercy, reflect mercy. Jesus said, “I was hungry (now He is describing beggars, isn't He?) I was hungry, you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. I was in prison, you visited me. I was naked, you clothed me.”

**We are beggars.  
That is true.  
We have received mercy.  
Let's be merciful.**

Amen.