

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke the eighteenth chapter beginning at the thirty-first verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.³² "For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.³³ "They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."³⁴ But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.³⁵ Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging.³⁶ And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant.³⁷ So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.³⁸ And he cried out, saying,

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"³⁹ Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"⁴⁰ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him,⁴¹ saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."⁴² Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."⁴³ And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Heavenly Father these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them.
Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

We are told in our Bibles that there once was a woman who had a sick daughter. She came to Jesus begging Him to heal her daughter and do you remember Jesus' reply? He said, "It is not

good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." Ouch... I can imagine that would have set most people reeling, but not this woman. She replied to Jesus, "yet even the little dogs get the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." This woman showed great faith to not only approach Jesus, but to know that Jesus would have mercy, would have pity on her daughter. And we know in the end that Jesus did indeed have mercy on this woman and heal her daughter... not because of her persistence, or her positive attitude, or even because of her family background; no, Jesus had mercy on her because of her faith. And so it is with the man in our text, Jesus had mercy on him because of his faith.

You see, Jesus has mercy upon His faithful children constantly. Not only in helping them with their earthly woes, but most importantly, with their heavenly woes. Jesus does help us, He helps those who have faith, and perhaps, the most important thing that we can ask Jesus throughout our life, is for Him to ***have mercy on me!***

In our text today, Jesus is heading up to Jerusalem to begin His final stretch of His earthly life. In fact, He even tells His disciples what is going to happen... and they don't get it. Now whether it was hidden from them for lack of faith, whether it was hidden from them because Jesus knew they would take drastic measures to stop Him, or whether it was hidden from them because they were not ready for this moment, this information was kept from them. Jesus relayed everything that was going to happen and they sort of listened but didn't really hear Him.

It reminds me of having a conversation with someone and they ask you to do something, and within two minutes you've forgotten what it was that they asked you to do. And it is not just old age, but any age, when this can happen. And it is sort of baffling as to why it happens, but none the less, it does.

And it is perplexing why it would happen to the disciples at this juncture in their ministry. Perhaps they were being prepared to experience all of the emotion and pain that was set to

come, perhaps they were being saved the mental anguish that this knowledge might bring them, or perhaps the explanation of this information was withheld until the appearing of the Holy Spirit, who would explain everything to them. Regardless of the reason, there was one... but God has withheld it from us.

Is God being unjust when He does this? Is God being a jerk when we do not know the reason or rationale for everything that happens in our lives? Is God being unfair when He doesn't clear things with us first? Of course not, but boy do we not feel cheated when we don't know the what and why and how and where and when.

And just like the story before us today. A man was without his sight... why? As Jesus' disciples asked Him about another man, was it his fault or his parents' sin? And if you remember Jesus' answer, maybe that is very applicable to all of these situations in our lives. It was neither his parents nor his sin, it was to display the glory of God.

Maybe this man was born blind and went through life this way so that Jesus could heal him... so that Jesus could have mercy on him. Well now that seems unfair, doesn't it? Why should this man, or anyone really, have to suffer? Why should he be treated so poorly by God? Why should he have to be different and go through life without sight? And are these not questions we ask about so much in his world?

God why did you...? God why must I...? God how come...? And so often we ask these questions rather accusatively. Almost as if God owes us an explanation... but He doesn't. God owes us nothing except wrath and punishment. God owes us hell... but He does not owe us an explanation. And yet, instead of giving us what we deserve, God gives us the complete opposite. And shockingly, in the Bible, God does give us the reason why so many things happen to us: sin. Our sin has a consequence and we must deal with that in this life... and it is because of our sin that many 'bad' or 'negative' things happen.

And yet, thanks be to God that He does not make us face our sin and our punishment alone... or even at all for that matter.

God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ into this world for this very purpose. Jesus came into this world to have mercy on the people of the world, on this blind man, on you, and on me. Jesus came into this world and He lived a life that none of us would envy. Beatings, mocking, betrayal, hatred, anger, bitterness... Jesus was the recipient of all of this and all because He had mercy on people. Think of all the times Jesus healed the people... and those who watched were upset because it happened on the Sabbath or happened and caused more to believe in the Savior. Jesus came into this world to have mercy on everyone, and so Jesus lived a perfect life because we can not, and He died an innocent death bearing all of our sin and guilt on the cross with Him, and He died.

Jesus lived, suffered, and died to take away all of your sin. Jesus did all of this so that He might have mercy on you... and the best part is, He didn't clear it with you first He just did it.

Jesus had mercy on you because He wanted to. He wanted to live, suffer, and die for you because He loves you.

And it is through faith in all that Jesus has done that we know this is true. And for us, faith is that open hand which clings to Christ and no other. And while at times that hand has a weak hold, we pray to God that we would never fully let go. And when our faith is strengthened it is done through God's means, and we then know Jesus did everything for me... He had mercy on me... and now I have heaven waiting.

Today is Quinquagesima Sunday... it means fifty days. We are about 50 days out from Easter but if we were not celebrating Quinquagesima Sunday we would be celebrating another important event in Jesus' life, His baptism. Today is also the day in the church year where we discuss and talk about baptism and how great it is for us.

And it is in baptism, for most of us, that God first had mercy on us. For in our baptism we are cleansed from our sin and our guilt. When

we are baptized into the name of the Triune God, we are taken from this world of sin and pain and we are brought into His loving family. When we are baptized we are made a member of the family of God... because He had mercy on us. It is not our doing, it is not because we want it, it is not because we've earned it... God forgives us, God adopts us, because He is merciful to us.

And just as Jesus healed this man's blindness, so He also heals our spiritual blindness in our baptisms. We are born dead in our trespasses and sins, spiritually blind, and hating God. Yet, when we are baptized, when God regenerates us, He brings back to life our hearts and places His Holy Spirit within us, then we are no longer spiritually blind and we can see Him and who He truly is, we are no longer dead but we are alive to Christ and to all that He has done for us, and we no longer hate God but we love Him, we love Him for all that He has done for us.

And now that we have our "sight" from God, just like the man in our text, we can follow

Jesus and glorify Him. We can listen to His word and we can do those works that He has prepared in advance for us to do. We can be God's "good children" when we trust in Jesus and know that He has already accomplished everything for us.

Dear friends in Christ, Quinquagesima Sunday marks the last Sunday of "Pre-Lent" and Lent is coming Wednesday. We have spent out time in Pre-Lent looking at how God gives us faith, God strengthens that faith, and today how God, for lack of a better term, rewards that faith. God has given us faith in our baptisms and when we hear His word, God strengthens our faith through His Son Jesus Christ when we hear His word and when we partake of His body and His blood, and God 'rewards' our faith through the mercy that He has had upon us and continues to have upon us.

Thanks be to God that He has sent His Son... without my input. Thanks be to God that He has given me my faith and strengthened it through His own means, and not through mine. And thanks be to God that He has had mercy on

me, though I deserve none, through faith in all that His Son has done and has assured me that I have heaven when this life is over.

Thanks be to God. Amen.