

Luke 18:31–43
Quinquagesima
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
February 19, 2023

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

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

The season of Lent officially begins this Wednesday on Ash Wednesday. That's when we will start on our 40 day journey to Jerusalem as we are reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Because we are sinners, we will return to the ground from which our father, Adam, was taken. That is to say: because of sin, you will die. But our Lord also took on the dust of your flesh in His incarnation to die for your sins and rise again from the dead, that He might raise you up from the pit of sin and death into which you were born. The season of Lent will culminate in the death of Jesus on Good Friday, soon followed by His resurrection from the dead on Easter. We know the story well, and every year we again take part in this divine drama as we prepare to celebrate everything our Lord has done for us in His Resurrection. We hear the story of our salvation so often, but like the disciples, we are often too blinded to understand its significance. But Jesus opens the eyes of our faith that we might understand these things, just like He physically opens the eyes of the blind beggar.

Jesus could not have been clearer with His disciples about what was about to happen and why it would happen. For the third time in the Gospel of Luke, our Lord tells the Twelve about His impending death and resurrection: "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is *written* about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished." We can't emphasize enough how important the *written* word of God is. God spoke to His people of old by the prophets, and the prophets actually wrote down God's message for the people. The Apostle Peter

tells us that even though he physically saw and heard Jesus, with his own eyes and ears, yet “we have something *more* sure, the prophetic Word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place.” Peter then continues to explain why the written scriptures are so sure, because they are divinely inspired: “no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:19–21). The prophetic Scriptures, the Old Testament, clearly revealed the coming Christ so the people would know what to look for. The Old Testament continues to be a light for the church. Our doubts and misgivings are overcome as the Holy Spirit leads us to see how perfectly Jesus fulfills everything written about Him in the Old Testament.

Jesus often refers back to the written Word of God in the Old Testament as proof that He is, in fact, the promised Savior. At the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah 61 about the Messiah’s work and then said: “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). Later, Jesus says He fulfills the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53: “And He was numbered with transgressors.” Jesus says: “this Scripture must be fulfilled in me . . . For what is written about me has its fulfillment” (Luke 22:37). Or there’s the sign of Jonah. Jesus says: “just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40). God had already revealed through the writings of the Old Testament prophets that the Son of Man, the Savior, would be delivered over to the Gentiles, mocked, shamefully treated, spit upon, flogged and killed, but after three days would rise again from the dead. God’s Word is clear enough, but the disciples, in their spiritual blindness, did not yet grasp what was said.

The writings of the prophets not only reveal what will happen; they also indicate the necessity of what God is working. The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus did not happen

by chance. We're not dealing with an accident of history here, as if there were such a thing. No, God planned before the foundation of the world how He would take on the dust of our human flesh and become man, born of the Virgin Mary when the time had fully come. Jesus was then delivered up, crucified, killed, and raised again from the dead according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:22–23). Jesus died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. He was buried and raised from the dead in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3–4), meaning the details of Christ's life, death, and resurrection were planned by God and revealed long before they occurred. In faith, the Old Testament believers trusted in God's promised Messiah. In faith, we, too, trust in the Word of God made flesh to die and rise for us. Christ stands at the center of world history, with all the prophets pointing towards Him, and all the Apostles pointing back to Him. Jesus won our salvation in time as God determined it in eternity.

But the disciples did not understand these things at first. "This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said." The disciples could not understand what Jesus was saying because their eyes had not yet been opened to understand the Scriptures. They were still under the veil of spiritual blindness common to all fallen men. In their sinful blindness and confusion, they had the wrong expectations of Jesus. The disciples thought Jesus would establish a kingdom of this world, a kingdom of glory and victory at the present time. The disciples were still blind to the true nature of God's Kingdom in Jesus Christ. They were prepared for a restoration of earthly Israel, the establishment of an earthly kingdom. But the Kingdom of God is a kingdom that is not of this world.

On the other side of the resurrection, though, things began to make more sense. The angels at the empty tomb said to the women: "Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and

on the third day rise” (Luke 24:7). And they remembered His words. The Holy Spirit brought the words of Jesus to remembrance. That same day, two disciples were on their way to Emmaus and their eyes were kept from recognizing Jesus (Luke 24:16). Jesus says: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?” Then Jesus interpreted all the things in Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Himself, finally opening the eyes of the disciples in the breaking of the bread. As Jesus opened the eyes of the blind beggar, so does He open the eyes of faith. Jesus interprets the Scriptures in light of Himself and sends the Holy Spirit to bring all these things to remembrance. As He promised the disciples in the Upper Room, so He promises us: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

The blind man sitting by the roadside begging represents us in our fallen state. Like all people, we were born walking in a land of deep darkness. We were born spiritually blind, by nature not able to see the pit in front of us, nor the spiritual dangers all around us. We were born blind to the heavenly treasures God has prepared for us in Christ Jesus. But the light of Christ has shone upon us (Is 9:2). “At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8). Jesus came into this world as the light of the world. Whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Jesus came into the world that those who do not see may see, and those who think they see may become blind (John 9:39). Jesus’s own disciples weren’t able to understand what was going on until the Lord opened their eyes. So it goes even now. We were blind until the LORD opened our eyes to understand His Word. May the Lord continue opening the eyes of our faith that we might behold wondrous things out of His Law, ever finding Christ in the written words of the apostles and prophets.

With the season of Lent beginning on Wednesday, we will embark on the dark 40 day journey with our Lord to His cross, a journey of self-denial, trials and temptations, suffering, and death, but a journey that culminates in the resurrection from the dead and eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth. As we approach the Lenten season, we pray that the Lord would reveal to us once again the meaning of His suffering, death, and resurrection for us. May the Lord who mercifully opened the eyes of the blind man and granted him to see light also enlighten our hearts by His holy Word, that we might rightly learn to know His gracious help and mercy in all confusion, and in all troubles and trials, look alone to our Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.