

Luke 18:31–43  
Quinquagesima  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
February 11, 2024

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,

As the people of Israel crossed into the Promised Land, their first battle with the native Canaanites took place at the walled city of Jericho. From an early age we learn the story about the fall of Jericho. The LORD told Joshua and the priests and warriors to march around the city, blowing trumpets for six days in a row. The people stood back and waited for the seventh day, when they were to shout, and then the walls came tumbling down and the people of Israel took the city. It's as though the fall of Jericho were already an accomplished fact. First, God says: "See, I have given Jericho into your hand." The people listened and they took the city after a one week siege. So the LORD was with Joshua, and His fame was in all the land (Joshua 6).

This first victory for Israel at Jericho should have been a sign for the people of Israel that God has the entire strategy and all its details perfectly orchestrated to take the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. The Commander of the LORD's army would go before and city after city would fall until the entire land was under Israelite control. And then at the next battle, the battle of Ai, Israel was defeated because they disobeyed the LORD by not rooting out all that is evil. The hearts of the people melted and became as water. Joshua tore his clothes and fell on his face before the Ark of the Covenant. He and the elders of the people put dust on their heads in repentance and then destroyed the evil that was among them, namely the sin of Achan, who took for himself some of the plunder of Jericho which the LORD had devoted to destruction. They

finally took the city of Ai, and then city by city worked their way through Canaan until the Promised Land was theirs (Joshua 7).

In Hebrew, the name Joshua is “Yeshua.” The name Jesus is also “Yeshua.” Jesus is the true Joshua, the commander of the LORD’s army who goes before us to show the way. He leads us from battle to battle until the Promised Land is finally conquered in His death on the cross and in His resurrection from the dead. As Jesus approaches the city of Jericho in our Gospel Lesson this morning, He opens the eyes of a blind beggar that this man might see reality. The blind man is able to see and understand what the disciples miss. The disciples are still blind to the mission of our LORD. Jesus says clearly what’s about to happen. But they didn’t understand a word. The saying was hidden from them. So Jesus opens the eyes of a blind man to show us the power He has to open our eyes as well, not only physically in the resurrection, but spiritually, right here and right now, that we might understand the mysteries of God’s Word.

Our reading begins with Jesus taking the disciples aside for the third time to tell them exactly what’s about to happen, the entire reason they are on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus says to the Twelve: “*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, shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging Him, they will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise.” Jesus is saying: “look,” “open your eyes,” “see.” But the disciples do not see. They are blinded to the message of the prophets about the suffering servant; blind to the fact that God became man to suffer, to die, and to rise for the forgiveness of all sin and for the healing of the nations. The disciples are blind to the pictures, images, types, and even direct prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the mission of Jesus Christ. Luke tells us in three different ways that the disciples did not understand these clear statements of Jesus about

His death and resurrection: “they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them. They did not grasp what was said.” The disciples are completely ignorant of what’s about to happen.

But Jesus opens our eyes to see and understand the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the person of Jesus. As He drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. Jesus draws near Jericho as did Joshua and the people of Israel. The Son of Man goes forth to war. He’s on His way to the final showdown. The LORD is preparing to lead His people into the promised land. At Jericho, Jesus tears down the wall that hides these spiritual realities from sight. Jesus heals the blind man to show His disciples and us that He alone has the power to open eyes, so that we might truly see who this Jesus of Nazareth is and why He is here.

The blind man was sitting on the roadside begging when he heard the crowd. He asked: “What’s going on?” “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by!” the crowd said. The LORD passes by before He reveals His glory. That’s what happened when the LORD passed before Moses and said: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex 34:6). Jesus of Nazareth passes by, and the blind man cries out: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” The blind man trusts that the man passing by him is a man, yes, but also more than a man. He is David’s Son, yet also David’s Lord. This is the promised Messiah, the one foretold by the prophets and pictured throughout the Old Testament. The blind man can’t see a thing, yet he sees more clearly than the disciples, the ones closest to Jesus, because this blind man has the eyes of faith. He recognizes exactly who Jesus is without physically seeing Him.

The crowd calls Him “Jesus of Nazareth.” And that He is. Yet He is also the Son of David. That’s what the blind man sees. Jesus is the man you see, but He’s also more than that. He

is the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the whole world. As Pilate posted on the cross after Jesus was handed over to the Gentiles: “Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum.” You often see that depicted on a crucifix as the letters INRI. Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews. He is the man from Nazareth, but He is also the true David, the King of the Jews and the King of the whole world. This is what the blind man sees, the vision the LORD grants to him before physical sight also comes.

The blind man must have really been making a ruckus, because the people in front rebuked him. Jesus has important things to do. Why would He stop and take care of this one individual case? He doesn't have time to answer every person's request. Yet Jesus stops everything and commands the man to be brought forward. The King summons His subject to hear his request. “What do you want me to do for you?” says the King. “Lord, let me recover my sight.” Jesus grants the man's request: “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.” Literally, “your faith has saved you.” You are saved through faith alone, through trusting in the Lord's Word about your salvation, through believing that Jesus Christ is your LORD and your God who laid down His life that you might have eternal life.

Jesus cares about individuals. He cares about the blind man and He cares about you. Cry to Him for mercy. Raise your voice to Him in the Kyrie: “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy!” Cry to Him because He hears your cry of faith and He answers you at the proper time. Wait patiently for the LORD; He inclines His ear to you and hears your cry (Ps 40:1). Have evils encompassed you beyond number? Have your iniquities overtaken you and you cannot see (Ps 40:12)? Are you poor and needy? Yes, you are. But the LORD takes thought of you. He is your help and your deliverer and He does not delay (Ps 40:17). He opens your eyes that you might see wonderful things out of His Law (Ps 119:18), wonderful things out of His

entire Word. When you read the Scriptures, pray that the LORD would open your eyes to understand the meaning of what He says. The cross is the key. If you look at every part of the Bible in terms of the death and resurrection of Jesus, your eyes will be opened and you will recognize Him where He promises to be found.

Today we stand at the gateway to the season of Lent, which begins on Wednesday, Ash Wednesday. There, as Joshua and the elders did, we will have ashes placed on our foreheads with the reminder that “you are dust and to dust you shall return.” We will focus on repenting of our sins and turning again to the LORD. There are many battles ahead of us this Lenten season. It’s a long process of rooting out the sin in our lives by the grace of God as we make our way from battle to battle until the entire Promised Land is taken. With Jesus, we begin our journey to Jerusalem, where the son of man is handed over, crucified, and then rises again from the dead. The LORD opens our eyes that we might see the way ahead.

Fight the good fight this Lenten season. Cry out to the LORD for mercy, as did the blind man on the way to Jericho. Ask the LORD to open your eyes that you might see the reality of your sin and the reality of your Savior from sin, our LORD Jesus Christ. He who opens the eyes of the blind is able to open your eyes as well, to remove the veil, that you might see Jesus Christ ever more clearly. Resolve to study the Scriptures intensely this season of Lent as you move from battle to battle towards the promised land of Easter and the resurrection of the dead. The LORD will open your eyes to see wonderful things. 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 Creed.