

Quinquagesima

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[0:00] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.! Please be seated.

I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Luke, chapter 18, where we'll mostly be this morning. We'll touch on 1 Corinthians 13 towards the end, but it's on page 1042 of your Pew Bible.

Particularly, actually, I think it's going to be in the verses we're going to be reading.

It's on page 1043 of your Pew Bible. In a few days, brothers and sisters, we will enter the season of ashes and penitence.

But the church, in her wisdom, does not lead us into Lent abruptly. She first teaches us something essential. During these desensitized Sundays that we've been going through, we've looked two Sundays ago at the sovereignty of grace.

[1:33] We've looked last week, we looked at the sovereignty of grace in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Remember that. We saw, we see how the dismantling of any confidence in human merit and the necessity of our dependence on grace.

And then last week, we learned that the human heart is resistant, is a resistant soil to the seed of the gospel. Naturally, it is. It only takes, it takes God himself to produce and to make it a receptive soil, a fruitful, yielding soil.

And he does that by endurance, not enthusiasm. We saw last week that it's endurance and faithfulness, a long obedience, as it were, that counts, not momentary and fleeting enthusiasm.

And it is Christ himself who sustains us to produce and to yield and bear fruit. Before we can go on and walk with Christ to Calvary and see the victory of resurrection at Easter, we must ask God first, this week, before we enter to Lent and begin our long, ongoing journey to Easter, we must ask God to enable us to see clearly and to remove our blindness.

In the gospel that we have before us this morning, our Lord takes the twelve aside. He takes them aside and he says, see, behold, we are going up to Jerusalem.

[3:10] He speaks this to them plainly and soberly. Soberly. And he continues, everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophet will be accomplished.

Everything that is written will be accomplished. And what are those things? He goes on and tells them. You will be delivered over. You will be mocked. Shamefully treated.

You will be flogged. You will be killed. And he will rise again on the third day. And Luke tells us that the twelve, they understood none of these things.

And this saying was hid from them. Now, it seems to me as I read this that Jesus could not have been clearer. And yet they could not comprehend what Jesus is saying.

And this is not the first time Jesus has told them what is going to happen as they go to, as he sets his face towards Jerusalem. He told them, in fact, this might be, in Luke's gospel, this is the third explicit, expounded interpretation and explanation of what will happen to him.

[4:31] Third time. And he goes into details. He gives, and yet they do not understand. This is not the first time Jesus has told them. Again, he's preparing them. He has been preparing them.

Yet still, they do not understand. And in this, in this lack of understanding, the passion predictions of our Lord are like all the prophecies of God in the Bible.

They are spoken repeatedly. God, in his love and mercy. We saw that in our readings this morning. God comes and continues in steadfast love.

The word for that, in the Hebrew Bible, is hesed. He's steadfastly loving. And in his steadfast love, he makes a covenant with Noah. He makes an ongoing covenant of common grace to all who are descendants from Noah.

And that's all of us. Right? He makes a covenant of ongoing love and grace to us. And we saw that even in the psalm that was read.

[5 : 36] God's ongoing deliverance and championing of his covenant people Israel. And yet, God's word comes over and over again.

The prophecy of God. The word of God comes. And yet, there is lack of understanding. Let these sink deep into your ears.

Until fulfillment comes. Until fulfillment comes. For at least these twelve disciples. Until the fulfillment of what God is prophesying comes. They remain veiled.

In fact, we're told that it was hidden from their eyes. The word precedes. The word of explanation precedes the passion of our Lord at the cross. But his passion.

That is his suffering at the cross. Precedes their own understanding of it. In this case, the disciples are like us.

[6 : 36] Often. They are walking towards Jerusalem. They are walking with Jesus. And yet, they are spiritually blind to the unfolding plan of God in Jesus Christ.

And it's not because they have not been told. It's because, left to themselves, they remain blind.

Luke tells us, in this gospel reading, of another blindness.

We're told that as Jesus draws near to Jericho. Another blind man. Another blind beggar sits by the roadside. We know this man's name from Mark's gospel.

His name is Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus sits by this roadside. While the disciples cannot see. As they go with Jesus. Accompanying him to Jerusalem. They cannot see before them.

Going ahead of them. Is the son of righteousness. But Bartimaeus. Blind Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus. Although he cannot see the sun rays. In the sky. He at least perceived.

[7 : 42] Something is going on. Now, let me ask us. As we look in this gospel. Whose blindness is most severe? I think that's what Luke wants us to actually ask the question.

Whose blindness is most severe? When he hears. We're told. That Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Bartimaeus cries out.

Jesus. Son of David. Have mercy. On me. The crowd. Calls him. Jesus of Nazareth. And these crowd.

The nose images of Nazareth. What did they do? They turned to this man. Bartimaeus. And they rebuked him. Be quiet. They asked him. But the blind man.

Ignored them. And he shouted all the more. Son of David. Mercy. Have mercy.

[8 : 38] Now. I think there's something going on in that. That identity. And the way he called on Jesus. By his confession.

Of the messianic identity of Jesus. Referring to him as the son of David. It reveals that this blind man shows. That he sees. Even more clearly.

Than everybody else around him. He recognized in Jesus. The promise of the Messiah. The rescuer. Of Israel. He understands his need.

And he knows that the only man who can meet them. Is this Jesus. Not just Jesus of Nazareth. But. Great David's greatest son.

And what are the needs of this man. Bartimaeus. What do you think his needs are? He's blind. It's apparent. Isn't it? But what is he crying for?

[9 : 38] He's crying for mercy. And Jesus stops. And asks. To him. What do you want me to do for you? Now. Jesus stopping to ask this question.

He's seeking to draw. This man's faith out. So that Bartimaeus can articulate. His faith. That's what Jesus is doing. And we must be willing to speak our needs.

Before God as well. Just like Bartimaeus does. Jesus is inviting you. To speak your needs. As you enter into Lent. Speak your needs.

Before your God. The Savior of your soul. The lover of your soul. Speak out your need. Not just. And. Here's really what.

What I think this week is preparing us for. To understand what those needs truly are. We must be willing to speak our needs.

[10 : 37] We must be willing to name them. We must be willing to publicly confess. Our dependence on God. As Bartimaeus does. And we must be willing to express.

Our trust in him. And now there's a. There's a. There's a. There's a. There's a thing going on here. There's. There's the felt needs. Of Bartimaeus. His blindness. And then there is a greater.

Deeper. Real. Realer need. That he has. Bartimaeus. Asks. For sight. That's what he needs. That's his felt need. He's a blind man.

He cannot own a job. He cannot. Have a job. He can. There is. He's limited. And his felt need. It is his blindness. But it's that. It's deepest need.

You know. In the world today. We. We. We still fall into these. Categories. Of. Of. Really not recognizing. What our deeper need is. In the church even.

[11:35] We fall into this. False. Category. Of wanting to meet people. We see. We use this language all the time. We just got to meet people. Where they're at. But. When we don't. This is often.

What that means. It means. Let's just. Meet them. In where they itch. Let's meet their felt needs. Give them what they want.

Is really what that means. Meet people where they're at. Is give them what they want. Now. If you're a good father. A good mother. You know that you don't give your children. Everything they want. What they want.

In fact. Most of the time. You don't give them what they want. Because to do that. Is to not serve them well. Scripture. That's true. Scripture. God's word to us.

Revealed the heart of God to us. And God does not give us what we want. He gives us. What we need.

[12:30] A man may feel that he needs a job. A restored marriage. Physical healing. All of these things are good.

And things that we should ask. Of our good father. But all of these things. Pale in comparison. To the greater. Deepest. Need that we have. Bartimaeus' deepest need. Is not. Sight. It's reconciliation with God.

Now. If Christ stood before you. And asked. What do you want me to do for you? What would you say? I know what I would say.

I have so many felt needs. That would like God. To. To. To. To. Pay attention to. And to. To. To. To bring.

[13:30] His power to bear. And solve it. But. But in truth. If I am to think rightly.

To think biblically. If Christ were to come to me. And say. What do I need? What do you want me to do for you? I think the right answer would be.

It should be. First and foremost. To recognize my circumstances. And to cry out. To him. Save me. Heal my soul.

Clothe me. With your righteousness. That's my deepest need. That's your deepest need. And. And often times.

We don't even cry to God for that. But yet he comes. And meets us. He knows what our deepest need is. He's a good father. And so that's what happens with this man. In Bartimaeus. He asks.

[14:36] He's crying out for mercy. He doesn't really know the full extent of what he's saying. He's crying out for mercy. And Jesus stops. Addresses him. And he gives mercy to him.

More than he asked. Better than he asked. Jesus. Heals him. Gives him his sight. Because he's a good father.

He meets him. At his need. His felt need. But he goes even deeper than that. He goes further than that. Jesus says to him.

Your faith. Your faith. Has made you well. Now that language. Your faith has made you well. The Greek verb. There can be both.

Mean both. Healed. And it can also mean. Saved. And I think. It's doing both here. Your faith. Has healed you.

[15:34] Of your blindness. But deeper. And greater. Your faith. Has gone. To. The uttermost. In Christ. Through Christ. Finished work. On Calvary.

And your faith. Has saved you. As you. Take hold of Christ. The faith. Being the instrument. By which we take hold of Christ. You are now saved.

And delivered. And what does that mean. For this man. What does it mean for him. We're told in the story. I think he knows what it means. He recognizes.

Something else has changed. It's not only that I have sight. Something deeper. And greater. Has happened to me. And we're told. That he follows Jesus. He follows Jesus.

He glorifies God. Because. As a response. To what God has done. That is the strongest evidence. That he received. More than eyesight. He received salvation.

[16 : 31] You know. Many in the crowd. Saw the miracle that happened. Only one. Followed the miracle worker. And if Christ has given you. What you need most.

Which is forgiveness. Has he given you that? Righteousness. Has he given you that? Adoption. Into his family.

Has he given you that? Has he given you that? Well if Christ has done that for you. Then your only response. And my only response. Is this. To follow him. Like Bartimaeus does.

And to glorify him. Bartimaeus did not say. Well. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus. I knew you were the man.

For the job. Thanks for the eyesight. I'll take my leave now. And go. No. He doesn't do that. He followed. His sight.

[17 : 30] Led. To discipleship. Grace given to him. By God. Freely given. Led.

To worship. And that's Luke's point. In this gospel. This is the point. Brothers and sisters. Those who truly receive.

Mercy. Those who truly receive. The mercy of God. Become followers of God. Become disciples of God.

Become true worshippers of God. And that's where we are. This Sunday. On the threshold of Lent. We confess the same thing.

That Bartimaeus confesses. We need mercy. We need his mercy. We are nearer now. To Jerusalem than we think. We're like the disciples.

[18 : 28] Coming to Jerusalem. We see the cross. We see the passion ahead. As we journey through Lent. Yet. Do we truly understand.

As we see it. Do we truly understand. Our desperate need for mercy. Ongoing need for mercy. Desimitide. These three weirdly named Sundays.

Ends. Not with a strategy. For spiritual and power improvement. It's not a five point plan. A three step program.

For Lent. That's not what this season. Of preparation is inviting us to. This season. Is meant to. Propel us into Lent.

With this prayer. On our lips. As it was. On Bartimaeus' lips. Lord. That I may receive. My sight.

[19 : 28] That's our prayer. But it's the sight. A deeper sight. Than just physical. Physical. Being able to see. The sight.

The what we really need to see. Is Jesus. If Jesus were to appear to you. And says. What do you need? And he stands before you.

I hope we can say. You. You are what I need. You are all I need. That's the sight.

What we are meant to see. To ask God for. To see him. Really. As it truly is. As our hope. As our light. As our life. What then.

Is this light. Of which scripture speaks. How does it bear out. In our life together. In our ongoing walk. With Christ. It's not just light.

[20 : 27] As we say. Of the body. But it's the light. Of the soul. It is love. The same love. That St. Paul describes. In 1 Corinthians 13. The love that never fails.

As is love. This is the language. That Jesus. The Bible uses. That love and light. Are synonymous. Is light. Is shed abroad. But in other places. It says. His love is.

Shed abroad. In our hearts. As Christ. The son of righteousness. The light of the world. Comes. Into our darkness. Illuminates our hearts. And our minds. To see him. Gives his love. To us. We recognize.

That he is. Both light. And love. And this is why. John says. In his epistle. Whoever says. He is in the light. And hates his brother.

[21 : 26] What is he? He is still in darkness. He is in no light. If you say. You are in the light. And you hate your brother. You are not in the light. You are in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother.

John says. Abides in the light. See the correlation. From St. John. To be. In the love of Christ. Is to be in his light.

To be in his light. Is to dwell in his love. God is light. And God is love. And as we enter the seasons. Of humility. Of Lent. Of self-examination.

