

Quinquagesima

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Date: 27 February 2022

Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] We prayed in our collect this morning that without charity, all of our actions are as nothing.

This reflects the epistle text we just heard from 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Without love, we are nothing more than an annoying, clanging cymbal, making a whole lot of noise, but void of any real substance.

Our collect goes on to ask the Holy Ghost to pour within our hearts this most excellent gift of charity, because without such love, we are indeed dead.

In our gospel reading from Luke chapter 18 this morning, we are given a portrait of love. Jesus informs his disciples that he will be making his way to Jerusalem.

Why the trip to Jerusalem? So that all things concerning what the prophets had spoken might be accomplished, might be fulfilled.

[1 : 15] Jesus was on a mission. He was on a mission, which is revealed in the following words from our gospel text.

For he, that is Jesus, will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon, and they will scourge him and kill him, and the third day he will rise again.

Nothing would deter our Lord from accomplishing his mission. His mission of being tortured. His mission of being killed, dying, and then rising from the dead on the third day for our salvation.

His mission of being killed, and the third day for our salvation. But in the midst of this mission, on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus heard the cry of a certain blind man who was on the roadside begging. And the man cried out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. These words, crying out for mercy, might be a bit odd to us.

[2 : 34] Because we are told that we are to be confident people, courageous people, go around with a swagger. We're not to be vulnerable. We're not to admit that we ever need help.

This pull yourself up by your bootstraps mentality is the very opposite of what we are called to do by God.

God calls us to come to him in lowliness, in humility, and we are to pray for mercy. The multitudes told this blind man to be quiet.

In other words, shut this guy up. But this blind beggar was persistent, and he said again, son of David, have mercy upon me.

By referring to Jesus as the son of David, the blind man was acknowledging that Jesus is the promised one. He is the long-awaited Messiah and king for Israel.

[3 : 45] He was the one who would come and deliver Israel from her enemies. Now, it's highly doubtful that this man knew enough to claim that Jesus was what we just confessed in the creed.

God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance, with the Father by whom all things were made. But he did confess Jesus as the promised anointed one, the one who would come and sit upon David's throne, the one who would come to deliver his people.

And this bold prayer stopped our Lord in his tracks. Jesus asked the blind beggar, what do you want me to do?

And the man said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. In other words, this blind man was saying, Lord, I just want to see again.

And Jesus then said to this man, receive your sight. Your faith has made you well. And as soon as our Lord said these words, this poor beggar who was blind, looked upon Jesus with perfect vision, perfect clarity.

[5 : 18] His sight was restored. And then he began following our Lord, giving glory to God. And likewise, the people, they were so astonished, they began giving glory to God.

Friends, our Lord could have said to this blind beggar, kind of like what the people said, would you just shut this guy up? He could have said, stop bothering me.

Don't you see that I'm on a mission? But he didn't. He took the time to care for this poor man and to heal him.

He practiced charity, taking time for this man who was reduced to begging, a man who was an outcast, a man who was seen as a completely annoying figure.

And Jesus cared for this man. You and I are like this beggar in more ways than we would ever want to admit. We cry out in the Kyrie, Lord, have mercy upon us.

[6 : 28] Why? Because we are people who often lose sight of that which is good and holy, exchanging the truth of God's word for a lie and therefore deceiving ourselves.

We are often blinded by the things of this world. We are blinded to God. We are blinded to truth. And we end up spiritually destitute and lost. We become blinded to the things of God because we are so enamored with the things of this world.

But our Lord does not ignore us, nor does he neglect our wayward plight. Jesus went to Jerusalem. He was on a mission. He went to Jerusalem to demonstrate the greatest gift, the greatest act of love, the greatest charity, by offering himself unto death upon a cross.

That was his mission. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

[7 : 48] Charity or love flows from the one who embodies such love. It flows from God. And this love is given to us because of the journey that led to our Savior's death.

And this love sustains us in our darkest moments because we know that our God is one who has come in complete lowliness, complete humility.

He came to pay the ultimate price by dying on a tree. And he did this for each and every one of you because he loves you.

And we know that our end in life is just a beginning because we will be raised on that final day to eternal life.

Such love should compel us then to be people of grace, to be people of mercy, to be people who love others for Christ's sake.

[9 : 04] Only God can transform people out of their darkness. But he does this. He uses us.

He uses you to be people of charity. And so in the words of our colleague, we are to ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to receive this love of God in Christ Jesus, which we do at the altar in our Lord's precious body and blood.

And then we are to allow this love to spill out to others, especially those who long for mercy, those who need our help.

Lord, have mercy upon us and enable us to be people of charity for Christ's sake. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.