

Quinquagesima

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[0 : 00] Our journey in the church year begins with Advent. We begin by focusing on the end, the end of all things, which our creeds summarize so well with the reminder that Jesus Christ will come to judge both the living and the dead.

We are reminded throughout Advent that our ultimate destination is the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God that restored and greater Eden.

Therefore, we are called to prepare for our Lord's appearance as he promises to come back for his beloved bride, the church.

We then move to Bethlehem at Christmas, focusing on a manger and marveling at the fact that the Lord of the universe came in such a lowly manner.

We then move to Epiphany, where men came from the east to worship Christ the King. We read how our Lord did his first miracle at Cana, the land of the Gentiles.

[1 : 14] And now we make our way to Jerusalem, the destination where, according to our gospel reading from St. Luke chapter 8, our Lord tells his disciples, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.

Friends, Jerusalem is our journey as well, as we now prepare to enter into this season of Lent. We walk the road of self-denial, confession, repentance, fasting, and seeking to rid ourselves from all distractions from our destination, which is Gethsemane, Golgotha, and finally that tomb that housed our Lord's body for three days in Jerusalem.

But what I want us to notice this morning are the two reactions to our Lord from our gospel text here in Luke chapter 18.

The first response is from the disciples. We go on to read in Luke chapter 18, verse 34, But they, that is the disciples, they understood none of these things.

[2 : 49] This saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken. The disciples did not understand why our Lord would be mocked, insulted, and spit upon.

They did not understand why he would be scourged and killed before rising again on the third day. The reason they didn't understand this is that they saw that Jesus was the Messiah whose sole purpose was to bring the victory of God's kingdom to this earth by implementing justice and judgment upon God's enemies.

You see, they certainly believed in the destination of Jerusalem. But they saw that place as a place where God would reign, not a place where the Messiah would die.

Ridicule, pain, and death was not in their purview. And this contradicted all that they had believed would happen when the Son of Man came for his people.

They saw glory, to quote Luther, but that glory was void of the cross. Many people today want the same thing.

[4 : 11] They want a religion of praise and worship without the acknowledgement of sin and the dire need for the cross. They want a religion of victory, a religion of success, a religion of self-help without having to take up the cross and follow Jesus.

They want Easter, but not Lent, and certainly not Good Friday. Now contrast the disciples' inability to understand these words of our Lord with the next encounter as he was approaching Jericho.

We are told of a blind man who was by the road begging. This man knew of pain, loneliness, and a life that was anything but the perfect portrait of a smiling, happy chap.

And as he heard commotion and the noise getting louder, he inquired what was actually happening. And he was told that it was Jesus of Nazareth.

So he began crying out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. The people tried to quiet him. You see, this man would have been seen as one probably rejected by God.

[5 : 35] His blindness would have been perceived as some kind of judgment and curse due to some sin. But this blind beggar did not stop.

We read in verse 39, that those who went before warned him that he should be quiet. And he cried out, all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me.

And his persistence stopped our Lord in his tracks. And Jesus commanded that this man be brought to him. And he asked this helpless beggar what he wanted.

And the man said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. Then Jesus said to him, receive your sight. Your faith has made you well. And immediately he received his sight and he followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

[6 : 39] The disciples did not understand what this blind beggar understood. This outcast. This man who was unclean. And that is this.

The goal of life is not about success and victory. It's not about vindication. It's not about achieving power and might. The goal in life is about receiving mercy and grace.

Which is found only in Christ. Beloved, there are no green pastures. There are no still waters without first walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

And our Lord walked through the valley of the shadow of death all the way to Jerusalem where his cross became his throne. Beloved, Lent is a time for us to give up certain luxuries and indulgences. It's about being less self-centered and more God-centered. Lent is a time where we begin making our way to Jerusalem. And what awaits us in Jerusalem is not judgment.

[7 : 56] It's not condemnation. Nor is it political vindication. What awaits us in Jerusalem is the cross of Jesus Christ.

And what we see in that cross is love and mercy beyond all comprehension. What we see in that cross is a God who bears our burdens so that we might have eyes to see clearly and to behold such wondrous love.

Therefore, dear friends, may we humbly bow our heads in thanksgiving as we begin our Lenten journey together following Jesus to Jerusalem.

in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.