

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Quinquagesima, February 3, 2008

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Hymns: 345 (417:7) 520:1-4, 375:1-4, 375:5

Lessons: Micah 4:1-5; Hebrews 12:18-29; Mark 9:30-32

Text: Luke 18:31-43

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear friends in Christ our Savior,

In the pre-Lent season of the Church Year we have three Sundays with Latin names that tell chronologically how long it is until the Easter Festival. These three Sundays are called Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima. These names mean 70 days, 60 days, and 50 days, the approximate time left before the Easter Festival. So today, on Quinquagesima Sunday, there are approximately 50 days before Easter. These three Sundays are like signposts pointing the way to Jesus' Passion and Resurrection. On these Sundays we hear sermons that are to prepare our hearts for the Lenten Season and the Easter Festival.

Our Lord Jesus also wanted to prepare the disciples for what was to come in his Passion. The first part of our text is the third announcement by Jesus to his disciples that he would suffer, die, and rise again. By these announcements Jesus was telling his disciples about his main purpose in becoming true man as the promised Messiah. Let us also listen to:

JESUS' REVELATION OF HIMSELF SHORTLY BEFORE HIS PASSION

1. **As the Messiah who must suffer, die, and rise again;**
2. **As the Almighty Son of God and loving Savior.**

“Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, ‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.’ Twice before this already Christ had told his disciples, *“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life,”* Luke 9:22. A short time later he also told his disciples, *“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men,”* Luke 9:44. In our sermon text another detail is added to what Jesus foretold when he said, *“He will be handed over to the Gentiles.”* Jesus would be given over to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers who were Gentiles. In our text Jesus foretold some of the grisly details of his suffering: *“They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him.”* Jesus knew exactly what horrible things would happen to him. Heathen men who delighted in tormenting accused prisoners would treat him in the most outrageous manner. He would suffer the most humiliating treatment in being spit upon. Then, even though the Roman governor had said, *“I find no basis for a charge against him,”* John 19:6, Jesus was whipped. This was a punishment so cruel and harsh that men have died of that punishment alone. Then they would put Jesus to death on the cross.

Knowing all that would happen to him there, Jesus still resolutely told his disciples, *“We are going up to Jerusalem.”* Our Lord did not try to avoid suffering and death, but rather determined to go through with it. He knew that this was his heavenly Father's will and he would perfectly fulfill it.

In announcing his Passion, Jesus said, *“everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.”* Just as Jesus on the cross said, *“It is finished,”* John 19:30, speaking of his work of

redemption being fully completed, so in our text Jesus speaks about his suffering and death as something that is already accomplished. There was no doubt about it. The Messiah must suffer, die, and rise again. For this was the Father's plan of redemption for all people. This was what the prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures foretold concerning the Messiah. For example, in Psalm 22 we have the words Jesus spoke on the cross, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" v. 1. Just as the mockers beneath the cross of Jesus mocked him, so the psalmist wrote, "**All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him,**" Psalm 22:7-8. Just as Jesus said on the cross, "**I am thirsty,**" John 19:28, so the psalmist wrote, "**My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth,**" Psalm 22:15. The prophet Isaiah foretold what would happen to the Messiah, "**He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all,**" Isaiah 53:3-6. These and many other things were foretold of the Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures, and Jesus says in our text that all of them would be fulfilled.

Jesus foretold also what would happen to him after his suffering and death. "**On the third day he will rise again.**" This was a most spectacular and marvelous miracle. The crucified Savior would rise again on the third day. In this way Jesus triumphed over sin, over death, and over the power of the devil. All sinners have in his resurrection the declaration of God that all their sins have been atoned for and that they now for Jesus' sake are righteous and holy in God's sight. This is stated in this simple sentence that Paul wrote to the Romans, "**He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification,**" Romans 4:25.

When the disciples heard all these things from the lips of their Lord, our text says, "**The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.**" The disciples did not grasp a single thing of what Jesus said; though it had been repeatedly announced to them. These things were hidden from their understanding because of their false, pre-conceived ideas of what the Messiah should do on this earth. Yet the announcement to them was not useless, for after all these things were accomplished, they did understand why all this happened. John writes, "**At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him,**" John 12:16.

Lest we find fault with the disciples for not understanding at first all that Jesus had foretold, we as believers today should realize that we don't always understand all that the Lord has in mind for us. For example, the Lord tells us through the Apostle Paul, "**We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,**" Acts 14:22. We have to remember what Jesus said right after one of the announcements of his Passion, "**If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it,**" Luke 9:23-24. To be a follower of Christ has no promise of earthly glory and honor. Rather the believer must be ready to suffer and endure hardships and persecution for the sake of his faith in Jesus. This we should do gladly, if only by God's grace we finally obtain eternal glory in heaven. We need to learn that in giving us hardships and persecutions for the sake of our Savior and his Word, the Lord is testing and then also strengthening our faith so that we endure until the end. Then when we have reached the heavenly goal and enter into eternal bliss, we will realize it was all worth it to have had to suffer persecution and hardship for Jesus' sake. Then we will also understand better what Paul said, "**I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us,**" Romans 8:18.

The same lowly Son of Man who foretold of his humiliation at the hands of the heathen also reveals himself in our text **as the almighty Son of God and loving Savior.**

2.

On his journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die, Jesus passed through the city of Jericho. Our text says, **“As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. Thy told him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.’ He called out, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy one me!’”** The blind man called Jesus **“Son of David.”** He had heard the Scriptures that spoke of the promised Messiah being the Son of David according to his human nature. Jesus did not try to silence the blind man. Earlier in his ministry Jesus had not openly permitted the people to address him as the Messiah because of their false ideas about what the Messiah would do. But now the time for his Passion had come and he permitted the blind man address him as the Messiah.

We are told, **“Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’”** Here Jesus revealed himself as the loving Savior. He showed himself to be the loving Savior who pities poor, lost sinners. We may take great comfort from this, for the Lord also pities us in our bodily afflictions that come as the result of sin. But far more important than that he has revealed his love and mercy to us as lost sinners and he has taken away our sins by his blood atonement for all sins on the cross. Give this some thought: We all are guilty of many sins and deserve nothing but everlasting shame and punishment in hell. But Jesus, our loving Savior, has taken all our sins upon himself and paid for them in full by his work of redemption.

The blind man told Jesus, **“Lord, I want to see.”** Jesus replied, **“Receive your sight; your faith has healed you. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.”** In these words we have a further revelation of Jesus as the almighty Son of God. For no mere man could have healed the blind man by simply saying, **“Receive your sight.”** Only God could do this, and Jesus here shows himself to be the almighty Son of God.

It is most important for us to believe in Jesus as the almighty Son of God. He is not a mere prophet as many heathen people today think. Because he is God’s one and only Son, his work of redemption has the power to make full atonement for our sins. Because he died for us and rose again, we may be sure that all our sins have been fully paid for and that we are truly justified in the sight of God the Father. With all confidence we may declare with Paul, **“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them,”** 2 Corinthians 5:19. Therefore, let us confess with the hymn writer:

**“The holy, meek unspotted Lamb,
Who from the Father’s bosom came,
Who died for me, even me to atone,
Now for my Lord and God I own.”**

As the former blind man and the people who witnessed his healing **“praised God,”** let us add our praise and confess with the hymn writer:

**“Jesus, be endless praise to Thee,
Whose boundless mercy has for me,
For me, and all Thy hands have made,
An everlasting ransom paid.”** Amen.

(Hymn 371:3 and 7)

