

Quinquagesima, A ✕ D 2009

Luke 18:31-43 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. 32 For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. 33 And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." 34 But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. 35 As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36 And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. 37 They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." 38 And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 40 And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, 41 "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." 42 And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." 43 And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 Last week, Jesus explained the purpose of parables was so that seeing you may not see and hearing you may not understand. Those whose eyes work properly are not always at an advantage over those whose eyes do not work as they were intended. Especially in matters of faith, seeing is not always believing. Sometimes your eyes are the enemies of your faith.

2 So it was with the disciples: seeing, they did not see. Their eyes worked well, and they knew what they had seen. They had seen miracle upon miracle: healings, exorcisms, resurrections. They had seen—tasted even—wine from water and bread and fish from nearly nothing. Their eyes watched in amazement as paralytics walked away, lepers strolled into the temple, and a dead man walked out of his grave alive. But, “see,” Jesus told them, “we are going to Jerusalem.” And seeing they do not see. They did not see, even when Jesus made it plain to them, the purpose of His coming: to suffer and die. Their eyes saw miracles and signs, which they thought displayed a triumphant savior.

3 So it was with Samuel: seeing he did not see. He saw a sinful King Saul, a king defeated by his own rebellion against the Lord. He saw and he grieved over the king’s death. Then Samuel saw the parade of sons of Jesse. He saw tall and strong Eliab, handsome and powerful Abinadab, chiseled and charming Shammah, and four other sons of Jesse who looked like they would make reasonable kings. But seeing he did not see. Samuel’s eyes only clouded his vision. The Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

4 So it is with you: seeing you do not see. Samuel wanted a warrior king. The disciples wanted a conquering Savior who would give them places of honor. Your eyes deceive you. The Godless prosper; the wicked succeed; the unrighteous triumph over the righteous. Your seeing eyes do not see; in fact, they

increase your blindness. Your blind eyes see treasures and pleasures and preachers who tell you that Jesus wants you to have these things. Your blind eyes see fellow Christians against whom you'd like to hold grudges, to whom you'd like to compare yourself. What your eyes are blind to is the true nature of the Kingdom of God, to the true nature of the Christian life: suffering and humiliation. Your eyes are liars. Repent. Seeing you cannot see.

5 But Bartimaeus, he saw. The blind beggar, who couldn't see well enough to know whose presence so excited the crowds, saw better than the crowds themselves. When they told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," he saw even more clearly than the disciples. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." They rebuked him, but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me." He made no pretensions; he had no plan for how Jesus could best deal with his problems. But even with eyes that don't work, Bartimaeus saw through faith that this Jesus, the true Son of David, the Messiah, was the only One to whom he could go for mercy.

6 Bartimaeus' prayer is yours, too. The sacred liturgy joins your voice to the voice of the beggar: "Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy." Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. The Kyrie makes no pretensions; it has no plan for how Jesus could best deal with your problems. It simply gives words to your most fervent prayer: for mercy. So as the Lord paused, stopped, on His way to Jerusalem to heal the blind beggar, He pauses in the progression of the Divine Service to His holy Sacrament to assure you of His mercy.

7 By faith, Bartimaeus saw the Lord of mercy, even though his eyes were blind. Later, with new eyes, what would he see? If he followed this crowd all the way to Jerusalem, he would see what Jesus just told His disciples they were about to see. "See, we are going 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 and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." With the eyes of faith wide open, Bartimaeus will see the Lord of mercy dying on the cross. It's how the Lord answered the blind beggar's prayer for mercy and your prayer for mercy: he died.

8 Love is lots of things, but—despite the saying—love is not blind. That's a lie. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all

things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends" (1 Cor 13:4-8). This is not a wedding text. It's a crucifixion text. Love is not blind. It doesn't overlook foibles or sins. It loves in spite of them. God demonstrates His love in sending His son to die for you. Seeing the ugliness of your sin, not ignoring it, not being blind, He has mercy by dying for these sins.

9 Faith sees what eyes cannot. Trust not what your eyes can see but what the eyes of Him who healed the blind man see. The Lord who looks not on outward appearances sees your heart. But fear not; He sees the new heart of faith delivered to you in Holy Baptism. Your faith has saved you. You see sin, but He who sees far better than you sees no sin, having died to remove your sin. Trust His eyes, not your own.

10 Faith sees what eyes cannot, at least not yet. Eyes see water, but faith sees and trusts the hand of God at the font to claim you as His beloved child. Your eyes cannot see it, but He has placed the mark of His cross upon you, and so you remind yourself it's there by making the visible sign of the cross before your stubborn eyes. Eyes see just a man in funny robes, but faith sees and trusts the work of God to forgive your sins through the mouth of His absolution man. Eyes see just bread and wine, but faith knows better. Faith takes Jesus at His word that on His altar and placed in your mouth is His Body and Blood, given to you to forgive your sins. Faith sees Jesus, feeding you with Himself. Eventually, your eyes will see as they were meant to. When your Lord returns these realities will be visible. Until then, trust your ears, not your eyes.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
Pastor Jeff Hemmer
Hope, Jerseyville