

Sermon Luke 18 31 43 8th S of Epiphany 1 Year S Quinquagesima

Sermon: 8th Sunday after Epiphany – Quinquagesima

Text: Luke 18:31-43 (v. 38)

Theme; Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

Goal: By faith, we can approach Jesus any time and beg Him for help. He faced the cross for us so that we may have confidence in Him.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We don't like when beggars knock on our door asking for something. And when we walk in the street and see a blind beggar seated on the sidewalk, we cross the road to the other side. Isn't it so?

Jesus didn't mind to be bothered by beggars. Especially if the beggar had faith in Jesus, like the one of our Gospel.

In a general sense, when we think about God's holiness and about our sinful condition, we are all beggars before God. Don't we all depend on God's mercy?

I – On the way to the cross – with His disciples

Jesus was preparing His disciples for what was to come. “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. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.””

This was the main reason of Jesus' life and ministry: to die on our behalf and for our sins on the cross. The Lent Season is beginning this week on Ash Wednesday. We will follow the path of Jesus to the cross again, as we do it every year.

But don't forget: “On the third day He will rise again”, as He already did! This is the reason of our faith! There is forgiveness on Jesus death, and there is life on His resurrection! Don't be

stupid and blind like the disciples who “did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.” They were following Jesus like many Christians nowadays, who are only wondering at His miracles and teachings, but don't believe in His promises of forgiveness and life.

Luther preached on this text and he said to his audience: *This is the way with God's Word. I (as a pastor) preach the forgiveness of sins and absolve you by Christ's command. You hear the Word, you hear that you are released from sin, and yet you do not feel that God and his angels are laughing with you, that they are your friends.*

That's why you should learn to say, God has baptized me, and God has absolved me and released me from my sins through His Word. Therefore, I believe firmly, though I don't see and feel right away that God' is smiling at me and calling me his son, that Christ, my Lord, is called my brother, and that the dear angels are rejoicing with particular happiness over me. This, I say, is what I believe; whether I see or feel it, I don't doubt it. (Quoted by Phil Brandt, pp. 56-59).

We have an advantage over the disciples: We have the fulfillment of Jesus' death and resurrection written in the Bible. We can understand better what they could. And even so, few believe and rejoice in God's forgiveness and love.

II – On the way to the cross – interrupted by a beggar
On the other hand, in this Gospel we have a good example of faith: The blind beggar. Blindness was something very common during the New Testament era, due to the poor hygienic condition and other reasons. Jesus healed several blind, but not all the blind in Israel. This one here who interrupted Jesus' walk to the cross with his cry and petition is a remarkable one.

“When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They 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 on me!””

Please, note here a huge difference as Jesus is acknowledged. The crowd answered the question of the beggar saying: “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” But the beggar called out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

For many, Jesus was just a great man, a prophet, a healer, that came from Nazareth. For the beggar, He was the Son of David! This is a confession of faith! The beggar knew the prophecies of the Old Testament that a descendant of David would come to save His people. And the beggar believed in the promises and acknowledged Jesus as the One who was the promised descendant of David, the Son of David.

The Old Testament reading for today showed us when David was chosen and anointed to be the new king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13). And the Psalm for today prophecies that a new David would come, who is the Son of God. Listen to the Psalm again: God says: “I have granted help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’ And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens” (Psalm 89) – This is not just about King David, but about his main offspring, Jesus, the Son of David, and His eternal Kingdom!

And the beggar believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of David, His Savior. Therefore, Jesus stopped for a while on His way to the cross and gave attention to the beggar. Listen to his prayer, Jesus restore his sight again, because he had faith in Jesus! And he followed Jesus, praising God!

Luther wrote: *The Gospel is teaching us the true beggar's art of how we should learn to gambol happily before God, be unashamed, and come near. For whoever is timid, let's himself be easily shunted aside and has no use for begging... But we have to doff our bashful hats and realize that the Lord God wants to have it so, that we happily come near. For it is his desire and honor to be generous and it pleases him when people look to him for every good thing. Therefore, we should be as importunate as he himself wishes us to be. For if a man is going to wait until he's worthy for God to give him something, he's never going to ask for anything. Therefore, it's best that we take off our bashful hats, open our mouths pronto, and say, Lord, I am in great straits of body and soul, and I need your help and comfort. Again, I have need of this or that, and for that reason I beseech you graciously to grant it to me.* (Quoted by Phil Brandt, pp. 60-62).

Conclusion: Do you recognize the beggar's cry in our Liturgy? In the original Greek text it says: *Kyrie Eleison: Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord Have mercy.* Mercy is shown to someone in need. We are always in need of God's mercy. Let's put aside our proud and self-confidence, and come to Jesus as beggars, asking for mercy. We need His love, we need His forgiveness, we need the daily bread, we need His peace, we need everything for this life and for the eternal life. And He is willing to give us what we need when we believe according to His will. His Word and the Holy Communion is offered abundantly among us. This is the way God answers our cry for help: *Lord, have mercy on me. Amen.* Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 26 February 2017