

Quinquagesima
St. Luke 18:31-43
February 11th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

We Are Going Up to Jerusalem

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Every year at the end of Pre-Lent (the season we are currently in) and before we enter into the Lenten season our Lord + Jesus Christ ushers us into the Lenten season by declaring, *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem.”* He further tells us (and His disciples) the reason for His going up to Jerusalem: *“He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”* Beginning this Wednesday (Ash Wednesday) the season of Lent begins, and our Lord will lead us through the Lenten season to His holy Cross. His suffering and death on our behalf to conquer sin, death and the devil, after perfectly fulfilling the Law of God, is the ultimate expression of love.

Indeed, in the Epistle for today, the blessed Apostle St. Paul tells us all about this love of Christ. For this is the true meaning of St. Paul’s words in chapter 13 of his first Epistle to the Church at Corinth. Hear the words again in light of the holy Cross of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. *“Love suffers long...love does not parade itself,...does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”* Can you hear the description of our Lord as He silently endured the shame of His betrayal and death at the hands of sinful men—at our hands—on the tree of the holy Cross? All love flows out of our Lord’s perfect love for us.

Indeed, is this not what we confess in the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther? The explanation to all the commandments begins with the words, “fear and love.” In other words, love is defined by God and not by mankind. Therefore, when this sinful and evil world decries about stomping on somebody’s love because we are calling sinners to repentance, their argument holds no water. For love is not to be defined by the raging blasphemies of this pagan world, but by our Lord and God Himself. His definition of love is obedience to Him. This is why our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ is the embodiment of love, for He bears all, endures all, suffers all from the sinful people of this evil world, in order to obey His Father’s holy will.

Therefore, if someone truly wants to show love for someone else, they need to do so according to the will of the One, True, Triune God. There is no love apart from the love expressed through the obedience to God’s commands, therefore this evil world cannot know love, nor can they express it. We know love and express it, on account of the Holy Ghost dwelling within us, and

creating and sustaining within us the love of God and love for our neighbor by His work done through the pure preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Blessed Sacraments, which always brings us to the holy Cross of our Lord + Jesus Christ. For it is there that the ultimate expression of love is shown. He suffers for us, so that we might be won for Him, and rescued and bought out of the hand of sin, death and the power of the devil. And He begins this journey to Jerusalem and His holy Cross by telling us and His disciples that He is going to do just that: suffer and die at the hands of sinful men to redeem us.

During Lent each year in the daily readings from *The Lutheran Hymnal* we hear about Moses and the people of Israel's wandering in the wilderness as we read through the Pentateuch; the first five books of the Bible (with the exception of Leviticus). Eventually, we are going to come to the point where the people of Israel will be led into the Promised Land by Joshua, whose name in Greek is Jesus. This is about the third or fourth week in Lent, and when we come to those readings remember and mark well what is taking place, and the words that are said, for here on Quinquagesima Sunday, exactly 50 days before the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, we see the True Jesus, the Name that means Savior, preparing His people to enter into the Promised Land, for mark in our text where our Lord and His disciples are when He tells them what He is about to do. He is in Samaria and Galilee, parts of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which on account of its sinful disobedience to the One, True, Triune God, was exiled by Assyria. In other words, this place is a spiritual wilderness, and our Lord spent most of His time on Earth in this spiritual wasteland proclaiming the good news of forgiveness of sins to the people of this land.

And our Gospel tells us that after He tells His Apostles what He must do, He approached Jericho. Note the similarity here between our Lord + Jesus Christ, and the first Jesus, that is, Joshua, son of Nun. They both lead the people of Israel out of the wilderness into Jericho. Joshua leads the people of Israel to conquer the sinful and rebellious Canaanites, and to put an eternal end to their wickedness. Our Lord leads His disciples—the New Testament Church—to put an eternal end to the power of our spiritual enemies: the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. The same love that led God to lead Israel into the Promised Land is the same love that our Lord employs to take the battle of our enemies to the holy Cross, where He conquered sin, death and the devil once and for all, and has given us a memorial of this beloved, once and for all sacrifice, in His Body and Blood given in bread and wine.

Here it is noteworthy to point out whom He meets in Jericho. He meets a blind beggar; in another Gospel we learn his name to be Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. The Lord asks him what He should do for him, and the answer is that he should receive his sight. Spiritually this is a picture of us. We are the spiritually blind beggars, on account of our sin, who cry out for our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ to have mercy upon us. We even said these words in the Kyrie a few moments ago, and we will repeat them in the Agnus Dei, just before we approach this altar and spiritually kneel before our Lord and Savior, and ask Him to have mercy upon us, and forgive us our sins, by placing upon our lips and tongues His true and substantial Body and Blood given in bread and wine.

And like blind Bartimaeus, He heals us of our spiritual blindness on account of our faith, which reveals to us that this Blessed Sacrament does in fact forgive us our sin, and restores our spiritual sight so that we might love God and our neighbor. Indeed, listen to the words of the Post-Communion Collect, "evermore rule our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled constantly to serve Thee." Again, our love for God and our neighbor flows out of the Holy Ghost's gifting us with faith in the merits of Christ's obedience to the Ten Commandments. The Holy Ghost acts in our hearts to credit us with our Lord's fulfilling of the Law through the faith that He created in us, so that it can be rightly said of us that we have obeyed the commandments, and therefore, that we also "fear and love God." Not because of anything that we have done, but solely on account of the work of God

in our hearts who fills us with His love and the desire to obey God. As has been said, love is the fulfillment of the Law and without the fulfillment of the Law, there can be no love.

And without love, we are spiritually blind; we are beggars in need of a Savior. Thanks be to our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ, Who today begins His journey to the holy Cross, carrying us along with Him, for what does blind Bartimaeus do after he is healed of his blindness, and he can see again? He *“followed Him, glorifying God.”* During the upcoming Lenten season, we follow our Lord to His holy Cross, glorifying Him by reflecting upon the Ten Commandments, and how we very much lack love, both for Him and for our neighbor. And we like blind Bartimaeus, during this Lenten season, will cry out many times, *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* For our sins are great, and we are indeed spiritually blind on account of them. But we will also glorify our Lord, for the Apostles may not have understood what our Lord was telling them, but we have the gift of hindsight, and we know that our Lord’s journey to Jerusalem, the city of peace, will end in our eternal peace, as He goes to battle and war against the powers of evil—sin, death and the devil—and conquers them once and for all, and gives us a meal in which we can receive the reward that He won for us: forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation.

Therefore, let us come to this holy Altar, receive our Lord’s Body and Blood given in bread and wine, and receive our spiritual sight, so that by the Holy Ghost working in us, we might have faith in God to fervently love Him and our neighbor. May God Almighty grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.