



QUINQUAGESIMA

50 days before Easter

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Andrew Richard

Collect of the Day:

O Lord, mercifully hear our prayers and having set us free from the bonds of our sins deliver us from every evil; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Introit:

Psalm 31:1, 5, 9, 16 (antiphon: v. 2b-3) –
An extended Kyrie

Psalm:

146 (antiphon: v. 2) – *“The LORD opens the eyes of the blind.”*

Old Testament Reading:

Isaiah 35:3-7 – *Jesus fulfills this prophecy in today’s Gospel reading*

Gradual:

Psalm 77:14-15 – *God works wonders, the foremost being redemption*

Epistle:

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 – *The love of Christ never fails and never ends*

Tract:

Psalm 100:1-3 – *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

LUKE 18:31-43 ESV

Author and Date:

Written by St. Luke who compiled eyewitness testimony of the ministry of Jesus, likely writing between AD 58-60 while he kept company with St. Paul during Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea. Luke 18:31-43 has parallels in Matthew 20:17-19, 29-34 and Mark 10:32-34, 46-52. Between the two parts of today’s account, Matthew and Mark both include the request of James and John to sit at Jesus’ right and left in his kingdom. Jesus replies, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). The healing of the blind man illustrates Jesus’ service to mankind as he prepares to serve in an even greater way by offering his life as our ransom.

³¹ 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.

- Verses 31-34 detail the “going out” of the master of the house two weeks ago and the sower last week. This is what Jesus came out to do.
- This is the third time Jesus has foretold His death, the first time in Luke 9:21-22, the second in Luke 9:43-45. This third one is the most detailed.
- The prophecy from Isaiah 35, “written about the Son of Man,” will begin to be fulfilled on the way with the healing of the blind man (35:5). The remainder of that prophecy will be fulfilled at the cross where the “haunt of jackals” (35:7) on Golgotha is transformed into the restoration of paradise to mankind.

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.”

- Jesus details with incredible detail and accuracy what is going to happen to Him.
- ³⁴ But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.
- The disciples were blind to what Jesus was saying (to pick up the language from the next section of the text). They would certainly see everything happen to Jesus, but they wouldn’t understand it rightly until Luke 24:45 when Jesus appears to His disciples on the day of His resurrection: “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

³⁵ As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

- Jericho is about 15 miles east-northeast of Jerusalem. This is the procession that will turn into Jesus' procession into Jerusalem in Luke 19:28ff.
- We can see parallels between the disciples and the blind beggar. They don't see for themselves, but have to ask things of others. We should also see ourselves in the blind beggar. We have nothing before Jesus. Our great sin is failing to realize this. We become confident of ourselves, like a blind man who thinks he has 20/20 vision, like a beggar who thinks he's a millionaire. The final step as we approach Lent is seeing ourselves for what we are: blind beggars who need to see Jesus.

³⁶ And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant.

³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

- The people announce Jesus as heralds going before the King.

³⁸ And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

- The beggar erupts with begging, praying the Kyrie very loudly.
- "In the ancient world, the king would sometimes visit a village or city. Anticipating his coming, villagers would line the road waiting for him to appear, and as he entered the city they would cry, 'Lord, have mercy!' Amid their shouts, one could also hear petitions from the crowd for gifts that reflected the king's mercy, such as food, protection, lower taxes, and always and most important, peace. Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is an excellent example of this. In the Eastern Church, Christians adopted the practice of petitioning for gifts with cries of mercy as the clergy entered the church during the procession to the altar at the beginning of the service. This secular practice was adopted for their King – the King of the Universe – for He was coming to them in His Word to bring the gifts of His presence." (Arthur Just, *Heaven on Earth*, 189)

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!"

- This is what the devil tries to do. He tries to make you silent before Jesus: "He doesn't care, he doesn't want to hear it, he doesn't want to be bothered by you." And this is because prayer is detrimental to the devil's schemes, as it says in the Large Catechism, "What do you think has accomplished such great results in the past, parrying the counsels and plots of our enemies and checking their murderous and seditious designs by which the devil expected to crush us, and the gospel as well, except that the prayers of a few godly people intervened like an iron wall on our side?... Now they may confidently laugh and make their snide comments. But by prayer alone we shall be a match both for them and for the devil, if only were persevere and do not become weary" (III.31).
- The opposition to the blind beggar's prayer doesn't silence him, but makes him cry out louder still. This is what faith does: it clings to what it knows of Jesus and ignores everything else. "With the inward eyes of his heart this blind man saw inside of Christ

more than all the Jews did with their outward eyes" (Johann Spangenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 102).

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?"

- "Jesus stopped" – Literally "Jesus stood." This is significant because Jesus just told His disciples He has an urgent date with death and yet takes the time to pause for our lowly human needs. This gives us confidence that our Lord is never too busy or preoccupied to hear our petitions and begging.
- When we pray the Kyrie during the Divine Service or privately we can think of Jesus asking us this same question: "What do you want Me to do for you?" We don't pray the Kyrie idly, with nothing in particular in mind, but we trust that the same Lord who stopped this entire procession so that He could inquire of a blind beggar stops before us poor beggars and inclines his ear to us as well.

He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight."

- "Lord" – The relation of a begging subject to a merciful and almighty King.
- "Let me recover my sight" – Perhaps more literally, "Let me see again." We pray the same thing going into Lent. "Let me see again. Jesus, let me see again your cross and passion, your precious death and burial (Luke 22:47–23:56). Let me see again your blood of the new covenant, shed for me for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 22:20; Matthew 26:26-28). Let me see again your love that is patient and kind (1 Corinthians 13). Let me see again how you give up your body (Luke 22:19)."

⁴² And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well."

- Literally, "See again, your faith has saved you." What's important here isn't that his faith made him physically see again. It won't be long and his eyes will sleep the sleep of death. What's important is that his faith saved him, that his eyes will open again on the Last Day and behold the same Lord who stands before him when his eyes open in this account. It is this faith that we desire: saving faith that sees Jesus.

⁴³ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

- "Followed him" – He continued in the procession that led to Jerusalem, that led to the cross, that led to the death of Christ.
- "Glorifying God" is what beggars do: "This one here, he did this for me." This is the briefest definition of what it means to glorify or praise God: simply recount what he has done.

Summary: As with the last two weeks, this last Sunday in the pre-Lent season teaches us to despair of ourselves and rely on the grace of Jesus. We are beggars before a merciful King. The Alleluias are about to disappear, but the Kyrie never does. Jesus' ears remain constantly open to our cries. We receive our wages according to his desire to give, we receive the Word according to his reckless love, and we cry to him as beggars who have nothing, but expect to gain all good things from his nail-pierced hand.

