

The Son of Man Came to Serve

Matthew 20:17-28

Quinquagesima (Anniversary) Sunday

February 14, 2010

Beloved of the Lord.....It is by the grace of God alone, we mark and observe the 51st anniversary of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. On this day we give all thanks and praise to God, that He by His pure mercies has not only given us the words of eternal life, but He has kept His Word pure among us. In a world where heresies and false doctrines abound, the truth yet prevails here and in our LCR fellowship, but we give God alone the glory for this. Hymn #640, vs. 3 puts our Church Anniversary in a proper perspective. *“Grant that we Thy Word may cherish, And its purity retain. Lord unless Thou art the Builder, All our labor is in vain. Keep us from all pride and boasting, Vanity and foolish trust, Knowing that our work without Thee Soon will crumble into dust.”* Today’s lesson then concerns God’s sincere admonitions against the pride of our heart, and then Jesus Himself teaches us that whatever our station or office may be, we are all here to serve one another, for the disciple is not about his master, nor the servant above His Lord. Yet our Lord became the servant of all, that He might redeem all men from sin. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” May we dear brethren throughout the history of this divinely blessed congregation, do likewise. “Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”

I. Christ warned His disciples of His cup of suffering.

In our lesson today Jesus and His disciples were on the way to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. It would soon be the night He was betrayed, yet on the evening of the Passover He would give to His Church that blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion, “Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.” Since Jesus would soon give His body and blood on the cross as a ransom and payment for the sins of the world, it was of the utmost importance that Jesus’ own disciples be prepared to see their Lord suffer and die, yet rise again the third day. As they journeyed to Jerusalem then, Jesus pulled the disciples off the road to speak privately with them. In clear and straightforward language Jesus told them He would be betrayed to the chief priests who would condemn Jesus to death. The Jews would deliver Christ to the Gentiles who would mock Jesus, whip Jesus, and nail Jesus to the cross. Yet Jesus would rise from the dead the third day. As disciples of the Lord we should always remember that God’s Kingdom, though glorious above us, is yet a Kingdom of the Cross here below. The path to heaven is here a path of suffering. The cross leads to glory. We do not know what is in store for Good Shepherd for the next 50 years, but we do know every

cross given is for the glory of His name and He never gives more than we can bear. Therefore fear not only believe. Jesus said, “ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

As Jesus and the disciples continued their journey to Jerusalem the proud mother of James and John came to Jesus, asking that her two sons be given a high place of honor in God’s kingdom. Jesus said, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” Can you suffer as I will suffer? Can you pay the price that I have volunteered to pay? Jesus here rebuked the pride of the mother and her two sons, even our own pride. What is the price, dear Christian of our pride? What was the payment the Son of Man paid so that all our sins of pride would be forgiven? James and John, the two sons who were also disciples said, “We are able”, but they were not. Neither are we able to pay the ransom, for we cannot appease God’s eternal wrath against our sin. Proud sinners have no offering to give God in exchange for their proud sins. Only Jesus, that holy, spotless, and undefiled Lamb of God could pay that price. That is why He came. He came to suffer. He came to be baptized with fire. He came to drink the cup of sorrows for the sins of all men. On the cross, though Jesus had no proud sins of His own, all our sins of pride were placed upon Him and He paid the price. God’s eternal wrath burned against Him for all our sins of pride. Will we yet be proud? Won’t we humble ourselves before Him and serve our fellow man? And so “the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The many that Jesus came to save, was the ALL. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

II. Men seeking the honor of men. When we see those notable disciples, James and John, desiring a high place of honor, we see ourselves seeking to be honored above other men. But when we seek our own honor, can God be honored? Did you notice what happened when the other ten disciples realized that two disciples were seeking a higher seat above them? “When the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.” All the sudden they became very angry! We can easily imagine their words. *Is Jesus going to honor them above me? They don’t deserve such honor, but I do!.....* Indeed we know what they were saying even though we were never there, because we’ve all said the same things before in our heart. Are we any different from these proud disciples? Your own conscience and mine tell us the answer. Thus Jesus says to every proud sinner who seeks their own honor, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the

honour that *cometh* from God only?” Dear believer, when we walk by the spirit we seek God’s honor alone. When we walk by the flesh we seek the honor of men. “The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.”

How is it that we seek the honor of men? First, we desire recognition for our work. See what I’ve done? Why don’t you thank me for it. Second, we covet a higher position than our present one. This can happen in the workplace, or even in a congregation with its different offices or positions. Third, while we have no problem saying bad things about other people, we want only good things to be said about us. We want other people singing our praises, and only our praises. Fourth, when we have an office, we want other people to serve us. It does no good being high, unless there are many below to serve us. Such is the *honor* of men. Yet in the Scriptures our Lord teaches us not to assume nor take the higher seat, lest one in authority tell us to sit some place lower. Let every proud sinner then be forewarned, God has many ways of smiting our proud hearts so the haughtiness of our soul is publicly exposed before all men. If we are lifted up in pride, won’t God bring us low? Jesus said, “whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” No matter how humble a Christian may appear to be, all Christians have much pride to be repented of. The proud who think they have no pride to repent of will die in their sins of pride with no forgiveness. But “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Because of Him our sins of pride are truly forgiven. “Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace.”

III. Whoever will be chief, let him be your servant.

After Jesus heard the request of the two disciples and their mother, Jesus told them that though they would indeed have to drink the bitter cup of suffering for the sake of God’s kingdom, only the Father could give those high places of honor in that Kingdom of Glory above. Jesus spoke these words in His State of Humiliation, as a man under the authority of God. It should also be said here that there are degrees of glory in heaven. Those who work with greater zeal in God’s kingdom will receive a greater reward above, though it is still a reward of God’s mercy not man’s merit. The disciples for example, most of whom drank the bitter cup of a martyr’s death, received their greater reward after death. In Matthew 19 Jesus promised the twelve a greater glory above. “When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Though all this is true we nevertheless must understand no true servant of God ever seeks their own glory but we seek to glorify God alone for saving us from our sins. Thus God’s spiritual Kingdom is different from

the earthly kingdoms of the Gentiles who exercise dominion and authority over others. “It shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister” namely your servant. This doesn’t mean if you want to be great you should be a minister. The word minister here means to serve, or be a servant. Greatness then in the Kingdom of Christ is not obtained by those who covet higher positions, but it is obtained by those who live only to serve others. Thus dear Christian if you truly want to be fruitful in God’s kingdom, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

When we consider Jesus spending every waking hour healing the sick, praying for the troubled, preaching the Gospel to the poor, washing the feet of His own disciples, suffering and dying at the hands of men yet rising in glory, we see a True Servant of God the Father. Indeed Jesus served all men and His entire life was a living sacrifice. When we consider His humble ministry of service, though He was Lord of all, does it matter so much what our office or calling is in church? Isn’t God just as pleased with a child who clears a dirty table as the pastor who preaches a sermon? When faith is at work regardless of our station or calling, isn’t all we do to the glory of God? Didn’t Jesus say, “Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” Shouldn’t we all joyfully serve others, the many, the ALL for whom Christ died? Can’t we happily do whatever needs to be done, for the sake of Him who has done all. May all be done to His glory, and whatever we do may it be done with all our might. But let us also remember those words, “Here am I, send me, send me.” The willing spirit always wills to do more. Truly there are no lords in the Christian Church, but all are servants, redeemed by the same blood of that most humble servant, our LORD Jesus Christ who said, “Ye are brethren.” Let us then as brethren humbly serve the Lord all the days of our life – whatever station or calling may be. For “the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Amen.