

Quinquagesima

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. And they will scourge Him and put Him to death. And the third day He will rise again.”

These words are plain and clear.

They say where Jesus is taking His disciples and what will happen to them there.

But *“They understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.”*

Luke has got to be exaggerating here! How can they understand NOTHING?!?

Surely, they at least caught the destination of Jerusalem—not Cleveland.

Surely, they understood that prophecy would be fulfilled.

Even the individual details of the Passion are spelled out.

But still, they understood nothing. How is this possible?

Jesus taught the answer last Sunday. The Sower and Seed were not at fault.

Their confusion had only to do with them and not with Christ.

Either, like the hard path, they weren't paying attention.

Or, like the rocky soil, they didn't want Him to be saying that.

Or, like the weedy soil, they were too distracted by their own expectations.

Bottom line: understanding is believing and believing is understanding.

Those don't understand who don't believe.

So if you want to understand, seek first the Holy Spirit and faith.

And this faith comes always as a gift—not something that you earn or deserve.

So, faith and understanding is to be cherished in heart and nurtured by Word.

Never taken for granted or assumed.

Understanding and faith also are forever challenging your assumptions.

Therefore, for faith to be received, you must constantly become like a little

child—absorbing and receiving what Christ says like a sponge.

...not like an adult who selectively takes only what fits your world-view.

It is this child-like receptivity which particularly marks catechumens.

Today, as we rejoice in the Baptism of Mitch and Heather and re-affirm our own, it

is especially this quality which we think about.

Once baptism is in the past, it is easy to think that we have now arrived.

Arrived at our destination of knowledge, understanding, maturity and wisdom.

But these things are not the goal! Jerusalem is the goal and we are still on the road.

Notice, that it is the ones who went before Jesus who told Bartimeus to quiet down.

They began as Jesus' disciples—as His followers.

But after they reached a certain level of understanding, they thought they knew where He was headed and what He was going to do.

But they were wrong. They thought that Jesus would ignore the beggar but Jesus had in mind to help Him.

They thought that being the Son of David meant that He would exercise power.

Jesus knew that it was rather about having mercy.

They thought He was going to the palace to sit on the throne.

But in fact, He was going to there to stand before the throne and be condemned.

The true throne of David is not a chair but a tree.

It's not that they were bad people who sought to change Christ's destination.

It is simply that, in their exuberation, they left off the position of a disciple and tried to become His leader.

The cure for this is to become a catechumen again.

Today and everyday, become a follower of Christ and not His leader.

And so, today, we are in the throng as followers.

And here, we are given understanding of Jesus' destination, purpose and future.

As Christians, we are not left in the dark about these things.

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.”

This revelation is as true for us as it is true for them.

The temptation is to use this true and valid information to form a new world-view.

And with this new world-view—formed by Christ to be sure—we would run ahead.

But this would be a mistake.

For Christ does not give His Word in order that we might see the world better.

He gives us His Word in order that we might see HIM better.

Jesus tells us about what is down the road, not so that we might predict the future.

But so that we might be better equipped to continue following Him.

Remember, after all, these words (and this understanding) come to His disciples.

As soon as we cease being followers, they will completely allude us.

...no matter how much wisdom, learning, maturity, understanding or holiness we might have accumulated.

For our journey to Jerusalem is not about following a road map.

It is about following Christ Jesus, our Lord wherever He may lead.

This is why even the “best” and “strongest” Christians too often fall away.

They take what Christ teaches on the road and make conclusions, predictions and assumptions about what this will mean for them.

And when life throws them a curve, they begin to doubt and question—not their own conclusions, predictions and assumptions as they ought—

But they doubt and question Christ Jesus instead.

But for you who hear these words and remain always as a newly-baptized, baby disciple and follower, Christ will never lead you astray.

As Christ's follower you will always be with Him on the path to Jerusalem.

...surprised by each new turn and everything He does in your life.

But always knowing and never doubting Who it is that leads you.

Therefore always confident and full of certain hope about where He is leading.

5 Then let us follow Christ, our Lord,

And take the cross appointed

And, firmly clinging to His Word,

In suff'ring be undaunted.

For those who bear the battle's strain

The crown of heav'nly life obtain.

AMEN.