

The blind man outside Jericho cries out, “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**” It’s the same plea that the church sings at the beginning of the Divine Service, the first of the major parts that are ordinarily present, the Kyrie, “Lord, have mercy!” It is the cry that often meets Jesus; we will hear it again in two weeks’ time from the Canaanite woman.

And in both of those cases we see how expansive this cry is. It is not a narrow prayer for forgiveness. Sometimes I am asked, “Pastor, we just had the confession and absolution right at the beginning of the service, and then here, we’re asking for mercy just shortly after. Didn’t we just get forgiven?” The snarky way to answer that is, “Oh, so you don’t need forgiveness now?” We live by the forgiveness of sins. There is never a time we do not need the forgiveness of sins. There is a reason that at the heart of all the Means of Grace, the preaching of the Gospel, Holy Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, they all deliver to us, first and foremost, the forgiveness of sins. God is teaching us something in that! He’s saying, “This is what you need the most.” And so He repeatedly, richly, constantly provides us that, what only He can give.

But beyond the simple and sort of snarky answer, is the point that this blind beggar, the Canaanite woman, and so many others illustrate. *Kyrie, eleison*, “Lord, have mercy,” is an all-encompassing plea. It is the cry for whatever it is that we need. Whether we recognize what we lack, or when we have no idea where to even begin. That’s why when we see or hear something terrible, the worst sorts of things that can happen in this life, we simply say, “Lord, have mercy!” Asking in the face of whatever horrific things have happened, whatever needs there may be in the whole rotten mess of whatever, that God would see to it. The Canaanite woman cries for mercy because her daughter is oppressed by a demon, she desires relief for her.

Today Jesus hears the cry, and asks “What is it you want Me to do for you?” Here we see a beautiful teaching from our Lord. We don’t just have the example of people crying out for this in Scripture, we see it has divine approval. Sometimes people ask things that they shouldn’t. That in fact happens near this same time. Matthew and Mark tell us that after our Lord predicts His passion, what we heard at the beginning of today’s Gospel, and before He encounters this blind beggar, James and John send their mom to ask Jesus something. He asks them, “**What do you want Me to do for you?**” They ask if they can sit at His right and left in His glory. He answers them, “**You do not know what you are asking**” (Mark 10:36, 38). They want earthly glory, worldly exaltation. Jesus’ glory, those given to be at His right and left in that moment, is His cross and those who out of all humanity hang there with Him.

This blind man cries out not for glory or greatness, but for mercy, for help, for aid. Jesus asks him the same question. “**What do you want Me to do for you?**” The blind man, accustomed to begging, asking for any and everything he needs to survive, is unashamed to hold back his request. He asks for sight. The mercy of God that he desires is that he could see again.

You may have a physical malady. You might bear some mental anguish or emotional distress. Life for you has brought some burden of one type or another. Your heart may be filled with sorrow. You may be fearful of a situation or anxious over the near or distant future. Today your Lord shows you that He is happy to hear you cry out for help. He invites you to be unashamed in saying to Him what it is you desire Him to do for you. He has come to have mercy, to provide for whatever need it is that you have.

What do you want Jesus to do for you? Let it not be for earthly riches, power, or comforts. Let it be for mercy. What you need His mercy for may indeed be very clear to you, painfully and tearfully obvious. Or it might be more like hearing terrible news, you don't know where to start, what to say, other than "Lord, have mercy." Bring that to Him.

We are also taught today where we seek that mercy, where we see it given in simple clarity. We heard it at the beginning of today's Gospel. They "**are going up to Jerusalem, and [Jesus] 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**" (Lk 18:31, 32–33). And in the next chapter, Jesus rides into Jerusalem, it's Holy Week, when all that is indeed accomplished.

Mercy, for whatever need it is that you have, is inseparable from our Lord's cross and resurrection. What is it you want Jesus, what is it you need Him, to do for you? Above all other things, what He has already done. To bear the heat of the day, to suffer the burden, to pay the penalty of all your sin on the cross, to show that He has made perfect satisfaction by rising from the dead.

If He can do that for all humanity, He can, and He will certainly show mercy to you, particularly, concretely, specifically. And that mercy is anchored in the cross He has already borne for you, in the victory His resurrection bestows upon you. Are you filled with shame over something you have done? Look to your Lord who, though He had done nothing, gave His face and back to be struck, fixed naked to a cross for all to see, and who was then vindicated being raised by the Father.

Do you long for mercy for an anguished spirit or mind? Look and behold the One who endured total forsakenness, total abandonment. You are not alone. Not simply because misery has good company, but because our miseries and sorrows have been carried by Him. He will provide comfort for your grief by His resurrection. He is the God who has already defeated death. He will uphold you with the promise of full restoration and renewal, that even should your eyes fail, your limbs weaken in this life, you have been raised up with Him, you will be renewed, glorified, made incorruptible. He gives you a treasure that moth and rust cannot destroy, that thieves cannot break in and steal, that cancer cannot eat away.

It is this Lord, to whom you are bid to turn in faith, to whom you bring all your needs and longings, who comes to you in the blessed Sacrament. Come to the table today and as you do, cry to Him in your heart for mercy for whatever it is you want Him to do for you, whatever it is you recognize you need that only He can give, and realize that here He gives that mercy. Here He satisfies that need with Himself, gives you the pledge that you will have that full and plenteous redemption that will never wane, never be taken away.