

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A poor blind beggar cries out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” Jesus stops, brings the man to himself, and asks “What do you want me to do for you?”

It does not take a psychic to know what a blind man wants. Jesus is not playing dumb. The one who knows how to answer our prayers before we even ask is not toying with the blind man. The blind man asks the expected: “Lord, let me recover my sight.” Now God acts upon His promises.

No spitting into dirt and making rubbing compounds to be applied on closed eyelids. No smacking of foreheads with an open palm and the words “Be healed!” No sending this blind beggar to wash in the nearby river Jordan. Simple words will suffice. “Recover your sight; your **FAITH** has made you well.”

What is faith? Is it something you do? Can you buy it, exercise it, store it up or lose it? How do you get it and how does **FAITH** make you well?

An infant is born helpless and dependent. Her mother draws near and smiles. She gently holds, cuddles, strokes, and speaks calmly. She presents her breast and satisfies the hungry body of her baby. She wraps and holds this child tightly to her chest until the satisfied baby sleeps. The next day her baby cries out for relief again. Once more, mother satisfies and comforts. Over days, weeks, and months this infant girl learns to trust her mother and most likely her father as well. She believes in their security and in their provision. This trust and belief that mom and dad are good, that they care for her needs, and that they will lovingly provide all she needs is evidence that she has **FAITH** in them as parents!

FAITH is to trust and believe. Therefore, **FAITH** always needs an object – something or someone in which we trust and believe.

The child has **FAITH** in her parents. She grows as she receives nourishment. She exercises her identity in the family as she matures. She acts on her faith as she lets them clothe her or cut her hair. She learns from them because she trusts and believes they have her own good in mind to do these things.

The blind beggar hears a commotion. He knows not what is happening but asks. Then he hears that the object of his faith is passing by. He cries out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” The blind beggar’s faith moves him to action! Why does he cry out? Because the beggar has heard of all Jesus has done. Why does the infant have **FAITH** in mom and dad? Because she has experience; she has seen and received their goodness, care, and provision. The blind beggar has heard of Jesus healing the lame, the infirm, the deaf, the mute, the leper and the blind. The beggar may even have heard of Jesus raising the dead.

Jesus hears the cries of the beggar for mercy. Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” Now – that which the beggar has heard of and believes is possible has come to him in person. The beggar trusts that Jesus is Lord, that He is the Son of David. He trusts that Jesus has come to have mercy on others. Now the blind beggar exercises his faith that Jesus will have mercy on him as well. “Lord, let me recover my sight.”

The blind beggar’s **FAITH** is more than just an ascent to knowledge. It’s not just knowing that Jesus can heal his sight. Faith believes Jesus wants to heal his sight. Faith believes Jesus wants to be merciful to this man. Faith believes Jesus will act!

I could stand outside the gate of the wizard of Wallstreet and cry out “Oh Mr. Buffet, please heal my financial woes.” Now I could have all the faith in the world that Mr. Buffet can do this. I know he can. But I really don’t believe or trust that he will. There is no action or promise by which I can grasp and hold onto as belief!

Here is where our faith in God often suffers at that hands of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. We can trust that God is good and loves us in the head –

by our knowledge. But when the world throws sorrows and struggles our way, when the devil tempts us, and when our flesh desires something other than what we are receiving our trust in the goodness of God may wane.

Tragedy has a way of exposing our weak faith. The spouse who just buried a long-time husband or wife might question God's timing. Why now? Why in this way? Why with all this suffering and expense? The head may know the promises of God in eternal life for those who die in Christ, yet the flesh may want its own way!

Premature death of an infant or child may cause a parent to question "Is God really good?" Why does a loving God let me suffer so? Why wouldn't an all-knowing God step in miraculously? Why didn't God answer my prayers? Here the devil works overtime in all our wants and desires. The devil pokes us with questions "Is God really good?" Our own sinful flesh jumps in with, "It's not fair!" "Why me?" "Why do I suffer when others don't?" These questions pop up often as our sinful flesh is denied what it desires through God's infinite wisdom.

As we head into the Lenten Season, remember the question Jesus asked of the blind beggar: "What do you want me to do for you?" As we come to the worship and confess our sins, what do you want Jesus to do for you? As you come forward to receive bread/flesh, wine/blood what do you want Jesus to do for you? Do you want His grace – the undeserved gift of love through Jesus despite your sinful mistrust and selfish deeds? Do you want His Word of forgiveness restoring you in a righteousness not of your own but of Christ?

The blind beggar had faith that Jesus could restore his sight. He also believed – had faith – that Jesus would act; he trusted Jesus would do this – **FOR HIM!**

Lent follows our Lord Jesus acting **FOR US!** He who knew no sin washed in the Jordan of our sins. He touched our infirmities of flesh. He bore our transgressions and by His stripes we are healed! The cross that brings death to Jesus brings life to us. The grave that could not hold our Savior will not hold those who trust all that

Christ has done **FOR THEM!** While the mortal flesh sown in weakness, sin, and trespass is put into the grave, a new man will emerge! In Baptism – we who die in Christ are raised to new life – His resurrected life. This is Christ’s Lenten and Easter promise, **FOR US!**

This faith to trust in Jesus comes not from ourselves but from God! It is His actions on our behalf that creates faith. Like the blind beggar, we may not see all the previous miracles of healing. We are not eye-witnesses to His suffering and death upon the cross. Nor have we seen His resurrection glory. Yet, we have heard! The Word has done its work upon us. As St. Paul reminds us, “Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God.” The blind beggar heard of Jesus and his miracles. He trusted that the Lord could heal his blindness. And, most importantly, the blind beggar believed Jesus would do this **FOR HIM** as well.

This is what it means for faith to reach out and grab ahold of the actions and promises of its object. For Christians, faith grasps ahold of Jesus. It trusts Jesus’ actions upon the cross as good for forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Despite the lies, the frustrations, and the urgings of the devil, our fallen world, and our own sinful flesh – faith takes hold of Jesus and doesn’t let go, believing God’s promises of redemption are true – for us!

To sustain this faith, God continues to give His gifts of Word and Sacrament. Through these gifts we trust and believe that God not only wants to forgive us but has – in Christ! We have faith that this world is not our home. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come!

In this faith we live... through Lent, Easter, and every season singing joyfully:
Most heartily I trust in thee; Thy mercy fails me never.
Dear Lord, abide; My Helper tried, Thou Crucified,
From evil keep me ever.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.