

Pastor B.J. Froiland  
Quinquagesima  
Luke 18:31-43  
February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Christ told His twelve disciples, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished." Can you imagine what the disciples would be thinking? Finally, no more traveling around in the wilderness, preaching to the resentful masses saying, "The Kingdom of God is at hand!" No more lepers, no more crippled, no more demon-possessed people crying out for help. No more scribes, Pharisees, and teachers of the Law bringing their ugly accusations and false charges. Finally, the prophecies would be fulfilled. The Prophet Isaiah said: "Strengthen the weak hand, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, 'Be strong; fear not! Behold your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.'" Finally Jacob's dream of the angels of God ascending and descending between heaven and earth on the ladder said to be the Son of Man would come true when they all went up to Jerusalem. The disciples may have been envisioning Jesus coming with vengeance and the recompense of God and overturning the temple with the high priests and Pharisees. He would break the bonds of the Roman Empire and overthrow Caesar. He would take over, become King, and save all the people. He would climb the mountain of Jerusalem and there reign supreme. The disciples would bask in the glory, the victory, and the majesty. They would become kings themselves. But that's not how the story went.

The Lord continues His discourse to His disciples: "... [the Son of Man] will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging Him they will kill him ..." The disciples didn't understand these things. The meaning was hidden from them. They didn't grasp what was said. "Now wait just a minute," they were thinking, "you mean to tell me that you're not going to overturn the temple and the Roman government? You're not going to fulfill the prophecies in the way we think you are? What about Jacob's ladder? What about climbing mount Zion and reigning on the glorious throne? If you will be scorned, despised, and killed in Jerusalem, what will happen to us?" Undoubtedly, the questions abounded among them. Nonetheless, the prophecies are fulfilled. Everything which the prophets had written had to be fulfilled. He had to be handed over to the high priests and scribes. He had to be condemned to death by them and handed over to the Gentiles. He had to be mocked, slandered, spit on, scourged, crucified, and killed. The Prophet Isaiah said so: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried

our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.”

The Kingdom which Christ rules is not of this earth. Today’s Gospel reading is the third time in Luke’s account that Christ preaches to His disciples about His suffering and death. He preaches to guard them against the false delusion of having an earthly kingdom. He preaches so that they may not despise His cross. In the dream of Jacob, Christ indeed would be the ladder that connects earth to heaven: He is True God to fulfill the law perfectly; He is True Man to suffer the consequences of the law in His flesh. He connects heaven to earth. Christ shows His true humanity by His death in the flesh. He suffered in willing obedience. He was the atoning sacrifice for sin. He not only carried the grief and punishment of our sin, Christ gladly carried the burden of our sin upon Himself. Jesus indeed climbed a mountain in Jerusalem, but it was no Zion. It was the mount of Golgotha, where He was to sit on the wooden throne of the cross. Jesus went up to Jerusalem, not reign on Mount Zion, but to die on the hill of the skull. Why?

Didn’t the sins of the whole world make it necessary for Christ to die on the cross? Didn’t your sins make it necessary for Him to die? Have you told lies about your neighbor? Have you celebrated upon hearing hurtful news about him? Have you defended the reputation and feelings of your neighbor? Do you look for the bad in someone instead of seeing the good? Have you been nosey with the secrets of others?

Your sins are real. Yes, they are real, Dearly Beloved, but never as real as the Savior who became flesh and blood for you. He became a real man for you. He died a real death by crucifixion for you. We preach Christ crucified, we live by Christ crucified. You have heard it said, “... the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than man.” I ask you, how much more foolish could God be than in subjecting Himself to mocking, spitting, flogging, and death? I ask you, how much weaker could God be than when He was nailed to the cross? Yet, He is still wiser and stronger than all men, even as He draws all men to dwell in the shade of His cross.

Dearly Beloved, I would be remiss not to mention love on a day such as Valentine’s Day. Today’s Epistle lesson from words of St. Paul gives me no small opportunity. But, as I read these words, I’d like for you to fix your eyes upon the cross lifted high above the altar and imagine your Savior being crucified, bleeding, [and] dying[, and being offered to you in Holy Communion] there for you.

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away ... so now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Behold the source of your life; behold the source of your love. God grant that this love, His love fill your marriages, your families, your own lives in Him to all eternity. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

✂BJF✂