

Fifth Sunday in Lent (2018)

Mark 10:32–45 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to [Jesus] and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, **“The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever

would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

In the Name of Jesus.

Praise the Lord! From HIS lips we hear what HIS Baptism is for and about: the Gospel; NOT the Law!

Yes, James and John will be raised to the glory of their Master! Is there a happier pledge to us Christians? But that glory is not at all what they had in mind, or what nearly all men have in mind when they consider God, religion, even Christian Baptism. Christ's GLORY has NOTHING to do with the FERVOR and the QUALITY of the BAPTIZED! Instead, His Glory, His Reputation, What the Unseen and Living God wants to be Known for, is NEW.

The New Covenant that the prophet Jeremiah prophesied! NOT, the prophet preaches—NOT like the OLD Covenant! For the people of God COULD break that covenant; and they did. But this treaty with heaven, this contract, legal and binding between The Ancient of Days and we creatures OF a day—

CAN...NOT...BE...BROKEN!

‘Won’t be THAT kind, the OLD kind of deal attaching God and men and men and God. For this one will last!’

One of the happiest things about our Creator is that He’s not at all fooled by His creatures! In order to ENCOURAGE my students at LSU—whether in Latin or Greek or Hebrew—I tell them to raise their hands, to ask questions, to ask the SAME questions over and over and over me, until they are SICK of the answers and know it so well. Since I WORK for THEM!—they need NEVER be embarrassed about showing their ignorance of their studies! I tell them: ‘You cannot possibly impress me with you language ability; and you cannot possibly disappoint me, either, with your ignorance! The ONLY way to get me worked up, is to PRETEND that you know what you do not know; out of fear! Ask! Seek! Knock!’ (Sound familiar, Christians?)

There was fear, Saint Mark records:

“And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid.”

Our Maker knows what He's made; and how we have undone ourselves! What is the worst-good response we men can make to that fear? James and John have it down!

'Hey, Jesus! We're not A-SCARED! Nu-uh! Dem uthers mebbe skaired; but WE ain't! Somuchso—that, if you PROMISE us good spots when it's all over, then WE will PROMISE never to let you down! (Scared of nuthin'!)

What a Savior! He even grants James and John—and you, and me, and the world!—Baptism like His!
GLORIOUS!

Because it is heaven's glory GIVEN; or as Jesus told them and us: prepared. It has all been prepared—this removal of our fears. And heaven, at this late stage, is not going to change His plans.

That same word—they were afraid—is just about the last word we hear about at the end of the Gospel; which we will hear, if the Lord holds off and we make it to Easter Day:

“[The faithful women] went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

And now, the LAST ONE we need fear is the Father of our King, our Christ, the Son of Man. For the pledge HE has made us by the Baptism and Cup of Jesus, suffered on the cross, is that any OLD notion of Eternal Heaven making distinctions regarding His care of us on Earth below, based on OUR performance, OUR boasts, OUR best efforts—well, the door has been closed on that.

For now, the King of God’s people Israel—our King too!—was nailed up between two sinners so sinful that this sinning world had had enough of them. THERE: Glory! Baptism! Cup! FEAR—REMOVED! And death defanged for good!

How do we do this, my dear ones? It is at the heart of our new faith:

“And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.”

What is it that you and I want our friends and neighbors, even our enemies, to come to church and hear

and join in with? HOW do we go to the world in order to make them KNOW the Lord in joy—and yet, NOT from a stance of ‘Here’s what WE GOTTS and Y’ALL don’t’s; and HERE is how to get from where Y’ALL are to where WE are!’”?

The prophets answer is this:

“For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Make sure the man closest to your cross on the left, and on the right, can ONLY plead forgetfulness of his whole life—and you STAY there on that cross. And those men will know God.

Our Lord picked up Jeremiah’s preaching this way:

“You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

In other words, my dear ones: live as Dr Luther taught the Church, as his catechism teaches.

The first Chief Part of the Small Catechism is the Ten Commandments. Learn them! For OTHERS! So that, when you have some big problem with some big sinner in your life, you learn if the problem has something to do with the will of God and violence done to is, rather than people ticking you off because they don't quite fit your fancy! God cares that we correct men into the way of His Law. He has no patience with our tyranny.

And then, how do we tell the sinners—NOT ‘Now the Lord! Behave!’—but, rather, ‘You KNOW the Lord! All men do!’”?

Holy Baptism is our first and last glory! That the Maker KNOWS...US! And so, now, NEW, having taken us IN, if there is ANYTHING lacking in us, that is now HIS...PROBLEM! Not ours!

And ANY voice that would scare us again into placing ANY WEIGHT of our conscience back on what WE can produce for heaven that others cannot—the Gospel according to Saint Mark tells us that's all best left at the

grave, among the dead.

Our calling is to live, to glorious life! Service! Cross!
Fearless! Forgiving! And losing all memory of all men's
past wrongs in the Name of Jesus! Amen!