

Praise and honor belong to You, our God, because You have given us Your Word, by which You clothe our poor and naked souls in the garments of salvation, and bring to us heavenly and abiding treasures. Fashion our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, that we crave not the things of this earth, but desire the things above. Amen. (Reading the Psalms with Luther, CPH, Ps. 119, p. 297)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by Him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

In Christ Jesus, in whom alone there is salvation for the common man and woman, the common boy and girl, dear fellow redeemed:

Our text is occasioned by the miracle Peter had performed at one of the gates of the temple the day before our text. There was a lame beggar asking for alms. Peter responded to him by saying: "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" He immediately stood up and walked and entering the temple with them he walked, even leaped, and praised God for this great act of mercy.

The crowd at the temple was astounded by this miracle and ran up to the Apostles to find out more about what they had just witnessed. Peter declared to them by whose power this miracle was actually done, namely Jesus who was delivered over to Pilate and crucified, but rose from the dead. This infuriated the religious rulers, knowing they were being implicated and so they arrested Peter and John and on the day of our text asked them: "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

Our text is Peter's response and should lead us all to realize and to rejoice to this day that **We Are All Beggars Who Can Only Stand in Jesus' Name.**

Who were the beggars in our text? Obviously the man who had been healed in Jesus' name was a beggar. Peter who had told him that he had neither silver nor gold could well be classified in the beggar class. But also John was included in the status of "beggar" by the rich and powerful in the text. As we read: "when [the religious leaders] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished."

We heard about a beggar and a rich powerful man in our Gospel lesson. The beggar was positioned outside the gate of the rich man. This is not to say the rich man and his associates gave nothing to the beggar, no doubt they had, otherwise the beggar would not have positioned himself there. But the tragedy in that story was not the beggar, but the rich man who could not come to terms with his real status spiritually as a beggar before God. When in hell, he was still trying to direct heaven how things should be run on earth. What arrogance, even though he was begging for a drop of water, he had the audacity to criticize God and advise Him! Sound familiar?

As sinners we can imagine in the darkness of our delusion that we have something to offer God and that He actually owes us. This was the same arrogance among the religious leaders in our text. They too probably passed by this lame beggar as they came to the temple to fulfill their duties. Very likely they too gave silver, maybe even gold, to the beggar, if not directly, perhaps through some benevolent offering given before their neighbors through their temple worship.

How do you view your relationship with the Lord God? Are you the spiritual beggars, who instead of making demands realize your unworthiness and ask humbly according the gracious will of your gracious Lord? In this setting you would probably agree with that assessment – and rightly so.

But how do you do in your everyday life? Is beggarliness evident to those God has placed in your life? – in your home, in your work place, in your neighborhood, in the long lines at the market, in heavy traffic? Feelings of unworthiness are appropriate here, to be sure before God in our prayers of confession, in our kneeling at the Lord's altar to receive of the precious food of His body and blood. But again is your unworthiness obvious to others in your deeds, words and even your overall demeanor?

The same sense of unworthiness before God in our worship together is to be present in our everyday interactions with our many neighbors in this life. Seeking and boasting of a rich and powerful status in this life will certainly achieve a certain level of recognition

among your neighbors, but as we learn from that parable in the Gospel lesson, it is not honored in the courts of heaven.

II

So, my fellow beggars, in this life we have nothing to offer God in the way of deserving some sort of reward from Him. In Christ Jesus, His Son we are lifted up from our beggarly status and allowed to stand in the presence of the holy God. He does not look upon us with disgust and disregard. While in our sin we deserve to be cast from His sight forever, instead He has given us something worth more than all the silver and the gold contained in this world. He gives us the forgiveness of all our sins through the sacrifice made by His Son for all sinners, including us.

This is what the beggar learned that day when by God's grace he was healed and no longer was lame. He learned of the power and salvation of Jesus his Savior. His standing, walking and leaping were all done in praise of the One who comes to us with His gracious gifts, gifts that last beyond a lifetime.

These are the heavenly riches you count on as you enter this house of the Lord, but these are also the heavenly riches you carry with you in your everyday living. So the person who does something or says something to offend you, and observes your eagerness and readiness to forgive, your beggarliness is evident. Now it may be looked down upon and you are considered to be and even called an uneducated common person. After all you must be desperate for attention, if when obviously offended you show an eagerness to forgive. But in your daily interactions with even those unappreciative fellow sinners, they are witnessing the power of God at work in you.

They too need to learn they need to join the beggarly class when it comes to their spiritual relationship with God as well. Then in Christ they too will rise to stand, walk and leap in praise to the only One who works such miracles among us sinners. As the Apostles bore witness to the rich and powerful in this life working at the temple: "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." That name is the name through which that beggar was made whole, whole not just physically but more importantly, made whole spiritually with all sins forgiven and dressed in the rich elegant robe of Christ's righteousness.

So my fellow beggars, it is this name which has bestowed upon you, without deserving, the heavenly riches that will sustain you in the everlasting courts of bliss. There we shall have no more wants. We will not be found begging for a drop of water to cool our tongues,

but rather we shall dine most sumptuously with the very Son of God girding Himself and serving us. We are and will remain fellow heirs with the Son of God now and forevermore. Amen.