

Lord Jesus, have mercy on me. Here I sit like the blind man at the gates of Jericho praying for Your help. Lord, let me see what I would never see or understand if You did not touch my eyes. Help me to see myself in the light coming from Your Father's throne. Help me to see You and all You have done in the clear light of Scripture so I understand what it means, why it was necessary, and what You have done. I pray that I may follow You and be a disciple, that I may hear and see what I need most day by day. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Amen. (To Live with Christ: Daily Devotions by Bo Giertz, CPH, 2008, p. 178)

[T]aking the twelve, [Jesus] said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For He 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, and on the third day He will rise." But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. As He drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he came near, He asked him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

In Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God who went patient on, growing weak and faint, to slaughter led without complaint, dear fellow redeemed:

The disciples knew something was up before this. Jesus had told them plainly two times before that He would soon suffer and die. Shortly before our text when Jesus announced they were going to Judea to raise Lazarus back to life, the disciples tried to talk the Lord out of returning, because the last time He was there, His enemies raised up stones to stone Him to death. It was not His time to suffer and die for our sins, so He just walked through the angry crowd and left. But now things were different, He was intending to return to Judea for the express purpose of receiving the complete punishment for your sins, my sins and sins of the whole world.

It is common for the world to characterize the historical Jesus of Nazareth as a hapless innocent victim of mean people. But you and I know Him much differently. This has great significance for us. As we enter the Lenten season let us consider our text with this blessed truth in mind: **Hearing Our Cry for Mercy, Jesus Willingly Bore All Our Suffering.**

After this the third explicit reveal on what was soon to happen to Jesus based on the prophecies in the OT, we read: the disciples “understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.” We can all grant them their failure to understand, it was unthinkable that anyone, especially their fellow Jews, would want to do such horrible things to the Lord. So, while they did not understand it now, when it all unfolded, it would not be too shocking and after the resurrection would begin to fall into place, awaiting its full understanding at Pentecost.

You and I have times when we willingly faced personal suffering. Perhaps it was dental work, elective surgeries. It could even be suffering for someone else. Mothers, you know all about that. Parents you may have had to do extra work to make payment for a child’s accident, ill-behavior, etc. But none of our suffering in this life can compare to the suffering Jesus anticipated to make payment for our sin, its deserved suffering, death and eternal torment. On the day I was ordained and had a painful appendicitis, my Mom taught me to think of the great suffering Jesus endured in my behalf. I have used that response every time I undergo pain in the dentist chair, doctors examining table, or in the surgical suite. What Jesus willingly endured cannot compare to my light and temporary pain.

Your pain in this life is actually a temporary matter on the road to recovery. Even if it is chronic and lasts the rest of your life, it will eventually come to an end when our Lord delivers you from all evil in this life. However, Jesus’ pain for you was an eternal pain and this He willingly suffered because He loves you. No victimhood here, rather a sacrificial Friend whose love made Him absolutely resolute to save you completely.

II

Now this truth about Jesus’ willingness to suffer for you can be turned into a negative by your spiritual enemies: the devil, the world and your own sinful flesh. This is what happened to the blind man in our text. “As [Jesus] drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.’ And he cried out, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’”

The blind man was being told to keep quiet in his apparent unworthiness. It was implied that Jesus had no interest in helping this poor beggar, He had more important things to do and among more important people, like those who were trying to silence him. When this blind man called out for mercy, it was not to just a miracle worker. By using the designation “Son of David”, he was acknowledging that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. In that faith in who Jesus was including a trust that this

Savior sent by God was filled with mercy for all sinners, including himself, emboldened him to cry out for mercy again in the face of opposition.

Then we read: "Jesus stopped and commanded [the blind man] to be brought to Him. And when he came near, He asked him, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me recover my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Recover your sight; your faith has made you well [or saved you]." Jesus acknowledged this saving faith, which allowed the poor beggar in all his unworthiness to cry out for mercy and made him eternally complete before God in heaven.

Your Jesus hears all your calls for mercy to Him as well. His willingness to bear all your suffering was on His mind all the way to the cross and unto death when He breathed His last. These familiar words from the prophet Isaiah, often heard throughout Lent speak of this most clearly: "Surely He [Christ] has borne our griefs and carried out sorrows; ... 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. ... He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, ... so He opened not His mouth." Then we read these **less** familiar words: "it was the will of the Lord to crush Him; He has put Him to grief; when His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring ... the will of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied ... make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities."

Our Lord does not regret His suffering in your place. He hears your cries for mercy even today, whether in the divine service or your daily life. He hears and declares to you that His willingness to show you everlasting mercy has not been withdrawn. Your God-given faith makes you well.

Jesus healed the blind man and we read about the responses: "And immediately he recovered his sight and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God." We would expect the blind man would respond the way that he did after the miracle, since we respond the same way as we go about realizing that the Lord has shown mercy to us as well. But the crowd also came to the realization that the Lord Jesus is merciful and answers our cries for mercy. How much they came to realize we do not know.

In the Gospel according to St. Mark we are told the name of this blind man – Bartimaeus. One would assume that to the readers of Mark's Gospel Bartimaeus was known by name. Can you imagine having this person in your same congregation giving a first-hand accounting of what took place on the day of our text. If they were already singing the Kyrie in their divine services: *Lord have mercy! Christ have mercy! Lord have mercy!* – how rich

would that common cry be among those close to him, which we regularly us in our worship today.

My fellow redeemed, you are surrounded by your brothers and sisters in Christ who are just like Bartimaeus. Not, of course, in having the same kind of merciful act shown them, but certainly similar mercies, for we are all sinners needing the same mercy to be received by our Lord and made whole. Like Bartimaeus, my fellow redeemed sinners, continue to call out for mercy in the Lord Jesus, no matter how your spiritual enemies try to convince you to be silent. Jesus will always hear your cries and respond with equal compassion and deliverance. He who bore all your eternal sufferings most willingly, will not let you wallow in them now without His effectual and intervening responses. Cry out faithfully - you will be faithfully heard and granted mercy upon mercy for Jesus' sake. Amen.