

March 2006

Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." *St. Mark 10:32-34*

What mixed emotions on the part of the disciples! They are at one time amazed and at the same time afraid. See how the Lord deals graciously with them revealing to them the things that are going to happen to Him for our salvation. Consider how our Lord deals graciously with us when we struggle and fight with mixed emotions in our lives – times we are anxious, fearful, worried, joyful, elated, and more. He deals with us gently and graciously also pointing us to His Word and promises, to Himself, to remove our fears and to direct our praises.

I am always amazed how Jesus always has the spiritual needs of His disciples on His mind even when He knew what He was going to endure and experience as our Savior. I dare say that we are no where near imitating our Lord in this for our troubles and concerns often overwhelm us and we, as a result, often overlook the needs of those around us and, in fact, may deal harshly with them in word and deed because we are so preoccupied.

Now, we are tempted to say that this is natural. This is just what it is like to be human. Indeed it is but it is still wrong and sinful. Though we are not to make light of our problems and difficulties, they do not give us an excuse to treat others harshly, poorly, and negligently. Even we, as God's people struggling and dealing with the sorrows of our lives, are still to love our fellow man, look to the welfare of others, and serve them in their time of need.

It is a difficult thing to do, isn't it? We can all identify times when we have been so preoccupied and overwhelmed by our schedules, deadlines, personal struggles, and family troubles that we have not lovingly looked on the needs of others and spoke gently and graciously to them, let alone commit those issues to our Lord in prayer.

Yet, our Lord still has dealt graciously with us sinful, fearful, and troubled disciples. He doesn't say, like the judges on "American Idol" – sorry, you're done. No, He comes to us in His Word and says "Come to Me, you where are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That rest isn't just a short respite from the rigors of our everyday lives, mind you. It is rest from our sins. It is deliverance from our guilt. It is forgiveness for all the times we have not dealt lovingly, gently, and graciously with others even as we are trying to handle all that is going on in our lives.

That rest is ours on account of our Lord's betrayal, His condemnation to death, the mockery and scourging He endured, and spit and the spikes driven into His hands and feet as He was crucified for our salvation. That forgiveness, that peace, that pardon, the rest of which Jesus speaks is ours all because of His redeeming work. Even more, all that is guaranteed us, made absolutely certain because He rose the third day just as He said for His resurrection proves that all He said and did was the truth and that He is our confidence in this life and for the next.

Beginning March 1, Ash Wednesday, we will once again begin to walk with the Savior and view Him actively saving us as we go through the Season of Lent. On Sundays we will see our Lord endure hostility from the Devil, from the Jewish religious leaders, and even His own disciples. We will hear Him talk about His impending sufferings and death for our salvation and watch as Holy Week unfolds in April His fulfillment of the Scriptures for our redemption.

On Wednesdays during Lent we will look at our Lord's sufferings, death, and resurrection under the theme "The Big Words of the Bible." During these evening services (a full schedule of which is included in this newsletter) we will examine those big words we hear thrown around in sermons and Bible Classes and define them as the Scriptures define them. Do you know what these words really mean or has the world's ideas perhaps watered down their meaning or changed their meaning in your minds and hearts? These big words will be examined in connection with our Lord's life, death, and resurrection so that you may have the right knowledge and thereby grow in your faith in the crucified and risen Lord of life.

So join us Sundays and Wednesdays as we see how our Lord dealt gently and graciously with us in our sins, laying down His life to give us eternal life, sacrificing His body and blood that we may have the remission of all our sins, interceding for us as our Sin-Substitute so that we may stand before God justified and holy by His grace through faith. May that love of our Savior move us to deal gently and graciously with all in our lives.

Kindest regards in Christ the Savior,

Pastor Cullen
Hebrews 13.20-21