

Quinquagesima
Luke 18:31-43

Who's the real blind man or blind men in today's Gospel reading?

The blind man is certainly blind. At least physically. He may be physically blind, but he knows who Jesus is; so he cries out so vigorously,

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (vv. 38, 39)

Right before this, Jesus had been telling His apostles what He must do:

"And taking 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.'" (vv 31-33)

But the apostles don't get it! They are clueless. They are spiritually blind. And they shouldn't be. They really should know better! From the beginning of time, it was the plan of God the Father to hand over the Son to sinners to be crucified by them, shedding His blood for the salvation of the world. He kept pointing to this amazing salvation in the Old Testament.

You know about the judgment of God against the serpent, against Eve, and against Adam. You know about the promise of Jesus when God is condemning the Serpent in Genesis 3:15. After God pronounces judgment comes this verse:

And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. (Gn 3:21)

God shows immediately that blood must be shed to cover sin. And God is the one who did it. He slayed a couple of the animals that He lovingly created to cover the shame of Adam and Eve.

In Genesis 22, we see what would be required to cover our sin.

"[God] said [to Abraham], 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'" (Gn 22:2)

Abraham took Isaac to Mount Moriah and attempted to sacrifice Isaac in faithful obedience to God. God stops him and says this:

"I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.'" (Gn 22:17–18)

All will be blessed by a sacrifice of an only begotten Son who is loved. God also provides the substitute for Isaac with the ram caught in a thicket nearby. Abraham then calls that place "the Lord will provide (Gn 22:14)." We don't know for sure but many believe that Mount Moriah is the exact same mountain the temple in Jerusalem was built on. Many years later, God will give up His only Son, whom He loved so that He might shed His blood for the forgiveness of all our sins. His blood covers our shame!

Later, when the children of Abraham, are slaves in Egypt they are freed by God. The final plague is the angel of death. Moses instructs the Israelites to slay a year-old unblemished lamb and to spread its blood over the lintel and two doorposts. Again, blood is used to cover the affects of sin so that the consequence of sin, death, will pass over their households.

Then God establishes the Passover feast so that they will never forget. We know this feast as Easter! Jesus is the unblemished lamb of God who died on the cross for all sin of all time of all people. He applies that blood to you in your baptism and covers you with His perfect righteousness so that death merely becomes a doorway to eternal life with God!

Later the children of Israel are instructed against eating any meat with the blood in it:

““If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood.” (Lv 17:10–12)

This is not some superstitious, pre-modern understanding of death and life. Here, God is driving into the Israelites conscience that the blood saves. So that when they see what Jesus does, they will understand that the blood of Jesus saves them from their sins.

This is a good example of why we don't follow the Old Testament ceremonial law. Jesus has fulfilled it and we are brought into the new testament through Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. Just as the Old Testament ceremonial law taught about God's Messiah who would come and save His people and bless the whole world, the New Testament ceremonies teach you about what Jesus has done and how His victory becomes your victory!

God promises a Prophet like Moses:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—” (Deuteronomy 18:15, ESV)

God promised an eternal King like King David:

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,

Not that Jesus sinned but when He took upon the sins of all men, His Father disciplined Him upon the cross for our salvation,

but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ ” (2 Samuel 7:12–16, ESV)

God promises an eternal Priest which Isaiah calls a suffering servant:

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.” (Isaiah 42:1–3, ESV)

There are so many other promises we could look at, but these should suffice to show that God taught His Old Testament people what to look for. From our vantage point, it may seem like it should be obvious that Jesus is the Messiah who is God, sent by God, to save all mankind. But the Apostles don't get it! It reveals to us that the revelation of who Jesus is must be given to us by the Holy Spirit.

The blind man knew who Jesus was! He cries out:

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (vv. 38, 39)

He knew that Jesus was the Son of God. He knew that Jesus could heal him. He knew that Jesus could save him! He had heard about Jesus and the Holy Spirit had revealed to him who Jesus was. Faith always "comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Rm 10:17)."

I'm sure you remember Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, that is Messiah, that is the Son of God, that is God in the flesh, who came to save His people and all people! Jesus responds this way to Peter's confession:

"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." (Mt 16:17)

Again, we see that knowing who Jesus is only comes through the revelation from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus heals the blind man and he is no longer physically blind. The apostles aren't physically blind, but they are spiritually blind. After the resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit enlightens them about the work and person of Jesus so that they are no longer spiritually blind.

You must have the Holy Spirit to have faith.

You receive Him in your baptism. Jesus links water and the Holy Spirit together in John 3. Peter links repentance and Baptism as the means by which you are saved. We know that even repentance is a gift from God, but we'll talk about that some other time.

Even though you receive the Holy Spirit in your Baptism, He is not like some possession you own like a car or house. The Holy Spirit is God and He goes where God the Father and God the Son send Him. He works faith when and where He wills only through the Word.

First He brought to remembrance everything that Jesus did and said so that the Gospel writers could write down God inspired accounts of Jesus' life. The Holy Spirit creates faith through these accounts (Rm 10:17). He also sustains faith by the same means.

The Scriptures warn us about falling away from the faith:

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'” (Matthew 7:15, 21–23)

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” (1 Tim 4:1–3)

“For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.” (Hebrews 6:4–6, ESV)

Jesus gives you warning upon warning because He wants you to cling to Him through His Word. That is what the Holy Spirit works through to give you a living, lasting faith.

That’s why we need to stay in the Word and pray for God to send us His Holy Spirit. That’s why we need to have the catechism memorized so we can spot false doctrine. That’s why we need to sing hymns that teach rightly that Jesus is found only in His Word and Sacraments and not in our heart or emotions or experiences. We need to stay away from hymns that tickle our emotions or self-worth. That’s why we need the lavishness of God’s forgiveness found in Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper. That’s why we need the consolation of the brothers and sisters in Christ which cannot be found online.

God promises to give us His Holy Spirit through all these wonderful means so that we have a true victory in Christ. True victory in Christ is accomplished by dying in the faith. Woe to those who die apart from Christ, but how beautiful and precious is the death of a Christian (Ps 116:15)!

We die with Christ in our Baptism. We live with Him in our Baptism. We die with him in our Baptism. We live eternally with Him in our Baptism.

Let us end with a beautiful prayer found in your hymnal (pg 311):

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, because of Your tender love toward us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may remain steadfast in this faith to the end and finally come to life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen!