

## The Fifth Sunday in Lent

### Passion Sunday

March 21, 2021

“...the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost  
Amen!

Today on this Passion Sunday, we find ourselves more than half way through our Lenten journey. We have been seeking to lovingly follow our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ as He approaches His suffering and death in the holy city of Jerusalem. In today's Gospel we find the Holy Jesus speaking to us of the true nature of the kingdom that He has proclaimed to the world and how utterly this message of the blessed Kingdom of the Holy Lamb of God runs contrary to the spirit and expectations of the world!

Our Lord is approached by the sons of Zebedee and their dear mother. She desires to ask Him what in her mind must have seemed sensible and good. She asks the Lord to permit her sons to sit with him on His right hand and on His left in the kingdom of God. We can suppose that this mother was only seeking the very best for her sons- that she only wanted to see them succeed in life. But in our Lord's reply, she and her sons learned that the ways of the spirit operate according to a different set of rules-

that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of love, and humble self forgetting.

This answer that our Lord gives to this mother and her sons, must have been such a disappointment to them- that the sons of Zebedee would indeed face persecution and martyrdom, and that it was not the Lord Jesus that would assign places in the Kingdom, but rather the Father. In fact the whole episode angered the rest of the Disciples who were shocked that such a selfish request would have been made at all!

The Lord Jesus uses this scene to instruct His friends on the true meaning of greatness and service in the Kingdom-He wants them to know that if they were to have a true understanding of the Christian life- they must forget the world's way of promotion and reward, and look to Him if they were ever to begin to understand the ways of God.

This is true for us as well isn't it-you and I need to be willing to give ourselves to a whole new way of thinking, loving, and living- a way that is based upon a new and eternal perspective. This is what our Blessed Lord sought to teach His Apostles who needed to discover a new vision of what following their Lord and Master meant. Each of us ,dear friends ,need to take to heart what the Blessed Jesus explained about the new way of the Kingdom-that is based upon the merciful down reach of God to us. The way of the Kingdom is a way of loving humility and sacrifice.

But learning these new ways can be challenging can't it. Our old nature wants so much to earn the respect and admiration of the world. We are so desperate to be right, to have some advantage over others, to want the world to look up to us in admiration. But this is not the way of the Kingdom-this is not the way of the spirit, but rather the way of a world that is adrift on the sea of selfishness and despair. As Christian people, we are called to a life of holiness, humility and mercy- a life that stands in stark contrast to what is so often most valued by our culture, and by the old adam that still lurks deep within us all.

The Lord Jesus explained to His Disciples that his was a mission of rescue and ransom- that in His coming to this earth in lowliness, assuming our flesh, and living as one of us, it was to minister-to serve and heal those whom He most dearly loved- and that includes all of us here today. This is a wonderful truth that each of us must keep deeply hidden in our hearts-especially when things are going dreadfully wrong-when we feel that we are drowning in a sea of darkness and despair-and when all of our own resources have run out, and we feel alone, and without hope. Remember that Christ has come to minister to US! He knows what it is like to be living in this world, and He is aware of our weakness and fear!

Christ comes down to where we are as our Good Samaritan-as the only one who can truly understand us and grant to us real healing and hope. What great comfort we Christians can experience as we know Christ as our minister, as the one who

comes to us so that He might draw us to Himself in mercy and power! The Blessed Jesus uses the word Ransom to describe this work of ministry that He has performed- a word that testifies to His Blessed work of taking upon His Blessed and innocent head, the sins of the world-all sin, for all people, everywhere! God the Father, not willing that any should perish in sin and unbelief has sent the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer a real death, upon a real cross, for the sin of the world. Christ is the Lamb, the innocent lamb that is slain for you and I so that the Kingdom of Heaven might be opened to us, and we might enjoy the blessedness of the vision of God forever. It staggers the mind to think about these things doesn't-yet it is true- the Eternal Son of God permits Himself to take our place, and suffer the consequences for our sins and wickednesses, so that we might receive life-eternal life-as the free gift of God.

The passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews that we have heard this morning, reveals something of the glory and eternal work of our true minister- Jesus Christ. By the shedding of His Precious Blood, and His Ascension into Heaven is our great High Priest. Christ has opened Paradise for us through His Holy suffering and death and now enters the Holy Place ad ever lives to make intercession for us. The Lord Jesus, continues His work of loving ministry to us, pleading His death before the Father for all of His children-for all who in simple faith and trust have confessed Jesus as their Lord, and who have given themselves to Him in loving abandonment and hope.

Friends, if Christ has done all this for us, if He really is the one who we desire above all, then surely we will want to imitate His example of ministry and servanthood! The Church, and you and I as individual members of the Mystical Body of Christ, have been given a vocation to share in the Ministry of Christ. This is a ministry that is not limited to those who wear the clerical collar, but to all who confess the faith of Christ Crucified. We are all called to become in our circle of influence, a bearer of Christ-in all circumstances and to all people everywhere!

But how shall we do this, how can we bring honour and praise to God Almighty and the light of Christ to a suffering world? Well, we can begin where we are, conscious of our weakness and faults, and yet confident in knowing that our Lord will bless even our weakest attempts at bearing His Blessed Light of Truth and Grace to those with whom we come into contact-our places of work, our families, our fellow church members, even those who have in the past hurt or offended us. There is no one who does not need a word of refreshment and hope, and we can become a great source of blessing if we seek first of all to live in and by the Love of Christ our Lord.

We could use this remaining time of Lent to seek for a truly penitent and obedient heart- a heart that is fixed upon the things of the spirit and that seeks not its own will, but the will of God in all things, and at all times! We could ask our Lord to give us a real hunger and thirst for righteousness and for Holiness. In other words, we must ask Him to make us more like Himself!

What a life changing thing it would be if we would only begin-if we would only humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and desire only His will to be done in us. Friends, the Lord stands willing to bless our efforts, and to pour down upon our heads showers of blessings. Remember this Passion Sunday that Christ came to minister to us by His Holy Life and His suffering on the Cross, and that He is in Heaven as our Advocate and High Priest! Let us come to Him and love Him-let us abandon ourselves to Him with confidence in His power to grant us all that we need in this life and the next, and may we minister in His Name with true, loving hearts, and humble minds!

Glory Be to God For All Things- Amen