**Through Faith Alone**

Based on [Luke 18:31-43](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk18.31)

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Quinquagesima

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Today’s scripture is about the true worship of God through faith alone. Faith is required to understand heavenly things and to call upon Jesus. Faith saves the sinner, and appropriates to him what belongs to Christ. Faith is not the work of man, but a gift from God.

Jesus tells his disciples: “**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**.”

Jesus tells them he will go to Jerusalem suffer, die and rise again, but they did not understand his words, or grasp his meaning. The idea that God would send the messiah to suffer and die is absurd. And it is still absurd. According to the religion of Islam, it is especially blasphemous to confess two central teachings pertaining to Jesus Christ…(1) that God has a Son, and (2) that God would ever allow a true prophet to suffer shameful treatment and execution at the hands of his enemies.

If Jesus was sent by God, he would not be shamefully treated, spit upon and crucified. So says the mind of man, which is blind to the things of God. “**The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned**” (1 Cor. 2:14)

Natural man is not powerless. From the beginning, God endowed mankind with dominion over all the earth. Visible, created things we can understand and master and even control. Human reason can help us direct traffic, raise children, organize our home, build super-computers, send car’s into orbit around mars (if that’s your thing). Human reasoning can help us draw certain general conclusions about how things work on earth, but they give no insight to heavenly things. The mysteries of God are revealed only by the Holy Spirit, and only to faith.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and Religious Teacher, “**Unless one is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God**.” This is a spiritual truth…a profound mystery about the miracle of baptismal rebirth. Nicodemus says, “how does it work?” “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?...How can these things be?” Jesus answered him, “**Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?**” Nicodemus is caught in a professional blunder. He is a religious teacher, but he proves himself an amateur, because he apparently doesn’t know this basic truth of Theology. 101…you cannot understand spiritual truths without the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit will not suffer the idolatry of your skepticism and doubt. He comes to create faith out of your selfish, skeptical, rebellious heart of stone. If you wish to see God, you cannot keep trying to be God. If you want to learn from scripture, you cannot presume to teach it something. If you want to learn from scripture, you can’t come to it’s pages with preconceived notions like “a perfect God is incompatible with an imperfect world” or “If a person suffers, God must not be with him”, or “the earth was formed millions of years ago.”

Do not resist the Holy Spirit so, but believe. When God says that he created the earth in six days some six thousand years ago, learn from it. When it says that a flood covered the earth and only one man was saved, believe it. When the Holy Spirit says, that one man must be spit on, suffer and die in order to save the world; praise God that he sent his son to do it. The almighty God has given you, O man, the power to rule over the earth and subdue it; do you presume to so rule over the Word of God as well? Repent and believe the Gospel.

It really is astounding that all the scholars and debaters of today, who like swine trample the Word of God under foot the moment it is cast. For all their claims to so-called knowledge they all have one thing in common. **They will die. All men die. But only one man has risen from the dead. Though every man is a liar, His word is true, and He gives the Holy Spirit without measure. He is Jesus Christ Son of God, and you are either for him or against him.** He came into this world to suffer shame and humiliation, so that he would gather his meek and tender sheep into his fold. Those who follow him will suffer also, but they do so with the assurance they will receive an imperishable wreath of righteousness, not because of works, but because they believe in Christ and receive His forgiveness.

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of god. So too for a man who thinks he is wiser than God. He is blind, and worse. He is blind, leading the blind and both will fall into the pit.

Is there anyone more humbled than a man who is blind in this world? Could anyone have less of a case to make that he “knows all things.” He is literally groping through this existence, in desparate need of the help of others. So the blind man in today’s scripture knows two things, that he is blind, and that Jesus can heal him. These two natural realities for the man correspond to the spiritual realities of repentance and trust. Repentance is recognizing your own sin and helplessness; Faith is believing that the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the one who can save you.

There once was a man who woke up in the dark. He went to turn on his lamp, but still no light. He groped around and found the telephone and called the power company. They said there was no power outage and that the problem must be on his end. Frustrated, he finally felt around for a drawer and pulled out a box of matches. He struck the match against the box. He heard the crack of the spark, smelled the sulfur and felt the heat and immediately realized that he was blind.

Jesus says as much to the Pharisees saying, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.” But to the blind man in Jericho, who calls upon Christ without shame and without fear of the crowds, desperate for his healing, to him Christ says, “Your faith has made you well”

Coming to the altar of the lord, not as proud know-it-alls, but as blind beggars in need of Jesus’ forgiveness and healing, receive his body and blood for eternal life. And when your humble desire for the sacraments evidence in you of the faith through which you are saved, the faith that has you seek the Lord where he may be found, the faith that heals your sin and send you his Spirit. Through faith you are righteous in his sight, for the sake of His Son.