“Beggars on the Road of God”

Luke 18:31-43

Quinquagesima

February 20 – 21, 2009

Trinity Lutheran Church

Girard, IL

<!--[if !supportLineBreakNewLine]--> <!--[endif]-->

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Our text for today is the story of the beggar on the road from Luke chapter eighteen.

Look at him, lying by the side the road. He barely has clothes on he’s so poor. Look at him. He can’t look at you. He’s blind. He can’t see a thing. He is poor as dirt and completely helpless. I’m sure there was a time when he thought he could do everything himself. I’m sure there was a time when he believed that he would not let his blindness and begging overcome him. *I can do this!* You can almost hearing him say it to himself. *I can defeat this! If I just work a little harder at paying attention, if I just find a job and a life that suits my lifestyle, I can overcome these woes which have come upon me.*

Look at him. *See how far his positive attitude and good work ethic got him?* He’s stuck alongside a country road. He doesn’t even have the good sense to do his begging in the middle of the city, where there are more people. No matter how hard he tries, he can do nothing for himself. His very life depends on the generosity of strangers. It’s pathetic. *How degrading is that? Doesn’t he have any self-respect?* I mean, maybe if someone just gave him a good start, he’d be able to do it himself. *What’s the old saying? Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, but teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime?*

But it’s been tried with this beggar. He keeps falling flat on his face. He keeps trying and trying and trying, but there is no hope for him on his own. He is royally stuck alongside the road with no hope of redemption on his own. All he can do is beg for the gifts that will come to him. That is his only salvation.

You are that beggar. You are blind and poor and helpless in God’s sight. You can’t get yourself out of the trap that has befallen you by sin. Certainly there may be times when things go better than others. There may even be months or years when you can forget that you wear rags, not riches, that you are blind and cannot see what sin has wrought in your life. You are that beggar.

The hardest thing in the world for a human being to do is repent and recognize that you are helpless without God’s love and mercy. It’s all fine and good to talk religious talk. Have lovely poetry on the walls in your house. Put spiritual makeup on so that no one can see you are a beggar. You want to depict yourself as a super-Christian, able to leap tall sins in a single bound. But it is not so. You are weak. You are blind. You are a beggar before God.

Martin Luther considered himself a beggar more than any other. His last words upon his deathbed in 1546 were a combination of German and Latin: **"Wir sind alle bettler. Hoc est verum."** ***We are all beggars. This is true*.**

You are that beggar. Repent of your self-made life and your fantasy world where you don't need God. Repent, and live.

Now look at that beggar once again. He hears the voice of His Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and cries out for all he's worth: **"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"** Ah, that great word of faith, mercy. Have mercy on me. Lord, have mercy on me. This beggar recognizes that he has no hope and no life apart from the mercy of Christ. That is what drives him. It is in him that his very lifeblood can be found.

The crowds and those around him want him to be quiet and go away. This is just like the cries of self-help and self-reliance that the world wants to foist upon you. Don't trust in Christ! Trust in yourself! You can do it. You don't need him. And even if you need him, someone as important as the Son of God doesn't have time for all your problems.

But the more the world tells him to be quiet, the more this man of faith cries out, **Son of David, have mercy on me!** And Jesus stood still at the cry of faith, listens to his cry for mercy, and heals him. Miracle of miracle. When this beggar, who has nothing and offers nothing, cries out for mercy, God gives it to him.

Now look at that beggar. He once was blind but now can see. He once was dead to the world but is now alive in Christ. And if you look a little closer still, you can see this beggar eating at the master's table, dressed in the finest of clothes, drinking the finest of food and the richest of wines. This beggar has become a lord and master. He has become everything he could not by his own power. All because of the mercy of the master.

You are that beggar. God kills you so He can make you alive. God hears your cry for mercy and forgives your sin, opens your eyes to see, and lifts you up to the highest place. It is no accident that we kneel to receive Christ's body and blood at His banquet. That is the proper place for beggars like you and I. But God, who is rich in mercy, lifts you up to the highest heavens and gives you His greatest treasure. He gives you His own Son, dead and alive again.

The world can never understand the Christian faith and how God works. They constantly want to come up with some sort of work-share system, where we contribute and he contributes like some sort of benefit package. But God will not share His glory with any other. And His glory is to forgive your sins and raise you up out of the depths into the heavenly places.

Now think about that for just a minute when we hear St. John's words that *God is love*. God is goodwill in action. St. John puts it this way, **In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins** (I John 4:10). God's love for you takes flesh and blood in Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ, the love of God in the world, gives you His very life to demonstrate God's love for you.

We begin our journey with Christ to the cross this coming Ash Wednesday. This blind beggar shows all of us beggars that when we beg at Christ's feet, He will always come through for us. Come on the journey of salvation. You will never be the same again. Amen.