

INI

Luke 18,31-43

Quinquagesima — 7 February 2016

Greeting: To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you all. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke, which was read earlier:

And Jesus took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.”

...

And the disciples understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

So far the text. Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.

Introduction. How do you solve a puzzle or a riddle? You look for clues — and the more clues there are the better the chances of a solution because the more clues there are the more dead ends and wrong solutions are eliminated.

It’s interesting the English word “clue” comes from the Old English word “c-l-e-w,” which referred to a ball of yarn. How did this come about?

It is based on Greek Mythology. Theseus, the son of the king of Athens, sailed to Crete to rescue the Athenians from having to pay an annual tribute to Minos, the king of Crete. Every year the Athenians had to send seven young men and maidens to Crete, where they were thrown into a labyrinth and there devoured by the Minotaur, a fabled beast with

the head of a man and the body of a bull. Theseus was befriended by Adriane, the daughter of Minos. She gave Theseus a clew of yarn and a sword. When Theseus went into the labyrinth he was to unravel the yarn so that he could find his way out — it was a complicated maze — and the sword was to slay the Minotaur. He was successful. He slew the monster and the yarn provided the “clues” by which he could emerge from the maze.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus told His disciples what awaited Him in Jerusalem. He provided the clues that spoke of a shameful death but more importantly of a triumphal resurrection. But to the disciples, these things were “hidden” — literally, to the disciples these things were an “enigma,” a riddle, and they seemingly could not understand or comprehend what it was that Jesus meant.

This brings me to today’s sermon topic, “**Clueless On The Road To Jerusalem.**” I’ll develop this topic in three parts:

- 1) Jesus Is Clued-In;**
- 2) Clueless Disciples ;** and,
- 3) Putting Two And Two Together.**

1) Jesus Is Clued-In. What does it mean to be “clued-in?” It means, that you have the answer, the solution.

Jesus knew what He would be facing in Jerusalem.

He would be delivered up to the Gentiles, that is, the Roman imperial authority in the person of Pontius Pilate, the one man in all Judea who had the legal power to put someone to death.

He would be mocked and mistreated and spit upon.

He would be scourged, that is, the whipping that would proceed crucifixion, this with its end to hasten death.

Then He would die — die on a Cross, there to die a criminal’s

death.

For the world of Jesus' time, death was an enigma, a riddle, and labyrinth from which there was no way out.

At best, the world of death would be a world of shadows, of aimless wandering; at worst, it would be a place of torment — of punishment for evil deeds done on earth. But in both, it was a world of dead dreams, of dead hopes, of dead wishes unfulfilled.

Who would willingly face this enigma? Who would willingly go into the Valley of the Shadow of Death? In relation to God, of this place the psalmist said:

For in death there is no remembrance of You;
In the grave, who shall give You thanks? (Ps 6,5)

And Isaiah said:

For the grave cannot praise You;
Death cannot celebrate You;
They that go down into the pit cannot hope for Your truth. (Isaiah 38,18)

In a word, dead bodies are quiet bodies, lifeless bodies, inert bodies.

Jesus, however, was not on a suicide mission. He was not going up to Jerusalem without any hope.

The Old Testament Prophets spoke of His being delivered up, being mocked and spit upon, being scourged, being crucified, and dying. Read Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. These Words of God were prophetic clues about the path Jesus would have to take.

But the Prophets also left other clues that pointed past the grave:

For You will not leave My soul in hell;

You will not suffer your Holy One to see corruption. (Psalm 16,10)

In Psalm 16, David pointed forwards through the centuries to Jesus, God's Anointed One, the Messiah.

God was faithful. The clew of yarn which led through the prophetic pages of the Old Testament led not only to the Cross on Golgotha, but to the empty tomb on Easter morning — from the darkness of death to the light of resurrection and life eternal.

For Jesus, the pages of Scripture were an open book. All the clues of the Old Testament pointed to Him. All the clues of God's promises had their "Yes" in Jesus.

But when Jesus told this to the disciples, we see

2) Clueless Disciples. The disciples did not comprehend what it was Jesus was saying.

"To be hidden" quite literally means to be "an enigma." They were confronting a mystery and could not put the clues together.

It is unclear whether this hiddenness came from within them or whether God Himself veiled their view. In a parallel passage in Mark's Gospel, we read that they did not understand what Jesus was saying and "were afraid to ask Him" (Mark 9,30).

What happened in the minds of the disciples?

We've spoken of this in Bible class. The answer someone gave best sums up the reaction of the disciples. They heard the worlds of Jesus: being given up to the Gentiles, being mocked and mistreated and spit upon, being scourged, and finally dying. When the disciples grasped what Jesus was saying, that He would die, it was as if they were a patient in a doctor's office and heard the results of the tests and then the word: "Cancer." After hearing that word "cancer," a patient's mind goes numb and everything else is "blah ... blah ... blah." Fear takes hold

and all other words evaporate into thin air, into a cloud of fear.

What kind fear gripped the disciples?

Perhaps the fear of being left alone. If Jesus died, what would happen to them? If the authorities killed the leader, what would happen to the followers?

Perhaps the fear of not gaining the Kingdom of God. Jesus had spoken about a kingdom, but the disciples usually thought this meant an earthly kingdom — Jesus would sit on a throne in Jerusalem and they'd all have positions of power. If Jesus died, then no kingdom nor power for them.

Perhaps the fear of having just wasted the last three years of their lives. If Jesus died, would their relationship with God and each other die a figurative death? Would they all be going back to Galilee or wherever to take up the jobs they had left?

Perhaps the fear of an unknown and uncertain future?

The fear that overcame them deafened them to Jesus' last words: "and the third day He will rise again!"

But the time was soon approaching when Jesus would die. The time was soon approaching when Jesus would then rise from the dead on the third day. The time was soon approaching when the disciples would:

3) Put Two And Two Together. Fear overcame the disciples and they could not comprehend what Jesus was saying.

What is it "to comprehend?" It means to put together, as in putting two and two together, putting the right clues together so that the solution is in plain view.

Again and again Jesus had told the disciples what would happen when for the last time He would "go up to Jerusalem."

He told them these things so that when they came to pass the disciples would know that this was not a chance occurrence, that things had gotten out of control and events had overtaken Jesus. He told them these things so that they would know that God was in control, and death would not have the last word — for on the third day the Son of Man, Jesus, would rise again.

After His resurrection, Jesus met two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were disconsolate that Jesus had died. But then Jesus opened to them the Scriptures — the clues God had set forth in the Old Testament. Then the eyes of the disciples were opened.

What had been hidden, now was revealed. Now they could put two and two together and see what Jesus' death and resurrection meant for them.

Jesus had not died for Himself. As the prophet said:

By His stripes you are healed. (Isaiah 53)

By His death and resurrection, the sinless Son of God won for the disciples and the world forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and life everlasting.

Jesus gives us the same clues as He gave to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and these clues are there to help us make sense of life when at times life doesn't seem to make sense.

Jesus shows us that the way to God is through His Cross. It is the call to repent of sin and grasp hold of forgiveness — the forgiveness He won for us.

Can fear cloud our understanding of Jesus when we face trial and tribulation?

Can fear cloud our understanding of Jesus when we face lingering illness?

Can fear cloud our understanding of Jesus when we face the inner demons of depression or loneliness?

Can fear cloud our understanding of Jesus when we face uncertain economic times and situations?

Can fear cloud our understanding of Jesus when we face our last enemy, death?

We turn again and again to Him Who was given up to the Gentiles, mocked and mistreated, scourged and spit upon, crucified, and died — but on the third day He rose from the dead.

We turn to Him Who in His suffering and death turned to us so that we might be assured that He is with us to the end of days — for on the third day He rose from the dead.

We turn to Him Who on our behalf was tempted in every way were are yet without sin — for on the third day He rose from the dead.

Jesus shows that God is in control. He shows that God has given us the clear testimony of Scripture that there is salvation in no other name.

Jesus has called us to be His own through Baptism and strengthened us through Word and Sacrament.

As we get closer to Easter, I'm sure that publications will speculate about the "historical Jesus." We will have magazine articles and TV shows which will be designed to cast doubt upon Jesus and the Scriptures and the clues God has given us to lead to life eternal. For the most part, these articles and shows are nothing more than ancient heresies tarted up with modern so-called scholarship. Save your time and money and don't buy the magazines nor watch the TV specials.

Do you remember the sensation, the "Lost Gospel of Judas?" It was popular about several years ago. It attempted to show that Jesus

really loved Judas. It tried to show the New Testament record regarding Judas was wrong. But a few years ago a scholar looked at the original manuscripts and found that those who had originally translated the manuscript had done so inaccurately. Why the inaccuracies? The cynic would say to sell more books and TV specials.

Conclusion. We should never let the fears and temptations of life cloud our understanding of what Jesus did for us and for the world.

The testimony of Scripture is sure. Jesus is not an enigma, a riddle hidden so we cannot understand Who He is or what He has done for us.

In today's epistle lesson, Paul puts it well when he says that in this life we see through a glass darkly. The "why" of what happens in this world is often hidden from us as we live through it.

But God does not leave us clueless. The clues are unfolded throughout the pages of sacred history. The clues lead us through the tribulations of life, through the maze and darkness of death, to the heavenly Jerusalem, where we shall know perfectly even as we are now in Christ fully known.

In Christ, we are not clueless, but clued-in —

clued-in to forgiveness;

clued-in to life;

clued in to salvation. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay & Central Valley
21290 Birch St.
Hayward, CA 94541-1538

SDG