

## **Behold The Son Of Man, The Obedient Servant Of The Lord!**

Text: Matt 20:17-28

1) Jesus goes forth to pay the ransom for our sins

Suggested Hymns:

2) Jesus leaves us an example to follow His steps

259, 354, 361, 371, 454

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 20:17-28, <sup>17</sup> *Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, <sup>18</sup> “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, <sup>19</sup> “and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”*

<sup>20</sup> *Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. <sup>21</sup> And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.” <sup>22</sup> But Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They said to Him, “We are able.”*

<sup>23</sup> *So He said to them, “You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.” <sup>24</sup> And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.*

<sup>25</sup> *But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. <sup>27</sup> “And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- <sup>28</sup> “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We preach Christ Crucified, the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God,<sup>1</sup> just as St. Paul was determined not to know anything among his hearers except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.<sup>2</sup>

In all the seasons of the church-year we preach Jesus Christ *for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*<sup>3</sup>

With the holy season of Lent now approaching we preach the same Christ, meditating, however, on our Saviour's Passion. We look at the history of His sufferings and death, in more detail than at other seasons of the year. We follow our Saviour from Jerusalem to Gethsemane, to the high priest's palace, to the pretorium of Pontius Pilate, to Calvary. *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*<sup>4</sup>

Today, the Sunday before Lent, is preparation day. Our text is most appropriate<sup>5</sup> for Christ announces His approaching death and resurrection to His disciples. Let us prayerfully consider, *Behold the Son of Man, the Obedient Servant of the Lord!* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Jesus Goes Forth To Pay The Ransom For Our Sins.**

This is the third time Jesus predicted His death and resurrection. The first prediction came shortly after Peter's great confession at Caesarea Philippi.<sup>6</sup> It must have taken them completely by surprise when Jesus *"began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."*<sup>7</sup> Peter was so upset that he tried to rebuke Jesus. This was when Jesus responded, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"*

The second prediction came shortly after the transfiguration.<sup>8</sup> Jesus did not really add any details to what He had told them the first time. But it seems that the message was beginning to sink in because their reaction was more subdued, *"The disciples were exceedingly sorrowful."*<sup>9</sup>

No "mountaintop experience" preceded this third prediction, but it was soon followed by the events of Palm Sunday. It is noteworthy that Jesus now says that He will be handed over to the Gentiles. Rather than being stoned to death by the Jews (as subsequently happened to Stephen), Jesus would be crucified by the Romans.

As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem He took the twelve disciples aside on the way. They were amazed, they were afraid, as they followed Him, and now explicitly and more fully than before that day, Jesus announces in our text, <sup>18</sup> ***“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death.”***

The Son of Man shall be betrayed, condemned to death, delivered to the Gentiles, be mocked and scourged and crucified. All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. We read in Luke 18:31, <sup>31</sup> ***Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.”***

It is the will of the Lord, the eternal plan and counsel and purpose of Jehovah, that Jesus is the obedient Servant, whom God sent into the world to do His will as we learn from Isaiah chapter 53.

See how Jesus willingly goes forth! He knows all things that were going to happen to Him, but the disciples were afraid as we read in Mark 10:32, <sup>32</sup> ***Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid.***

Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha, smitten, stricken, afflicted, betrayed, bound, spit upon, mocked, falsely accused, condemned, buffeted, crowned with thorns, scourged, despised, rejected, and finally crucified.

Jesus knows because His Spirit was in the prophets and inspired and moved them to write all these things, all these details of His bitter sufferings and death. We read in 1 Peter 1:10-11, <sup>10</sup> ***Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, <sup>11</sup> searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.***

Jesus knows because He Himself is Jehovah, God manifest in the flesh, humbling Himself that He might suffer death on the cross. Note well that it was a voluntary sacrifice!

No other, nothing less, would have been acceptable in the sight of God. Behold, it was the sacrifice of Jesus who is true God! No other would have been sufficient and perfect. Uncomplaining, not opening His mouth to complain, as a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

Why was Jesus sent? Why does Jesus go forth to be obedient on the death of the cross? Why does He who knew no sin and in whom no cause of death could be found, suffer all that unspeakable torment of body and soul and die on the accursed tree?

His Spirit revealed to the prophets, *He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.* <sup>6</sup> *All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*<sup>10</sup>

He shall make His soul an offering for sin.<sup>11</sup> As our text says, *the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.* Many? Not in contrast to “few” or to “all,” but the one Son of Man for many sinners, that is, for Jews and Gentiles, for the world. We read in 1 John 2:2, <sup>2</sup> *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.* And in John 1:29, <sup>29</sup> *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*

And behold, Jesus finishes the work of redemption. As our text says, *And the third day He will rise again.* God accepted the sacrifice for the propitiation of the world.

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:14-20, <sup>14</sup> *And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.* <sup>15</sup> *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up -- if in fact the dead do not rise.*

<sup>16</sup> *For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.* <sup>17</sup> *And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!* <sup>18</sup> *Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.* <sup>19</sup> *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*

<sup>20</sup> *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

Yes, the obedient Servant of the Lord has finished the task. We are redeemed. Let us believe and rejoice. We are reconciled and justified.

## **2. Jesus Leaves Us An Example To Follow His Steps.**

Jesus has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Our text tells us of the ambitious request of the sons of Zebedee and their mother, <sup>20</sup> *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.* <sup>21</sup> *And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."*

James and John certainly had fiery personalities, especially in their younger days. Luke 9:51–56 tells us how they wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, and Mark 3:17 says Jesus gave them a nickname which means *"Sons of Thunder."* Maybe they got some of that spirit from their mother, Salome. She was the one who approached Jesus and boldly requested that He give James and John the places of honour in His kingdom.

Salome was a very devoted follower of Jesus. She was an eyewitness of the crucifixion,<sup>12</sup> and she was one of the women who got up very early on the first Easter Sunday and went out to Jesus' tomb to anoint His body.<sup>13</sup> And it is significant that she made no request for herself when she approached Jesus on behalf of her sons.

But Salome and James and John did not understand the true nature of Jesus' kingdom. They realised that Jesus' earthly life was about to reach its climax, but they failed to understand what that would involve. They were not thinking about Jesus' recent prediction that the Son of Man was about to be mocked, spit upon, flogged, and killed.<sup>14</sup>

They evidently expected Jesus to rise above His lowly circumstances and to ascend His glorious throne. Since they considered themselves to be the first to realise this, the first to honour Jesus as the King that He would soon be, and the first to make such a request of Him, they expected their request to be granted.

Although this request was motivated partially by their desire for their own honour and glory, their ambition was by no means completely selfish and improper. They wanted to devote themselves completely to His service, so Jesus did not rebuke them. Instead, Jesus attempted to show them what was in store for them as subjects of His kingdom.

Without realising what they were saying, James and John quickly affirmed that they were able to drink the cup of suffering that Jesus was about to drink. Jesus responded, ***You will indeed drink My cup.***

Not only was Jesus' death closer than they knew, but only ten years after Jesus' crucifixion, King Herod would put James to death by the sword.<sup>15</sup> And although John was the only one of the Twelve who did not die a martyr's death, he was forced into exile on the island of Patmos.<sup>16</sup>

Considering the fact that, in Matthew 19:28, Jesus had already promised his disciples that they would sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel, the request that James and John should sit at Jesus' right and left sounds ungrateful.

They seem to have forgotten the wise advice of King Solomon, written in Proverbs 25:6-7, ***6 Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of the great; 7 For it is better that he say to you, "Come up here," Than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince.*** Jesus also told a parable teaching the same lesson in Luke 14:8-11, where we read, ***11 "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."***

This was a lesson that James and John and Salome had yet to learn. And it is clear that the other ten disciples were no better. Their indignation with James and John would have been very much in place if it had meant that they regarded the request itself as inappropriate or misguided. But that was not the case at all. They were unhappy because James and John had gotten ahead of them. A spirit of competition rather than a spirit of co-operation prevailed.

We read in our text, ***Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 "And whoever desires to be***

*first among you, let him be your slave --<sup>28</sup> “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

The followers of Jesus had false ideas and Jewish hopes concerning the kingdom of Christ and thought that Jesus would give special places of honour to His favourites, as in the kingdoms of this world. But not so in the kingdom of Christ. The only path to greatness and glory in His kingdom is through much tribulation, “drinking the bitter cup,” and humble, self-denying service.

In the church we cultivate the attitude of Christ Jesus. We read in Philippians 2:5-8, <sup>5</sup> *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* <sup>6</sup> *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* <sup>7</sup> *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.* <sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

This means that we must follow Christ on the way, and in His steps. First we have the sufferings and service, and then the glory will follow. Not love of greatness, but the greatness of love. First the cross, then the crown.

We read in Romans 8:16-18, <sup>16</sup> *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* <sup>17</sup> *and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* <sup>18</sup> *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Humble and self-denying service are here, as we learn in Matthew 25:35-40, <sup>35</sup> *‘for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;’* <sup>36</sup> *‘I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*

<sup>37</sup> *“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?’* <sup>38</sup> *‘When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?’* <sup>39</sup> *‘Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’*

<sup>40</sup> *“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, we shall stand on His right hand and hear the blessed words as recorded in Matthew 25:34, <sup>34</sup> *“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”* The apostles and martyrs were such faithful followers of Jesus.

Let us believe in Jesus Christ who gave His life a ransom for us and follow His example of true greatness, obedience, and service.

Let us conclude with the words of the hymnist,<sup>17</sup>

O Jesus, Thou hast promised  
To all who follow Thee,  
That where Thou art in glory  
There shall Thy servant be. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 1:23-24

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 2:2

<sup>3</sup> Acts 4:12

<sup>4</sup> John 1:29

<sup>5</sup> See also Mark 10:32-34, and Luke 18:31-33

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 16:13-16

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 16:21

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 17:1-9

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 17:22-23

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 53:5-6

<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 53:10

<sup>12</sup> Mark 15:40

<sup>13</sup> Mark 16:1

<sup>14</sup> Mark 10:33-34

<sup>15</sup> Acts 12:1-2

<sup>16</sup> Revelation 1:9



