

In faith we cry out, “Lord, have mercy upon us!” We desire our heavenly Father to find favor with us, that His grace and mercy would be upon us, that we would be fed with Jesus, the Bread of Life: with His Holy Word proclaimed and taught in all of its truth and purity, and the Blessed Sacraments given to us to create and strengthen us in the faith. But the government tells us to be quiet. The government and the world tell us we don’t need God, that He cannot help us, that He doesn’t even exist. In faith we cry out even louder, “Christ, have mercy upon us!” We desire our Lord Jesus Christ to be with us, to dwell among us, to save us. But the world tells us, “Don’t bother, there is nothing to see here. Don’t listen to what Jesus is saying, it’s a lie.” In faith we cry out still louder, “Lord, have mercy upon us!” We realize that our help is in the name of the Lord. Who made heaven and earth. Satan, the great deceiver, tells us, “You don’t want what Jesus has to give. What He gives isn’t any good. If you trust in Him you are a fool.” And our sinful flesh begins to waver, we are tempted to believe what the government, the world, and the devil himself are telling us.

But in our weakness, Jesus comes to us and gathers us into His presence to strengthen us in the One True Faith, handed down to us by the Prophets and Apostles. Jesus brings us here, before His holy altar, where He is, where He promises to be, to encourage us. Jesus speaks to us and we are strengthened. Jesus calls us by the Gospel and we are made to see. Jesus enlightens us with His gifts of grace and mercy and we are built up, we have nothing to fear. Jesus says to us, “He who has ears to hear, let Him hear. He who has eyes to see, let him see. He who has a mouth to eat, let him eat.” And in Christ Jesus, we do hear and see and eat. That which is from Jesus is good; it is for our very good. In faith we cling to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Because of Jesus, we fear, love and trust in God above all things.

During His mission of mercy, Jesus healed many from diseases and afflictions and evil spirits. To the blind He granted them the ability to see that He is the Christ. To the lame He granted the ability to walk in the Way, the Way of forgiveness, life and salvation. To the deaf He granted the ability to hear the Word of God, preached and taught, that they might read, mark, learn and inwardly digest it. To all people, Jesus comes, bringing grace, mercy and peace, which the world cannot give.

In his Gospel, St. Luke records for us a blind man who sat along the road begging. As Jesus passed by, he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!” These words demonstrate that the blind man is a man of faith. Although his physical eyes are shut, they have been opened by the healing presence of Jesus. Even though the man is blind, he sees. Jesus has come to heal both physically and spiritually. The blind man’s words understand Jesus as the miracle-working prophet. He believes that Jesus is the Creator who has come to bring miraculous healing to His creation. He believes that Jesus is the Son of David, the promised King who would sit upon the throne forever, the deliverer, the Messiah, the One who would come to deliver him. The blind man believed that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed One of God. And even though he was told to be quiet, he cried out again, even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy upon me!” He did not allow the government, the world, the devil or even his own sinful flesh to keep him from crying out to Jesus for mercy.

Jesus commanded him to be brought to Him. Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” Then Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. The man’s eyes are now open in more ways than one. The irony is that the blind man already had received his sight. The blind man sees what he already believed. And Jesus adds to His declaration of mercy, “your faith has saved you.” With these words Jesus acknowledges the man’s faith in Him as the One who makes all things new.

Prior to healing the blind beggar, Jesus told the disciples of John the Baptist, “Go, tell John the things you see and hear; the blind are seeing again, the lame are walking around, lepers are being cleansed, and the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised, the poor are having proclaimed to them

the Good News.” By His coming down from heaven and dwelling among us, Jesus, the Son of God, true God and true Man, has taken pity on us poor miserable sinners. Jesus has come to bestow upon us His Father’s gracious favor; that we would be blessed, that we would be kept safe from all evil, that God’s face would shine upon us, that we would know and have true peace.

Like the blind man, Jesus has shown mercy to us, He has come to save His people, to deliver them from sin, death and the power of the devil. Like the blind man, we can see that Jesus is the Christ, He is our Lord and Savior. Unlike the disciples, who had eyes to see but could not see, who understood nothing about what Jesus said concerning His coming Passion. In faith, we know that when Jesus is talking about His being delivered to the Gentiles, that He will be mocked and insulted and spit upon, that He will be scourged and killed, and on the third day rise again, we know that He is talking about His work of salvation for us and all people, where He purchases and wins us from sin, death and the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

Jesus accomplished all of this, that we would be His own. He has shown us grace and mercy that we would be children of the heavenly Father, His dear children, Jesus brothers and sisters, united with Him as members of His body, members of the Holy Christian Church, heirs of the kingdom of heaven; that we would serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

Today, as we focus upon the third sola, faith alone, we realize that faith is a free gift of God, given to us that we would hear and cling to the words of Holy Scripture, with the eyes of faith open to see that Jesus Christ is clearly proclaimed and revealed in its pages. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who alone is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love toward us forever. Hearing Scripture alone, we approach Jesus in the liturgy and come to Him to be fed with the Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation, that Jesus’ grace, mercy and peace would be upon us.

Shortly, we are going to stand and sing the Offertory. The other day, during one of my visits one of our members said, singing the Offertory was his favorite part of the liturgy. He said, “Pastor, I love to stand and sing it with all the gusto I have.” He said, “Those are the words of faith. This is where our help comes from. They proclaim God’s grace and mercy toward us.” He is right. Hear the words that you are about to sing: **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.** Truly He does create and renew. Those words point us to our baptism, where God our Father makes us His own and joins us to His only begotten Son’s, Virgin birth, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. Having been joined to Jesus we are forgiven, we are recreated in His image, eternal life and salvation are ours. The Offertory continues: **Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.** By His grace and mercy, we are not cast into the fires of hell, where there is suffering and the gnashing of teeth; Jesus now eagerly invites us to come before Him and take His yoke upon us, that our burden would be light. Jesus desires to feed us with His holy body and precious blood, that goodness and mercy would follow us all the days of our life and we would live in the house of the Lord forever. It concludes: **Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit.** Truly we are restored and upheld. By coming forward to our Lord’s altar and kneeling at His presence, our faith is proclaiming with joy and thanksgiving, the Lord’s death until He comes again. We shall not be in want. Like the beggar, our faith now sees clearly the salvation of our God. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, have mercy on me. Here I sit, like the blind man praying for Your help. Let me see what I would not see or understand if You did not touch my eyes. Help me to see You and all You have done in the clear light of Holy Scripture, so I understand what it means and why it was necessary for forgiveness, life and salvation. I pray that I may follow You, that I may hear You and see You; that what I need most day by day is You. Jesus, have mercy on me. Amen.