

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.

St. Luke 18:31

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Were you able to catch what St. Luke was trying to say in this evening's Gospel?

...they understood none of these things; [Luke tells us]

...this saying was hid from them;

...neither knew they the things which were spoken.

Pretty hard miss it, eh?

Luke spells it all out three times; saying the exact same thing using just a few different words; just in case you missed it the first or the second time:

...they understood none of these things;

...this saying was hid from them;

...neither knew they the things which were spoken.

And what was it that Jesus' disciples didn't get?

What was it that they so epically failed to understand?

Well, we could say that it was this: that they failed to understand the nature of true love. Because, at its heart, that's what Jesus has been talking about.

In his account of Christ's ministry St. Luke frames this conversation between Jesus and His disciples at the end of a long journey: a journey from Galilee to Jerusalem; a journey not so far in distance as it was in preparation.

All along Jesus has been preparing for this moment; preparing Himself and preparing His disciples.

Walking the dusty roads. In the hot sun and the cold rain. Speaking and teaching. Healing and helping. Opening hearts and opening minds. Teaching his disciples and teaching the crowds to think about their relationship with God in entirely new ways.

And all along he has been waiting. Waiting until His hour had come. Waiting until the time was right.

That, in fact, is what he's been trying to tell them. That the hour has come for Him to go to the death that had been foretold long before.

Foretold, as we heard not so long ago on the Feast of Candlemas, in the words of Blessed Simeon when in the infant Christ was just 40 days old.

Just as it had been foretold centuries before in the words of the Prophet Isaiah.
For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again.

That's what He's been trying to tell them.

And that's what they failed to even begin to understand.

And it's really all about love. God's love for us. And the depths that He was prepared to go to for that love.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have

*all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.
And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body
to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.*

All along He's been talking about love. A love that reaches out to the unloved and unlovable. A love which gives of itself. A love that takes upon itself all the weight and stain of this broken world and takes it away. Forever.

That's what He's been talking about. And that's what they've utterly failed to understand.

...they understood none of these things;

...this saying was hid from them;

...neither knew they the things which were spoken.

But, of course, they are not alone. Because understanding the nature of real love, and living it out, is the very same challenge that we all face. Even though we've also heard Christ's teaching. Even though we've seen the Cross.

And it's the very same challenge that the world so often fails to understand as it relentlessly, hopelessly pursues all its lesser loves. The lesser love of power and control and wealth and greed; the lesser love that inevitably lead humanity to violence and war.

And it is not a coincidence that Luke immediately follows all of this with the story of a poor blind man begging at the side of the road. It's a kind of living, breathing, walking example of what we heard Christ say in last week's Gospel; when He spoke about the nature of parables as a tool for teaching: that, as He said then, '*seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.*'

Even as the sighted cannot see; even as his disciples cannot see what Christ is getting at, it seems that this blind man knows who and what He is. That even though he cannot see outwardly, he can see inwardly with the eyes of faith.

The fact is, Christ's disciples have allowed their personal agendas to blind them to something far greater. Their desire for personal glory and gain; their pursuit of power and privilege prevent them from seeing what Christ is doing in that moment for them; and for us. Even though, at the very same time, poor blind Bartimaeus seems to know.

We too are on the brink of going up to Jerusalem. To see the Cross. To see and hear again the story of the death of the Son of God. To see love crucified and resurrected. And we are invited by the Church, in this Season of Lent which lies before us; [we are invited] to set aside our personal agendas and pursuits; to step back from our lesser hopes and expectations; that we might have our eyes opened to see a love so great that in it can be found all that we ever dreamed of; all that we ever hoped for.

Everything.

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.

With Christ.

That in seeing we might understand.

That in understanding we might be transformed.

That in our transformation of heart and mind, we might model a better love, a deeper love, that we might model the self-giving love that has the power to heal this broken, grasping, fearful world.