**Mark 10:32-45 (ESV)**

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, **33** saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. **34** And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

**35**  And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” **36** And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” **37** And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” **38** Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” **39** And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, **40** but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” **41** And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. **42**  And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **43** But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**“The Divine Service”**

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. We live in a service-orientated society. Simply opening the yellow pages reveals a list of countless services offered for just the right price. In addition, there are waiters, bellhops, attendants and other occupations just waiting for a tip. People tend also to volunteer their services for a cause or campaign they are eager to support. So many services around and yet people keep missing God’s serves to a sinful world. It comes without price or conditions, but purely as a gift given in Jesus. Matter a fact, so free is this service from God. It may seem too modest for the standards we set. Some have even gone so far as to turn worship upside and make man’s service to God the primary focus.

However, Lent saves us from passing over the Gospel. This is why Lutherans go out of the way to make God’s service unmistakable. If you have ever noticed the different settings used for communion. All of them have the title, “The Divine Service.” This is far more meaningful than just the word worship, but means we take seriously that God brings the greater service. As the introduction to the hymnal states,

“Our Lord serves us today through His holy Word and Sacraments. Through these means, He comes among us to deliver His forgiveness and salvation, free us from our sins and strengthening us for service to one another and to the world” (LSB viii).

It truly is remarkable, God wishes to be known by how He promises to serve. Jesus is the suffering servant who welcomes us to His divine service.

“And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him…” There was no mystery in what Jesus did for people. Disciples and strangers alike requested Him to help in all kinds of distresses. Yet, when it came to the cross. No one had a clue. No one knew how to receive this service from God’s Son. They were amazed over His boldness as the promised Savior, but just as fearful over the way it was heading. Right before His final entrance into Jerusalem. Jesus made the witness a third time to His suffering, death, and resurrection. There was no reason to hide the truth, but He also told it to them out of love. The Old Testament promised a new covenant, truly a new service from God. As described by Jeremiah, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Jesus leads in the way of service unknown to sinful humanity. When people come to worship, it is different from what anyone experiences in the culture. As one writer puts it,

“Naturally we want success, victories, and happiness. We will be attracted to any religion that can promise us such things. We want complete and understandable answers, evidence of tangible spiritual power, all conveyed by an impressive, well-run, and effective institution. Instead, God gives us the cross.” (Veith)

Lent turns worship right side up so all know God’s Divine Service. As with daily life, so we begin worship together in the Name of God given in baptism. It means Jesus takes the lead just as St. Paul proclaims, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (Romans 6:3) What is both amazing and fearful about worship is how God already chooses the way to be Savior. This truth casts out false delusions of what anyone brings to God. The suffering servant Jesus Christ makes known what is unknown to sinners.

Strangely enough, it is when God shows forth His humility that everyone else seeks opportunity for self-glory. We heard James and John who said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” These “Sons of Thunder” as they were nicknamed were not bashful or the reserved type. They knew something big was coming and wanted to secure positions of glory and power after the dust cleared. Of course, Jesus exposed their sinful desire not set upon the cross. He said, “You do not know what you are asking.” Having to drink the full wrath of the Law and receive the punishment of being the sinner was what Jesus saw glorious. The disciples wanted to go up. God’s Son wanted to go down. They agreed to share in His suffering, but that came after the dust cleared from the crucifixion. James would later die by the sword and John exiled to an island as a prisoner. Yet, the priceless treasure hidden for them was faith in Jesus who received all glory and power risen up from His cross.

Jesus uncovers our self-centered service set on glory. We always get ahead of ourselves trying to seek glory beyond the cross in this earthly life. The Divines Service is God still being the Savior at the present time. Lent reveals we are in a life of repentance and faith to Jesus. As an early Church Father puts it about the request of James and John, “The timing was precisely wrong. For this was not the right time for crowns or prizes. It was the time for struggles, contests, toils, sweat, wrestling rings and battles” (ACC). God’s service at worship is the time when Jesus cries out with a holy absolution of glory in the cross. He is saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Whatever we end up asking is before this suffering servant. Justified in Jesus means He selflessly gives Himself to me whose life is not so gloriously in His way of the cross. It humbles us to say with St. Paul, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:18).

The spiritual outcome of the rest of the disciples was no different. How quickly does power corrupt even the most dedicated followers of Jesus. Their fellowship built on faith in the Gospel was falling apart. Only the Savior could handle such a situation by calling them back together. What they knew was the ways of the world, the ways of men who only know the ways of power. Yet, Jesus rebuked such a kingdom and gave another kingdom built on His grace. He said, “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Slaves were these men to powers that love neither God nor neighbor. Only Jesus offered another power given in His sacrifice. It would scatter them, but in the end it saved them. The risen Savior promised to hold them together in His undying love. Redeemed by the blood of God’s Son turned power into a place of service before Him who served sinners.

Jesus serves as the sacrifice holding His saints together in service. We know how the world plays with power. We know how easily the hearts of men turn to serve self. Those words of the Savior echo throughout His Church, “But it shall not be so among you.” Is this because Christians are better in using power? Is it because the church has done so well throughout the centuries? I think not, because whenever Christ was lost and His sacrifice diminished or confused. Everything be it worship or life became about the powers of men and their service for glory. What holds the baptized together is the precious blood of Jesus. It is His kingdom of grace. The Savior calls us together being both the servant who gives and the sacrifice we receive. He who is God wields all His power for our benefit. In this Sacrament He pours forth forgiveness, life, and salvation to His weak and weary saints.

This power of love given by the Gospel is what Peter glorifies. He states, “you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19). God’s Sacrifice covers all our sins today and in so doing turns us to give of ourselves to others. It starts at the communion rail and this power of love goes out into the rest of our lives. There are many services in our society, but nothing as useful as what God so modestly gives to sinners. Jesus is the suffering servant who welcomes us to His divine service. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.