

Christ's Going up to Jerusalem

Mark 10:32-34

Sing: Psalter 266v1-3

Read: Mark 10: 32-52

Sing: Psalter 318:1-7

Sing: Psalter 202v1-3

Sing: Psalter 422:1,4,6

Congregation, people travel a lot nowadays! If you want, you can book your summer holiday flight when it is still winter. In other words, globalization is increasingly part of our lives. The farthest corners of this world are mostly within reach for everyone. But not everyone chooses to utilize these possibilities. Not everyone wants to spend his savings on travelling. Not everyone wants to spend his time that way.

But even if we choose not to travel to distant places this summer, the life of each one of us can be compared with a journey. We all make the same journey, the journey from cradle to grave. For the one this journey can be easy, while for the other it can be very hard and challenging. Yet, the start and finish of everyone's journey are all the same.. Our birth marks the beginning, while our death marks the end of our earthly existence. It shows that we are fallen sinners who have brought ourselves under death's power through our ruinous fall in sin.

The apostle pictures our condition in grim words in his Epistle to the Romans, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

Congregation, this is our condition. We are full of enmity. We are powerless and unwilling. We are estranged from God, living without His communion. But God, in His gracious good pleasure, has given His Son to bring sinners back into communion with Him! The Son Himself has testified of this while He was on earth, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The Lord Jesus Christ has come as Surety to travel on this earth the way we travel. He began where we all began our journey - in the womb. His way through life began in the cradle in Bethlehem and ended on the cross of Golgotha. In the portion of Scripture which was read, Mark directs our attention to the last part of Jesus' life. With the help of the Lord we would like to consider especially verses 32 to 34 of Mark 10:

"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall

deliver Him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.”

Congregation, this portion of Scripture brings our attention to Christ’s going up to Jerusalem. We will consider three thoughts:

1. The road He traveled: “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them.”
2. The impression He made: “And they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid.”
3. The announcement He made regarding His suffering: “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.”

1. The road He traveled

Congregation, in this portion of Scripture Mark portrays a group of travellers. In the wider context the author describes how the Lord Jesus together with His disciples return from the other side of the river Jordan, to go to Jerusalem via Jericho. Verse 32 opens with that, “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them.” The expression ‘going up to Jerusalem’ is also used in verse 33. Two times this is brought to our attention.

Jerusalem’s altitude was quite high. The difference with the Mediterranean Sea is a couple of hundred meters. From whatever side a traveller approached Jerusalem, the road was always going up. You could feel this in your legs. ‘Going up to Jerusalem’ is a standard expression which occurs seven times in the New Testament. The literal meaning of this expression is obvious, but it also has a religious meaning. This expression does not only refer to the movements of the feet but also to the spiritual movements of the heart, as Jerusalem was the city of the temple of the Lord, the place of the ministry of reconciliation. The place where also in the old covenant the Holy Spirit used to lead sinners from the outward ceremonies to Him who was to come, the Surety and Saviour Jesus Christ. It caused the hearts of the temple pilgrims to sing, “Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee... in whose heart are the ways of them” (Psalm 84:4-5).

Everything in the temple spoke of anticipated deliverance, each day again with the many animals brought daily to be sacrificed, and the hundreds and thousands of Passover lambs which at the event of the Passover would be herded into Jerusalem to be killed at the feast. All of the sacrifices, all of these Old Testament institutions cried for the coming of Christ, the fulfillment of the law. And the Lord in His merciful kindness compassed about His people in His house of prayer with joyful songs of deliverance.

It was to this temple, congregation, the Lord Jesus was travelling. Though the Lord had done this before together with His disciples, it is remarkable that this time Mark particularly draws our special attention to it, as he writes in verse 32, “And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them.”

It is as if Mark emphasizes that the road which they were taking, with the Lord Jesus leading, was the only right one. This was the road Christ had to take; the only one He could take. The time to suffer and to die as Surety was at hand. He had read it in what was written about Him in the books of the Old Testament and through them the Holy Ghost instructed Him in the way of obedience. He was perfectly willing to do the will of His Father. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

"And Jesus went before them." Truly remarkable words, congregation. Being the good Shepherd, He takes the lead. He goes before them. Very decidedly He walks at the head. He goes before them as a very willing Surety, who has come to pay for the guilt and sin of His Church. The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep, as He stated two times in John chapter 10. He paves the way for His Church. He goes before them! "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10:17, 18).

We read in the next part of verse 32, "And they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid," which brings us to our second thought:

2. The impression He made

The twelve disciples who followed the Lord Jesus were amazed. It must have been His unwavering, unmovable attitude which triggered this amazement. Something in the Lord Jesus' behaviour must have been responsible for this amazement. Could it have been the look in His eyes? Or the way He walked, the way He talked so resolutely? Right after Mark has mentioned the amazement of the twelve, he follows with mentioning that they were afraid, as we read in verse 32, "And as they followed, they were afraid."

Considering the context of this verse, their fear is really justified. After all, hadn't the Jews decided that anyone who confessed that Jesus was the Christ would be cast out from the synagogue? That was quite a dramatic thing! It meant that you were spiritually and socially cut off from society.

And hadn't the Jews not too long ago tried to stone Him to death? We can read that in John 11 verse 8. And hadn't the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council, ordered to find out as soon as possible where Jesus stayed, so that they could arrest Him? And hadn't Caiaphas the high priest made the final decision at the secret meeting of the Sanhedrin? Unknowingly he had pointed Jesus out as the innocent Passover Lamb, when he as the chairman snapped at the members of the Jewish council, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:49-50). Which man had to die? The Man, Jesus Christ. The Lamb of God! He is the great Passover Lamb, set apart for that reason by the Father Himself, who as Surety went the way from the cradle to the cross in the fulness of time.

We will talk more later about how the disciples were surprised and afraid. Though they are not unimportant, they are completely dominated by the scope of the words from verse 32, "And Jesus went before them." These are words full of salvation! Jesus Christ was the true Passover Lamb that came to atone for the guilt for the entire Church of all times and places.

Congregation, what do you think of Him? You are, in most cases, a member of the Christian congregation here. Young people, what do you think of Him? You are, in most cases, a baptized member of the Christian congregation here. Now tell us what meaning Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb, has for you personally! Tell me, has He already become the Fairest among the children of men for you? Or do the Passion weeks that we have started mean very little to you? You may wonder, What use is a Lamb to me? But that raises another, very probing question. Have you never faced the guilt you have before God? Have you never noticed that you are a powerless slave of sin who cannot redeem himself?

Ask the Lord for conviction of the heart, beg Him for the gift of true faith. You must be born again. Rebirth and faith always go together. They are two sides of the same matter. Have your eyes already been opened for your sins and your guilt? Does the holy law condemn you as a transgressor of all God's commandments? Is your debt great?

You are invited today as a great sinner to enter the wedding hall of the kingdom of heaven. For in His sovereign grace and through His Word and Spirit He still grants wedding garments!

Are you looking for a lamb to pay your debt? Are you looking for a sacrificial lamb without blemish and without spot? There is such a Lamb! It went up to Jerusalem. There this Lamb gave His life for the sheep. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).

Have you seen your debt? And is your debt still unpaid? Or are you now seeking help from the Lamb? Are you looking for that only sacrificial Lamb that has given His life for the sheep at Calvary? His Name I may proclaim today: Jesus, Saviour, Redeemer, Emmanuel, He who conquers sin. His Name says Who He is and what He does. Jesus - He will save His people from their sins.

What caused you to begin seeking the Lamb? How did it happen? Did it not happen when the Holy Spirit showed you how worthless all your self-righteousnesses, your religion, your piety is? He made room for Christ in your heart, so that's why you started seeking Him. You knew that you could not come before God even with tears and tenderness of heart and the experiences on life's pathway. That is not enough. It would never ever suffice. You saw that you could not pay the debt you had with God. And if you begin to see the Surety as the One who takes over your debt and bears your guilt, a joy which surpasses all understanding will fill your heart. And we say as in Psalm 71, verse 16, "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.

Congregation, the wider context of the text speaks about the approach of the Passover in Jerusalem. The people are travelling. They are on their way to the capital to remember the statutes of the Lord. Not only adults are going up, but also the children, as we read in the Bible that the twelve-year-old Jesus went up to the temple as well. In our text, we see the Lord Jesus going up to Jerusalem again. He deliberately went there, boys and girls, because He wanted to suffer and die also for children. He is wholeheartedly willing to receive children who have an

sinful heart. Have you already felt how bad your heart is? Have you felt that from the unkind words you sometimes speak? Have you felt that from your disobedience to your mum and dad? From being disrespectful to your teacher at school? Have you felt it because of your irreverent behaviour during family worship or in church?

But what is even worse is if you keep on ignoring the Lord who is calling you. He calls you to repentance, but you do not repent! That evil, stubborn, hostile heart of yours must be washed in the blood of the Lamb, the blood of the Lord Jesus, which He has poured out on the cross.

If you are washed with that blood of Christ, young people, you will get a new heart at that very moment. That changes you from within. You will begin to have a new mindset and new desires that you did not have before. You will begin to love the Lord, and to hate sin, because you see that your sins hurt the Lord. Come, boys and girls, seek the Lord while He is to be found! "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of children!

Knowing this context, congregation, let us reread verse 32 and pay attention to the plural, "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem." That comes back again in verse 33 where the Lord Jesus says, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." It is obvious who is meant by that plural 'we.' It is about the Lord Jesus and His disciples.

Notice here the word "followed," "and as they followed, they were afraid." People of the Lord, perhaps you timidly ask the question: Does that mean that in our time Christ's disciples must go the same way to Jerusalem, just as He did? No, not to earn salvation. That's what Jesus did on the cross; He has established a perfect righteousness. You and I do not need to add anything to it, nor can anything add to it. For that dear Saviour submitted Himself under the wrath of God against sin in such a way that He could cry out at Calvary, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Atonement is *accomplished*, the work of grace is *finished* through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Of this John testified, "And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

But in a sense, going up to Jerusalem with Christ still happens today. In a spiritual sense, the Lord leads His people to the cross. With Him they must die, and with Him they will rise to a new life. The baptism form says briefly, matter-of-factly, and very strikingly that 'we must crucify our old nature.' And the apostle Paul says it very insistently, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

To mortify our old nature is very hard for us by nature. It is impossible. We don't have the strength for it. Yes, we want to be saved, but only in a way that pleases us. We want to hold on to that which we think is good in us. We do not want to admit that there is no godliness in us. We do not want to admit that we are an unholy one who stands in need for the crucified Christ and to have Him as our holiness.

Yet, this is the only way, the way of mortification, of humility, in which we can enter the kingdom of God unto life.

We should exclaim, "Holy Jesus, sanctify me that I may be holy as Thou art holy." For that reason, the Lord makes His own here on earth to follow Him in a way of cross bearing after Him. Only in this way we learn to take refuge as a poor and needy sinner in the all-justifying, all-sanctifying, and all-cleansing blood of the Lamb. That is not an easy way. That's why we read that the disciples were amazed and frightened as they followed Christ.

"And Jesus went before them." Amazement is something different than awe. Awe in the Bible includes the element of worship, but amazement is different. Unbelief echoes in these words. "Do we have to go this way? Isn't there another option? Isn't there a different way we can go?"

Jesus' taking the lead had shocked the disciples for a moment. Mark didn't write it without a purpose. After all, in general the disciples had so little understanding of reconciliation through perfect satisfaction. The Lord could not count on any help from His disciples in the way of suffering which He had to travel. He didn't have His disciples' support in His going up to Jerusalem. He was going to do something which they did not understand. He must do something which they did not approve of. He must do something which scared them.

And thus in the whole way of suffering He is on His own. All alone! Therefore, He goes before them, "And Jesus went before them." Alone! He opens the way to eternal life for His Church. And Jesus went before them, alone! And of the people there was none with Him.

Our text also says of the disciples that they were frightened. We all know that death is frightening. Who has never been afraid to die? There is fear of judgment and there is fear of God. The Bible doesn't condemn that type of fear, on the contrary, but that is not the fear of which our texts speaks. Here the disciples were afraid that Jesus had to suffer. And the way in which Jesus led them could also bring suffering upon them! The word 'frightened' speaks of opposition, resistance. They rejected the way Jesus went, the way Jesus had to go. They rejected the way of the Saviour who was to pay the guilt of His Church.

It was a fear which clearly opposed God's will and therefore, it was sinful. Oh, beloved, why do God's children often seek salvation in a way where it cannot be found? They seek it everywhere except in that one and only way in which it is to be found. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). So often we trust on answered prayers, or on emotional stirrings received during a sermon. Or we build on the pleasant conversations we had with God's people.

Certainly, make no mistake, those things accompany the life of grace, but as such they give no rest to your soul. Rest, true peace, and assurance are only found in the unity of faith with Christ. "I am the light of the world: He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

This one and only way is pointed out in the gospel, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). That's why He goes before them; that's why He prepares

the way for them. He is the mighty one who is our only Help. Where God's Church cannot go, He goes. Where God's Church does not want to go, He goes. Where God's Church does not dare to go, He goes.

That brings us to a deep secret, the secret why the disciples, though being amazed in unbelief and sinful fear, yet followed Him. They continued to follow Him in spite of their fear; they continued to follow him despite their astonishment. Why did they continue to follow Him? Why? Because He is their strength; the power of their strength. Why do they continue to follow Him in their unbelieving amazement, in their sinful fear? Why? "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). This then is the secret of the life of God's Church. The Lord draws His people out of darkness to the light! He continues to draw, He will not forsake the work His hand begun.

We will pause to sing of this with Psalter 217, all verses.

Congregation, verses 33 and 34 of our text bring us to our last thought:

3. The announcement He made regarding His suffering

In verse 33 the Lord calls Himself the Son of man. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again."

Here the Lord Jesus calls Himself the Son of man. He is the second Adam, who has come to restore that which the first Adam ruined. He, who is God of God, Light of Light, was incarnate, which means He was made human, a man, like you and me, through the virgin Mary.

He humbled Himself so deeply to pay the debt of sin of all His people in our nature, a weak, fragile nature, subject to death. And now, in this passage of Scripture, He is ready to descend in the deepest depth of His humiliation. Soon He will open up His pure soul and body to all the torments of hell, for all the horrors of damnation. And now He confesses openly that He is the Son of man, who is fully prepared to allow Himself to be struck as a substitute by the sword of God's righteousness. "And He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto Him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem."

Two things are brought to our attention. The first is the clarity with which the Lord often made a separation between the twelve on the one hand, and the circle of disciples in a broader sense and the multitudes on the other. The gospels make this distinction no less than ten times.

The second thing that strikes us is that He calls the twelve from the crowd. He takes them aside to teach them further in the way that will lead to His approaching end. In this way, the Lord also today teaches His children to give them a deeper insight into the secrets of salvation.

The Lord Jesus said, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." This shows His full willingness as Surety to enter the way of suffering and death. He knows what is

coming at every point and yet He goes on to the next one: In the upper room, in Gethsemane, before Caiaphas, with Pilate before Herod, at Gabbatha where He was scourged, and at Calvary where He was crucified. At every point He was completely willing to give Himself over unto death for His own.

Here He speaks for the third time about His suffering. It is remarkable that this time He does it in much more detail than at other times. The first announcement is found in Mark 8:31 and it is only one verse. The second announcement is found in Mark 9:30 and 31, which is two verses. However, in our text the Lord Jesus gives much more detail about the suffering that awaits Him. Mark lists seven things connected to the suffering Saviour's going up to Jerusalem.

The first thing is that He will be delivered into the hands of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council.

The second is that the Sanhedrin will condemn Him to death.

The third is that He will be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, which were Pontius Pilate and the soldiers.

The fourth is that they will mock Him, ridicule Him, and spit at Him.

The fifth is that He will be scourged at Gabbatha as a preparation for His crucifixion.

The sixth is that they will kill Him by way of crucifixion.

The seventh is that He will rise from the dead on the third day and thus show His victory over death and hell, and the grave and the devil.

How clear it stands out through Mark's detailed list that the Lord Jesus knows all things! He understands what He must suffer, and He knows even the smallest details.

He knows how He will die. See how in this way He makes Himself known to us as the highest Prophet and Teacher! He goes far beyond the prophet Isaiah, who foretold His sufferings in Isaiah 53. He goes far beyond the prophet David, who has marked His suffering in Psalm 22 and Psalm 69. Boys and girls, when you're at home, look up Isaiah 53 in your Bible. Find for yourself two texts about the suffering of the Lord Jesus and read them to your father or mother. David and Isaiah were privileged to proclaim God's counsel in words shrouded in shadows. But Jesus, our highest Prophet and Teacher, has revealed God's will even to the smallest details.

Why did He do all this? Because He wants to be the way of escape for the greatest of sinners!

“And Jesus went before them.” Did you already take in these words with close attention? Did you already say it with your mouth and confess it with your heart, “For such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26)? Or do you have to admit that this confession is foreign to you? Do you have to acknowledge that there is no desire in your heart for the Saviour Jesus? Perhaps you say, “It is true, I have no thirst for Him. Yes, I sit here in church, but I do not hunger after Him. Would He be willing to teach such a one as I am, such an indifferent church attender?”

Yes, congregation, to such He still wants to give instruction, because the acceptable year of the Lord is also the year in which we live. He has come especially for such sinners, hardened ones, unwilling ones, and people full of

enmity and indifferent.

This is precisely why He went before the disciples, going up to Jerusalem, to establish a perfect righteousness, to gloriously work discovering grace in spiritually dead people. Still today He testifies the same with a solemn repeated, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead (that is: the spiritually dead) shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25). “And Jesus went before them.” “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.”

His going up as Surety brings salvation to all God’s children of all times. That was His focus; He never did anything for Himself. Everything He did, He did for His people. Every step on that way He took as Surety for His people. He prepared the way for them to the throne of grace. He went before them.

Children of God, may you learn to see the eternal willingness of this precious Surety to save a sinner like you. Have you already been given to see something of it? Then do you not read Psalm 40 with awe and wonder, “Then said I (speaking of Jesus), Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart” (verses 7 and 8). Through the instruction of Scripture we can see something of God’s eternal good pleasure to save sinners in Christ. May we believe what is says in Ephesians 1:5 & 6 “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us acceptable in the beloved.”

Then we may join in this song of praise on God’s gracious election,
Thou art, O God, our boast, the glory of our power;
Thy sovereign grace is e’er our fortress and our tower.
We lift our heads aloft, for God, our shield, is o’er us;
Through Him, through Him alone, whose presence goes before us,
We’ll wear the victor’s crown, no more by foes assaulted,
We’ll triumph through our King, by Israel’s God exalted. (Psalter 422:6)

Amen.