

THE KYRIE : Simple Words, Profound Comfort ..

Sometimes the most simple and obvious things are also the most profound. We often go to great lengths to find comfort, to improve our situation in life, to find peace. With God, this is not necessary. We don't have to ascend to heaven or go off on some elaborate spirituality quest to find His comfort. He brings it to you, simply and plainly (Jeremiah 23:23). In Exodus 34:6, God describes Himself as "merciful and gracious." This simple, yet profoundly comforting truth finds its expression in the Church's Kyrie: "Lord, have mercy upon us!"

The Lord is merciful. This is such a simple and obvious truth of the Christian faith that we risk taking it for granted. It is the genius of the liturgy that it takes these simple, profound truths from Scripture and sets them before us as the pattern for our lives. When you are hurting and have need of comfort, you need not remember some complex set of rules to find your best life now. In-stead, we cry out simply and plainly, "Lord, have mercy!"

There is great comfort in this simple prayer. God is merciful. He bids you to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24), to daily die and daily rise (Small Catechism; Baptism, IV). Our Lord is more fully acquainted with sorrow than we could ever be (Isaiah 53:3). The Lord knows firsthand the weight of the cross, and mercifully, He does not allow you to bear its full weight, nor does He give you to bear it alone.

The Lord is merciful. The crosses He sends into your life are custom made, neither too heavy nor too light. He knows just how much you can bear, and He will never give you more than you can handle (1 Corinthians 10:13). He who formed you with great care in the womb (Psalm 139:13), who knows the very number of the hairs on your head (Matt 10:30), who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for you, how will He not also with Him graciously give you all things (Romans 8:32)? In the midst of suffering, into the midst of daily suffering and death, a confident Kyrie is in order. "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (Luke 18:31). Your Kyrie is not in vain. If, in His mercy, God desires to remove a given cross from your life, He will.

We're good at the dying part. We don't have to look very long or hard to find crosses to bear. Suffering comes all too naturally to us. The difficult thing is the rising part, the living by faith part, the part where we trust in God's good and gracious will even when the crosses He sends tax us to the limit and go against every fibre of our being. If He will not remove such a cross, faith means trusting that the crosses God sends into our life are for our good, that even such crosses are evidence of God's mercy. They probably don't seem that way at the time, any more than it did for Jesus (Luke 22:42; Matthew 27:46). But as it is written, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives," (Hebrews 12:5-6).

God, in His mercy, does not allow you to suffer in vain. His will is good and gracious. He grants you the privilege of Sonship when you call upon Him as Father, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But fellowship with Christ also means fellowship with His suffering (Matthew 10:25; 1 Peter 2:21). He grants you the privilege of Sonship when He disciplines you (Hebrews 12:7). This, too, is of God's mercy.

God will not leave you to bear these crosses forever. The Lord is gracious and merciful (Exodus 34:6). He will leave you in death no more than He abandoned His Holy One to Sheol (Psalm 16:10). Jesus rose on the third day, and you are raised up with Christ by faith even now (Ephesians 2:4-9). By faith we boast in our weaknesses, for faith raises us up to new life, a life in which we rely on His all-sufficient grace (2 Corinthians 12:9). We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world

to come even as we pray, "Give strength and patience unto me to bear my cross and follow Thee,"
(LSB, 708, v. 2). Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.