



72nd Year

August 11, 2024

Pamphlet #32 (3715)

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Matthew 9:27-35)

Christ heals every disease

At that time, as Jesus passed by, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But they went away and spread his fame through all that district. As they were going away, behold, a dumb demoniac was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

THE FRUITS OF FAITH

In today's Sunday passage we have two events: one is the healing of two blind men, and then the healing of a deaf but simultaneously possessed person. The dominant element in the two cases of these miracles is faith in the person and in the healing work of the Lord over diseases.

Faith and unbelief

Faith is not some vague and abstract theory, a beautiful ideology and an advantageous religious point of view. The Orthodox faith is an experience, an ethos, a way of life and being. Faith means that the life of Christ becomes my life. By faith, man transcends the limitations of space and time of the post-fall world and ascends from the earthly to the heavenly, from the temporal to the eternal, from what passes to what stands, from death to life indeed. Through faith he sees the heavens declaring the glory of God, he sees the substantive, lifegiving but also productive grace of the Creator in the world. This faith can make him ponder and think. The denial of faith in God is insanity, as the psalmist David characteristically says: "the fool said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (Psalm 14:1)

The Orthodox faith

Our faith starts from the acceptance of the manifestation, in Christ, of the Triune God in the world, and is completed, following spiritual effort, in the personal encounter and sacramental union within the Church, of man, created in the image and likeness of God, with Christ. Such a meeting and union is found in works, the works of faith, because without works faith is dead. And the opposite: works without faith are a form without essence, pompous actions with other motives and goals, usually personal recognition and projection, deprived of love for one's neighbor. The Orthodox faith leads us to pray for others, to share, to rejoice in the joy of others, to feel sadness in their sadness, to think about our eternal destiny, to learn to forbear, to hope, to be abstinent and to rejoice in simplicity and austerity.

Experiencing the mystery of faith

Unfortunately, modern man, nurtured with the principles of rational intellect, gives greater importance to created human logic than to faith in God's will. Enclosed in the shell of egotism, he trusts only himself, his personal judgment, and ignoring God,

he chases Christ away from his personal life. And while man undoubtedly achieves a rapid scientific and technological development, which facilitates his daily life, he experiences more and more deeply the consequences of his problems, of social, psychological, health, environmental, and others, ending up at an impasse in which he is trapped. And he thinks that he is happy, while he is unhappy. In the end, he submits to the common fate of mortals which no created force can surpass, death, not only physical but also spiritual death, because of his secular mindset.

We Christians, who are experiencing the mystery of faith, face the weaknesses of our environment and sorrows as spiritual exercises and contests. We receive the individual incidents of our lives as manifestations of God's will for us, and we try, amidst these, to put our own struggling effort from the rampart in which we were placed. We are living the obedience of faith, and we do not retreat in the challenges of the world, nor are we assimilated by the world. Being inside the noetic Ark of the Church, we commune sacramentally with Christ, with discretion we evaluate what is good and innocent, and with prudence we set the spiritual priorities for this temporary life. God, the Triune God in Whom we believe, is not a distant being, an unapproachable God, a vague power. God, Who incarnated, suffered, and was crucified for us, and Whose Resurrection gives us the hope and the opportunity of eternal life, is then present in our lives.

† F. A.

“Without me, you can do nothing”

If a person doesn't want to be tortured, he must believe in the "without me you can do nothing," which Christ said. That is, to despair of himself in the good sense, and to believe in the power of God. When one despairs in the good sense of himself, then he finds God. "I put all my hope in you." Even the most spiritual people have not secured their lives, that is why they always keep themselves in the safety of God, hope in God, and

despair only of their "ego," because the "ego" brings to man all the spiritual unhappiness.

The good God, many times, very wisely allows us to see both His divine intervention and the failure we had with our self-confidence. When one watches and examines every event that happens in his life, he gains experience, he pays attention and thus he progresses. Christ first asked for faith in God's power, and then performed the miracle. "If you believe in the power of God, you will be healed," He used to say.

(From the book of the Apostolic Ministry:
Anthology of Counsels of Saint Paisios the Hagiorite)

August 11, 2024: 7TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW
Euplus the Deacon († 304), Niphonus of Constantinople († 1502),
Commemoration of the miracle of St. Spyridon in Corfu (1716).
Tone: Pl. 2 – Eothinon: 7 – Epistle: Rom. 15:1-7 – Gospel: Matt. 9:27-35
NEXT SUNDAY: August 18, 8th Sunday of Matthew
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 – Gospel: Matthew 14:14-22

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