

Fifth Sunday Of Lent - The Paralysed man

Father Luke Sidaros - 03/04/23006

“In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

Today is the fifth Sunday of the Great Fasting. From the Gospel of St John the Evangelist; may his blessings be with us. Amen.

Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralysed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

So, they asked Him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In His defence Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” For this reason, they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Glory be to God forever Amen.

My beloved, when an illness is prolonged, healing has a miraculous feeling—a beautiful taste. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has healed illness and disease and raised the dead, but He is not a Saviour of the body.

Our Saviour gives us eternal life. He healed the sick in abundance, raised the dead, and said, ‘My Father works with me till now.’ ‘Now’ means to this day. ‘My Father works, and I work

with Him.' Jesus will continue to work. He is not limited by time. He will continue to work forever.

Don't ever think Jesus was in the past—meaning the first or the last century. He is here, there, and everywhere, all the time. He is *not* limited to one time or one place.

The gift of healing Christ gives is not limited to a time frame. He gives healing gifts and gives today, and all the time.

We are not Jews; the Jews were interested in and keen on saving the body because they didn't know salvation. They looked down on Jesus for healing the body, giving sight to blind eyes, healing illness of the body, healing the body of leprosy, raising dead bodies, and so on. However, because we are Christians, we ask and look for the salvation of our souls and spirits.

He works with us today in abundance. Here is a test for each one of us: How many times has Christ healed you? How many times has Christ forgiven your sins? Believe me, no one can count or remember. This is a test for each one of us.

How many times has He forgiven your sins? Sin is not an illness or disease, but by definition, it is death. How many times has Jesus approached you, approached your heart to say, 'Isn't it enough? Don't you want to be healed and feel better?'

When a person comes along with all his immoral and dirty illnesses, and falls sick and approaches death, Jesus says, 'Isn't it enough? How long will you be like this? How long will you stay in this sick bed? 38 years?' Then Christ comes and asks you, 'Do you want to be healed?'

At the first sign of acceptance and willingness to be healed, Jesus immediately offers healing and forgiveness. Christ is generous, and willing to forgive, however we are not good people; we are lazy, we lean toward bad things, we lean toward the cravings of the body. This is what is hindering and stopping us.

From our point of view, Christ gives, and gives in abundance, but we are not decent or honourable enough to receive.

The Bible has revealed to us that Christ raised the decayed body of a dead person from the grave. We ask, 'But why doesn't it happen now?' Because we are bad; because we are not sincere.

We lost Christ because we love worldly things. We plead saying, 'God help me; God, please give me success. I want to succeed. Make life simple for me. I want to make more profit. I want to buy. I want to sell.' So, everything is focused on material things. 'I want to have treasure,' and so on. So, you think Christ needs to give more. So, what is it you have already? We've lost spirituality. Everything you have is a gift from Christ. He continues to give once, many times, and millions of times. Who gave you whatever you have? There are no limits to what Christ can give you, because Christ has no limits. We all love Him. We love Him spiritually. You can ask someone, 'Do you pray?' The reply is usually, 'I pray within my limits.'

But He asked us to pray without ceasing; without boredom; to pray with joy and happiness. Yet people say, 'I pray as much as I can; within my limits.'

We can ask someone, 'Do you give?' And the usual reply is, 'I donate as much as I am able; within my limits.' 'Do you forgive?' and the reply is, 'Yes, as much as I am able.' 'Are you living a holy life; a saintly life?' The usual reply is...oh, well you know what it is. We all have illnesses, and the example is in front of us: 38 years in sin, and Christ can revive and save him. He can also raise the dead four days after burial. He is God; surely He can do it; His capability has no limits and He knows every one of us by name.

Do you think Christ saved the world en masse? No; Christ saved every individual by name. He suffered and died for each and every one of us.

We mock the man who was healed, and ask him, 'Who healed you?' And his reply: 'I don't know.'

We ask him, 'Are you carrying your bed on the Sabbath? Don't you know the Sabbath? Aren't you a Jew? Don't you know the Sabbath? Who told you to carry your bed on the Sabbath?'

He told them, 'The Man who healed me told me, 'Pick up your bed.'

They asked him, 'Who was the Man who healed you?'

He replied, 'Believe me, I don't know.'

This is a scandal. Who healed you?'

'I don't know.'

We deal with Christ in a different way: our personal relationship with Him. There is one point that needs clarification: my personal relationship with Him. What exists between you and Him? An acquaintance? Do we come to church? Do we fast and do we pray? Do you know Him? Do you have a relationship with Him? Do you have any kind of relationship with Him? 'Oh yes, I hear about Him during the Liturgy and the sermon.' Did you ever have a covenant with Him? Yes, you did—through the covenant of Baptism. He purchased you. But due to a lack of knowledge...intellectual knowledge has increased, but our knowledge and personal experience of Christ has decreased. This is personal love for Christ: He is my only love; He is the one I sit with. The thermometer and measure of this love and success is prayer. When you are pushed and pushed repeatedly to pray, your life with Him is limited or non-existent. If I am pushed to pray, pushed to be holy, pushed to forgive, pushed to give, and pushed to live in a saintly manner... then there is *no* relationship with Christ.

But when I miss spending time with Him, I hate that this time runs out...I go to my room alone and spend time with Him because I love Him.

They asked the man, 'Who healed you?' Who gave you breath to breathe? Who gave you the salvation you are enjoying? The forgiveness of your sins? Who gave you this? Do you know Him or not? Do you have a relationship with Him or not?

What does Christ want from me? He wanted to heal this man, so He healed him. Believe me, here is the way to explain and clarify it. He was lying with others like him. They were all waiting for the water to be stirred up or to move. Tradition said that if the water moved or was stirred up by the angel, they could slip into the water and be healed. So, they were focused on and continuously watching the water. So, believe me, the ill and unwell suffer with waiting; to them, waiting is extremely painful.

So, with Christ no water or angel exists or can work. It is He who will heal you; He is here, there, and everywhere. Go on; call on Him now. Whatever your sin may be, go on; call on Him now. You will feel saved; a great feeling. This is the test of the saints. What are the things we suffer for years and years? He will heal all these ailments. People will say, 'Isn't that the sinner? Isn't he the one clothed in immorality?' 'Isn't he the con man...he used to con everyone. What happened to him?' 'Isn't he the one that was lying for 38 years, rotting? Is it him?' No, it is not him. He is now healed, generous, and gives. 'Isn't he the dancer and the womaniser?' He has traded with Christ and He healed him. This is healing for all ailments.

This is what will happen to you when you connect with Christ. When you leave the church, people will say, 'Look how well adjusted they are...a different person.'

The final warning is this; please be mindful of this: The sick man met Christ again and asked Him, 'Was it You who healed me?' Christ replied, 'Yes, it was Me.' Christ asked him, 'Do you want something that will make your healing last?' The sick man answered, 'Yes.' Christ told him, 'Don't sin again.' Are there any greater sins than 38 years lying in sin? Yes, there are, and Christ will forgive them, and bigger sins.

If Christ gave you the blessing of salvation and forgiveness, don't ever let Satan look at you and take it from you. Satan will be envious, and begrudge you this blessing. If you slow down, or became a sinner, Satan will snatch this blessing from you—if you lean toward sin again and return to it, and to immoral thoughts. This is Christ's warning to each and every one of you. If you have communion, receive the holy body of Christ and the blessing of forgiveness, don't you dare let it slip away, because the consequences will be very severe. Keep this blessing alive and safe in you, and don't let Satan snatch it from you.

Glory be to God forever. Amen."