

May 6, 2012

Sunday Sermon

Fr Ambrose Young
Entrance of the Theotokos Skete



Sunday of the Paralytic

John 5:1-15

Dear Brothers and Sisters: Christ is risen! Today is the Sunday of the Paralytic. The Kontakion hymn for today is as follows:

I am grievously paralyzed in a multitude of sins and wrongful deeds. As You raised up the paralytic of old, also raise up my soul by Your divine guidance, so that I may cry out, "Glory to Your Power O Compassionate Christ."

This Gospel narrative is well known and familiar to us all: the Lord's healing of the paralytic. It has a very deep spiritual application for us all today, well beyond the fact that it testifies to the Lord's already well-known ability to heal. And that application is this: *today is a feast day for all of us paralytics—that is, you and me--who are paralyzed in our sins, in our bad habits, and in our negative attitudes.* As Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov, the Abbot of the Sretensky Monastery in Moscow once said, "Today, brothers and sisters, we to a certain degree are meeting our name-day, our feast day. [For] who among us can boast that he is strong, courageous, bearing all the misfortunes of this age, fulfilling all of Christ's commandments?"

But we who are "paralytics" also have a patron saint, the Apostle Paul, who said: *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong"* (2 Cor 12:10). But St. Paul did not deprive himself of one thing: strong faith and undoubting hope in the Savior, for *"The power of God is made perfect in weakness!"*

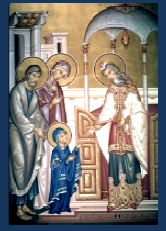
So, my paralyzed brothers and sisters, let us be grateful that we see ourselves as we are actually are and not as we pretend to be. The Lord came into the world to save people just like us. But when we become proud and sure of ourselves, then we become like those who crucified our Savior.

Rather, let us remember these words from the Orthodox funeral service, which come directly from Holy

May 6, 2012

Sunday Sermon

Fr Ambrose Young
Entrance of the Theotokos Skete



Scripture: *"For what is your life? It is a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"* (James 4:14). Think about this; really *think* about this! Soon you and I will no longer be here. Our flesh, which we pamper and take such good care of and give so much comfort and ease to, watching our diet and our weight, will be lying in the ground, moldering, food for worms, just as all human beings—except for some few incorrupt saints—have done from Adam and Eve to the present day. And after our children and grandchildren are gone, *will anyone even remember us any more?!* This is how very frail everything about us is. Yet we live and act as though we are going to live forever, as if we are not at all paralyzed but are strong survivors. Believe me, we will not survive this life!

And yet, Revelation tells us that indeed we *are* more than just a vapor, more than just the morning mist that disappears in the sun. It has been revealed to man that we were uniquely created by God and have an immortal soul, which will live forever in the destination or “house” that we have created for it while we are on this earth. Never forget that. With each day that passes, we are adding more bricks to the walls of our heavenly destination—either a mansion of endless bliss in the River of God’s love, or a dungeon of endless torment in the River of Fire. Yes, we are preparing that destination right now, this very day, with each moment that comes and goes.

Just as with the paralytic in today’s Gospel, we know that only Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God and the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is able to heal us and raise us up from our spiritual and moral paralysis. And, brothers and sisters, here is the best news of all: the Lord actually *wants* to do this! He is here, this morning, waiting to do this for each one of us!

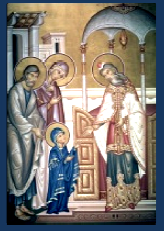
In this morning’s Gospel we read: *“Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.”*

Commenting on this, St. John Chrysostom wrote: “O the power of that command! Truly, the voice of God is a voice of power....The paralytic received strength from the word, and immediately he got up and walked. But it is also to us who are spiritually paralyzed, brethren, that Christ says, Rise and walk; meaning that it is not

May 6, 2012

Sunday Sermon

Fr Ambrose Young
Entrance of the Theotokos Skete



enough for you simply to rise from your fall; ye must also walk through progress in the virtues, following the course of virtue.”

In other words, when we fail and fall into our many imperfections and flaws, we must indeed rise from them immediately, but at the same time we must replace those sins with their opposite virtues, and the Lord will give us the strength and the wisdom to do this! This is the way in which we hear His call, His healing command to “Rise!”

Our strength is Christ alone, but we must actually do something, too. We must *cooperate* with that divine strength, keeping in mind that (in the words of Abbot Tikhon) He will *ultimately* free us from the last, the final paralysis, which is death itself.

As long as we recognize our littleness, our paralysis, and our helplessness, and at the same time reach up to grasp His helping hand, He will indeed do everything possible to raise us from our state of paralysis and lead us, again by the hand, ultimately into the Kingdom of Heaven, where we will live with Him forever and ever and evermore.

Kontakion in the Third Tone

I am grievously paralyzed in a multitude of sins and wrongful deeds. As You raised up the paralytic of old, also raise up my soul by Your divine guidance, that I may cry out, "Glory to Your Power O Compassionate Christ."

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Christ is risen!