

## *4<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost*

Today, on the fourth Sunday following the descent of the Holy Spirit, we hear the story of the healing of a Roman centurion's servant. The Gospel stories, following Pentecost, gives us concrete practical advice for the spiritual life, beginning with faith, which is the spiritual foundation.

The greatness of the centurion's faith also lies in his firm recognition of the power of God, who can act and heal even at a distance. His faith was full of trust in Jesus Christ, so he said, "...Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed" (Matt. 8:8).

In the Gospels, we see that the sick sought to recover and clearly asked for it (alone or through loved ones). It is important to note that Jesus Christ, in all cases, perceived this desire as completely normal and natural. There is no example in the texts of Him saying to someone, "You must be patient, for this is for your sins." He did not put forward any conditions for healing, except faith in Him and His ability to do so.

Knowing each person's heart, Jesus asked people about their faith before giving healing. Where there was no faith in Him, such as in his native Nazareth, the Lord did not perform miracles of healing and he was amazed at their unbelief (Mark 6:5-6). Unbelief and doubt seem to "block" God's action in man. The Lord does not heal us against our will.

"...Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and never doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (Matt. 21:21-22).

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, "... he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people...and he healed them" (Matt. 4:23-24).

Peter's mother-in-law's recovery from a severe fever, "he touched her hand, and the fever left her..." (Matt. 8:15).

In the evening after sunset, he healed many sick people, "...he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them" (Luke 4: 40). All this is to fulfill what the prophet Isaiah said, "...He took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Matt. 8:17).

After that, "...Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and infirmity" (Matt. 9:35).

Jesus Christ himself testified for John the Baptist, "...Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news..." (Matthew 11:4-5).

Healing a man with a withered hand on the sabbath, Jesus said, "...Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored (Luke 6:10).

Recovery of a woman who suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years; she said to herself, "...If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well" (Matt. 9:21).

Resurrection of the daughter of the head of the synagogue; and he took her hand and said aloud, "...child, arise." And immediately the girl got up and walked... (Luke 8: 54).

Return of sight to two blind people; Christ asked 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 let it be done to you" (Matt. 9:28-29).

Resurrection of the son, of a widow, from Nain; "...Young man, I say to you, arise" (Luke 7:14).

Healing a woman hunched over 18 years; and when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "...Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God (Luke 13:12-14).

Purification by the word of Jesus' ten lepers, of whom only one returned to thank Him; and He said to him, "...Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well" (Luke 17:19).

So, as we can see from these many gospel texts, many people were healed of their diseases by hearing the Savior's word and touching Him or at least the hem of His garment.

"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ...pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects" (James 5:14-16).

Calling his twelve disciples, Jesus gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out and heal every disease and every infirmity. At the same time, He called on His apostles, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without pay, give without pay" (Matt. 10:8). And they preached repentance, "...and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (Mark 6:13).

Before His Ascension, the Lord made a promise to all who believe in Him, "...they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:18).

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do.... Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:12-14).

"In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14:20).

God's "touches" us through visits to holy places, miraculous icons, relics, and other shrines stimulates the strengthening of faith and confirmation in the hope of receiving healings. "...Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Until now you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24).

Dear brothers and sisters, I want to end today's reflection with the words, "...when you are sick do not be negligent, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you" (Sir. 38:9).

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