

**31ST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST,
JANUARY 1/14, 2007**

I TIM. 1: 15-17

ST. LUKE 18: 35-43

by

Fr. Dr. Photios+ (W)

Gospel: *And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:*

And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

And he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when he was come near, He asked him,

Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

St. John 8:12

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness.

St. John 12:46

The Cry of the Faithful Blind Man –

The blind beggar, sitting by the way side leading to Jericho, needed help. When he heard the crowd passing by, he asked what was happening? They told him Jesus of Nazareth was passing. He immediately cried out to the Lord, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” By his words, he declares his *faith* in Christ’s Divinity. He believes that our Lord is the long-awaited Messiah. Since he had been raised among the Jews, he knew that “the Christ would be of the seed of David”.¹

He knew that no one other than the Lord could give him his sight because God alone exercises mercy and saves.² The many who were there rebuked him, but their words had no effect. He fervently cried out again to Christ, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” His phrasing, “have mercy upon me” indicates he believed Jesus to be Divine, not merely a man.³ He didn’t ask Jesus to pray for him to God; he *knew* with faith that Christ *is* God!⁴

What does he want? –

Our Lord entertains his request because this lowly creature is just the kind of individual Christ came to save: the downtrodden. He commands he be brought to Him and asks him what He can do for him? The Lord didn’t ask this out of ignorance of his purpose. He knew exactly what the man wanted. Christ knows everything! Jesus asks what he wants to ensure that everyone present understands that He gave him exactly what he requested. This illustrates the Lord’s humility. If the blind man had simply asked for alms, and Christ went beyond the scope of the request and cured his sight, some might have said He displayed a “vainglorious show of power”.⁵

The Greek word for mercy, *eleos*, commonly means alms, showing compassion to the poor.⁶ Christ ‘cleared up’ what the blind man wanted by posing the exact question “What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?” I.e., what I can do for you? Exactly? He responded that he wanted his eyesight.

The Miracle – We Receive What We Request in Faith -

And I say unto you, Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.⁷

When Christ heard from his lips what he wanted, he gave it to him, no more, no less. Showing His total lack of vainglory, He says to him that the blind man’s *faith* has made him whole! He faithfully believed Christ was the Son of David, the Christ as the prophecies foretold.⁸ He truly believed in the now-revealed Messiah, and he zealously stated his faith, yet again, when the crowd rebuked him. The fruit of his faith is salvation.⁹ This is an important lesson for all of us; if we have unbridled faith in Christ, he gives us exactly what we ask for, not a substitute. If we do not receive what we ask for, we either didn’t make a good request or asked it *without* faith.¹⁰

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.¹¹

Christ, the Ultimate Source of Healing –

See the power of the Lord’s healing! He healed out of His own Divine Power “Receive thy sight.” The prophets could not heal this way, not directly. They called upon the Lord to heal: Christ is the Lord and heals in His own right.¹²

The True Light -

At the same time He said to him, Receive thy sight; and the voice of the Lord was a light to the sufferer, and he suddenly received his sight, because the voice was that of the Light, and the voice was of the Light-giver.¹³

Christ is the True Light, and He brought His light to him.¹⁴ The blind man received his sight and immediately followed Him, glorifying God. He showed his gratitude and caused others to do likewise “and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God”.¹⁵

He was set free, therefore, from *double* (emphasis supplied)-blindness; for not only did he escape bodily blindness, but also from that of the mind and heart. For he would not have glorified Him as God had he not possessed spiritual vision. And further, he became the means of others also giving Him glory.¹⁶

Imitate the blind man! It does not matter how far down we are on society’s ‘totem pole’. We are not outcasts; rather, we are those Christ came to save. We don’t need any help other than our faith in the Lord. We put our faith in motion, and we can overcome any obstacles. Even if we become incurably ill, Christ can cure us. All we need is child-like Faith in Him!¹⁷

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Bl. Theophylact’s *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke, Vol. III* in the series, Bl. Theophylact’s *Explanation of the New Testament* (tr. from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade), Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p. 245.

² See Hieromonk German Ciuba, (tr. from the Slavonic into English; tr. from the Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, A.D. 1343), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, p. 571.

³ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁴ Ciuba, *op. cit.*, p. 571.

⁵ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

⁶ *id.*, fn 23.

⁷ St. Luke 11:9-10

⁸ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

⁹ Ciuba, *op. cit.*, pp. 572-573.

¹⁰ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

¹¹ St. James 4:3, *id.*, cited fn 24.

¹² *id.*

¹³ Ciuba, *op. cit.*, p. 573.

¹⁴ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

¹⁵ *id.*, pp. 245-246.

¹⁶ Saint Kyril [Hom. 126, *Commentary*, Ch. 18, p. 501] cited in *The Orthodox New Testament*, Holy Apostles Convent/Dormition Skete, Buena Vista, CO, 2000, fn 420, p. 377.

¹⁷ Ciuba, *op. cit.*, see the overall commentary, pp. 573-576.