

**7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**JULY 2/15, 2007**

**ROMANS 15: 1-7**

**ST. MATTHEW 9: 27-35**

Fr. Dr. Photios+ (W)

**Gospel** *And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

The Belief Of The Blind Men

The two blind men following Jesus knew about His miracles, and they **believed** He was the expected Christ that the Scriptures prophesied. After all, they had grown up in the Jewish faith. Now they want to be cured, healed from their pain and suffering. They called Him Son of David as an honourific term; David had been the first king to please God, “and he received the promise that the Christ would arise from his seed”.<sup>1</sup> However, though they believed He “could do all things,” they didn’t know yet He was actually God. They honoured Him as a man as many others also did.<sup>2</sup>

Inside a faithful man’s house (since the Lord had none), Christ specifically asks them if they **believe** He can do this? He wanted their faith to be made manifest with the hope that through them others might come to Him:

For Christ worked miracles not only for the sake of those who were suffering, but **even more so** (emphasis supplied) for the sake of those who saw them or heard of them.<sup>3</sup>

They answered *Yea, Lord* indicating they no longer harboured any doubts that He was the Lord and Master. They didn't address Him any longer as Christ, Son of David, simply Lord and Master; "at His questions they soared to the heights of faith". Their faith had been increased by their knowledge. Undoubting faith "will find the Lord merciful".<sup>4</sup>

### Christ 'Conditions' Their Healing

When He touched their eyes, he said, *According to your faith, be it unto you*. He conditions their healing according to their faith. He had done the same to others, thus stimulating them forward to belief. His touching of them with His hand shows the Incarnate Christ "also bestows light and life; for He is the Giver of life and light, the Treasury of good things".<sup>5</sup> The Lord healed them in private in the house demonstrating to us how to avoid vainglory; this was another of His teachings in humility.<sup>6</sup>

### Compare Belief Of The Unseeing To The Unbelief Of The **Seeing** Jews

The blind men believed in Him without proof of His miracles, by "hearing alone did they believe". Compare this belief with the Jews' unbelief; the Jews had seen His miracles yet their sight did not enable their salvation.<sup>7</sup> Despite overwhelming evidence, they didn't believe in Him. St. Athanasius the Great discusses this evidence in his masterpiece (so labeled in the Introduction by C.S. Lewis) *On The Incarnation*.<sup>8</sup>

### Christ's Humble Command 'Not To Tell': Unheeded

After their eyes opened - they were healed – Jesus sought to keep what had occurred between them and Him:

In His humility The Lord commanded the blind men (note-who now saw) to tell their story to no one; He did not desire that their healing be spoken of or seen by all. Nevertheless, even though He Himself did not wish them to do so, they made their story known, not out of disobedience, but to give thanks to their Physician, Christ.<sup>9</sup>

They didn't sin by telling of their healing. They did it in good faith, which probably emanated from their faith in Him. The Lord's admonition to them to keep things secret is a lesson to them to despise vainglory:

It appears, then, that Christ fled the praise of men in order to teach them that do good to hate vainglory.<sup>10</sup>

In this, Christ shows His humility:

For He wants them to say nothing about **Himself** (emphasis supplied), but to speak of the glory of God.<sup>11</sup>

...

He knew with certainty that the blind men would not remain silent, but would openly proclaim their Benefactor, yet He accomplished His purpose, and commanded them to tell no man what had been done. It is fitting that one who does good should enjoin silence, **out of humility**, but **also** (emphases supplied) that the beneficiaries of His goodness should acclaim their Benefactor, out of association, and not conceal His gift.<sup>12</sup>

### Exorcism Of The Mute

They brought to Christ a mute suffering his disease, not normally, but from demonic forces. He could not speak, thus he couldn't call out to the Lord. Jesus does not require faith of him due to his mute condition. He "immediately heals him by casting out the demon which had prevented his speech".<sup>13</sup>

At this, the multitudes marvelled, "placing Christ ever above the prophets and the patriarchs. For He healed **with authority** (emphasis supplied), unlike those who first had to pray".<sup>14</sup>

### The Stupidity Of The Pharisees

The Pharisees obviously aren't going to be satisfied. They charge that he casts out demons as the agent of the devil, "that is, as a magician". This is patently ridiculous since demons don't heal diseases, forgive sins or preach the kingdom of God. They are evil themselves! They do exactly the opposite of the Lord, bringing on diseases and separating us from the Lord.<sup>15</sup>

### Jesus Continues His Message Of The Kingdom

Christ wasn't passive in His ministry, not 'laid back'. He didn't wait for the people to come to Him. He didn't want them to have the excuse that "no one taught us":

He draws them to Himself by **word and deed, teaching and working wonders** (emphasis supplied).<sup>16</sup>

What then should we have learned from Christ's message today? Let's take a brief look at what we need to do as True Orthodox Christians to follow in His path. Obviously, these will be just a few of the things we should do. We need to do works of light during our time on this earth. During this period, it is possible for salvation; after death, there is no confession.<sup>17</sup>

We should do good deeds to manifest our faith, work hard, sow, and trade, sowing "earnestly, with great care and toil and sweat, that we may **later reap repose and rejoicing** (emphasis supplied)". We are spiritually tilling our soul's soil, not for

cultivating, but for future harvesting. Whatever we sow now, we will reap in the age to come:

Let us sow in the spirit fruits of the Spirit; let us sow compassion, generosity, mildness, peace, longanimity, philanthropy, benignity, goodness, mercy, tranquillity, joy, charity and holiness without which no one can see the Lord. Let us always train ourselves in good things, so as not to learn evil things. The mind does not wish to stand still and be silent; it is ever in motion, and it ought to do good. If the Lord will find us so doing, he will surely accept us and help us...<sup>18</sup>

### **Let's start with our neighbours (everyone)!**

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

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<sup>1</sup> *The Gospel Commentary (Lessons Taken from the Holy Gospel and from Many of the Divine Writings of Our Father among the Saints, John Chrysostom)* (translated from the Slavonic into English by Hieromonk German Ciuba), Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, Pennsylvania, 2002, p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> *id.*, p. 325..

<sup>4</sup> *id.*

<sup>5</sup> *id.*, pp. 325-326.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *Explanations of the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew, Vol. I*, (translated from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade) Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 326.

<sup>8</sup> St. Athanasius, *On The Incarnation, Refutation Of The Jews*, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, N.Y., (Reprinted, February 1993,) pp. 64-75.

<sup>9</sup> *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 326.

<sup>10</sup> *id.*, p. 327.

<sup>11</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 327.

<sup>13</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>14</sup> *id.*

<sup>15</sup> *id.*, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> *id.*

<sup>17</sup> *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 329..

<sup>18</sup> *id.*, pp. 329-330.