

The Third Sunday after the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord
St. Matthew 8:1-13
January 20th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Show Yourself to the Priest

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

All authority in Heaven and Earth have been given to our Lord + Jesus Christ. In the Gospel from the Evangelist St. Matthew the Lord + Jesus shows us His authority over all diseases. He heals a leper and a paralyzed and tormented man. The amazing thing about these healings is that the Lord + Jesus heals both of them with just His Word. He does not need to touch them, or be in their presence (even though He offers in the case of the Centurion's servant). He heals them solely with His Word—with His proclamation that be healed.

It is important to make note of the timeline of these two healings. The Evangelist St. Matthew says that the first healing takes place *"when He had come down from the mountain."* When we hear transitional language like this in the Holy Scriptures our immediate question should be, "What mountain?" Since this is chapter 8 of the Evangelist St. Matthew's Gospel, and the previous three chapters were spent detailing our Lord's sermon which He went up on a mountain to preach, we are being told by the Evangelist that this healing takes place after the Sermon on the Mount. At the end of that sermon we are told that the people *"were astonished at His preaching."* For, *"He taught as one having authority and not as one of the scribes."*

In other words, the Sermon on the Mount establishes the Lord + Jesus Christ's authority over all things in the minds of the people. Therefore, He is approached by two people needing healing. One needed healing for himself. The other needed healing for someone other than himself. In this we certainly see a pattern for prayer. For, we should learn to pray for not only ourselves and our needs of healing and sustenance, but we should also learn to pray for our neighbor; for all others who need the grace and help of the Lord God. Even as we do every Sunday during the General Prayer when we pray for healing for the sick, for the pastors in our diocese, for our bishop, for the other parishes in our diocese, and all those who are in the armed forces and those struggling with addiction. We pray in this way not only to petition our Lord God for needs of those on our prayer list, but also to give us a pattern for us to follow in our daily prayers and instruct us on who among us and our friends and neighbors also need and desire our prayers.

It is a rarity that we get to hear about the healing of a leper in a sermon, and then get to discuss the purification rites of lepers in the Old Testament during Bible class, as we do today. Our Lord + Jesus tells the leper who comes to Him for healing to *"Show yourself to the priest."* The first thing that we can

see from this is a refutation of this incorrect notion that the Lord + Jesus was some sort of rebel; that He did His own thing; that He walked to the beat of His own drum; that He stood in opposition to the religion of the day. Nothing is further from the truth. Here we see the Lord + Jesus giving instruction to the leper to obey the Law; to do the thing that was commanded by the Lord God through Moses.

When a leper was cleansed of his leprosy, he was supposed to show himself to the priest, so that the priest could confirm that he was indeed healed. We'll talk about that process more in-depth during Bible class. But to summarize, this process involved washing and sacrifice.

Secondly, we learn from this, how this leper receives his healing. It is simply through the Lord's words, "*I am willing; be cleansed.*" Then, the Evangelist St. Matthew uses a word that is found more commonly in the Gospel of the Evangelist St. Mark: "immediately." "*Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*" The Lord + Jesus did not need to touch him, but he was healed simply through the Lord's proclamation—through His Word—that the leper should be cleansed.

The Lord + Jesus has authority to heal this leper by His Word, and so He does. The Lord + Jesus also has the authority to heal the servant of the Centurion. He has all authority over Heaven and Earth to heal our infirmities, especially the infirmities of our soul. He gives us forgiveness, life and salvation all through His Word. Both through the spoken Word and also through the visible Word offered to us in the Blessed Sacraments. He heals us of not only our physical maladies, but also heals our sin-sick souls with His Word.

The servant of the Centurion is also healed by the Lord + Jesus Christ's Word. The Centurion also shows us an example of just how amazed the people were at the Lord's preaching; just how much authority He had through His Word. The Centurion also shows us great faith in the Lord and His ability, even as the leper did when he simply said to the Lord + Jesus, "*If you are willing, you can make me clean.*" He left it all in the Lord's hands. The leper did not demand the Lord's healing, but simply stated the obvious, that if the Lord + Jesus desired to heal him, he would be clean. So too, with the Centurion. If the Lord + Jesus was willing his servant could be healed at His Word.

The Lord + Jesus, at the request of healing from the Centurion, does something He does not normally do: He offers to come to the Centurion's home to heal His servant. Even though the servant can be healed simply by His Word, the Lord offers to come to the home of the Centurion. The Centurion refuses. And in this we see the faith of the Centurion, even as we saw the faith of the leper. This is probably even why the Lord + Jesus offers to come to the Centurion's house, so that He could reveal the great faith that this Gentile and outsider had in Him and His authority.

The Centurion gives the reason for his refusal by using an example. The Centurion knows about authority. He wields it every day. If he tells someone to come, he comes. If he sends someone to do something, he does it. His commands are fulfilled simply through his word. The Centurion assumes the Lord + Jesus has the same authority. He can command things be done, and they will be done simply through speaking His Word. The recipient does not even need to be worthy. Just as the Centurion, on account of his being a foreigner and outside the house of Israel, is not worthy for the Lord to come under his roof.

We should approach the Lord + Jesus with similar humility. We are unworthy for Him to come under the roof of our souls on account of our manifold transgressions. This is why when we confess our sins, we humble our hearts before Him, laying our transgressions at His feet. When we come to this holy altar to receive His Body and Blood in bread and wine, we again humble our hearts and acknowledge our unworthiness to receive this Blessed Sacrament on account of our sins, but through faith we know that the Lord + Jesus offers to us forgiveness, life and salvation through this sacred meal. Therefore, in faith we approach this altar in humility and receive from the Lord + Jesus, Who has all

authority in Heaven and Earth to heal our sin-sick souls, the gifts that the Lord + Jesus suffered and died for on the tree of the holy cross.

The leper at the Word of the Lord + Jesus had his leprosy cleansed immediately. The Centurion at the Word of the Lord + Jesus had his servant healed of his paralysis and tormenting immediately. When we come before the Lord + Jesus to receive His both His spoken Word and His visible Word, our souls are immediately healed through the faith created in us by the Holy Ghost through the receiving of His Word. Our Lord + Jesus Christ has all authority in Heaven and Earth to take away our sorrows through His Word.

This is why the most important place for us to be is in the presence of our Lord + Jesus. Just as the leper approached the Lord and received healing for himself. And, just as the Centurion approached the Lord and received healing for someone other than himself—His servant. We too, can receive healing from the Lord + Jesus when we come before Him. He is willing to cleanse us of our sins. He is willing to come under our roof, and make us whole. He is willing to grant all of our petitions and prayers.

Therefore, let us come before the Lord + Jesus with humble hearts. Let us show ourselves to the High Priest with humble hearts Who is able to declare that we are cleansed of our sin on account of His fulfillment of the Law and His sacrifice in our place. All authority in Heaven and Earth have been given to our Lord + Jesus Christ, and with that authority He chose to offer Himself as a sacrifice for us, so that we might receive cleansing and healing from our sins and trespasses. He is willing and through our faith in Him we will be cleansed. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!