

The Third Sunday after the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord  
St. Matthew 8:1-13  
January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022  
St. Bartholomew Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Fort Myers, FL  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Many Will Come from East and West

*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 God, Who by the meek endurance of Thine Only-Begotten Son didst beat down the pride of the old enemy, help us, we beseech Thee, rightly to treasure in our hearts what our Lord hath of His goodness borne for our sakes, that after His example we may bear with patience whatsoever things are adverse to us; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

Our Lord + Jesus had just finished preaching the Sermon on the Mount. That is to what the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew is referring when he writes that our Lord + Jesus had “come down from the mountain.” He also writes that “great crowds followed Him.” In His words were life and healing. They did not want to miss out on anything that He had to say. This implies faith. For no one who is an unbeliever would care so deeply about what the Lord + Jesus had said.

An unbeliever is too consumed with the thoughts and strivings of their own miserable life. They have themselves as their god, they have no need for another. They have themselves for a Savior, they have no need for another. An unbeliever would have no use for what our Lord + Jesus would preach. Indeed, an unbeliever would find some fault within the Lord’s teaching by which he could justify His unbelief.

These crowds, however, hung upon every word that the Lord + Jesus had preached on the mountain; every teaching that He taught in the Sermon on the Mount. They did not want to be apart from what this Man + Jesus would teach and preach. Therefore, they followed Him when He had come down from the mountain.

Upon coming down from the mountain—from preaching the Sermon on the Mount—our Lord + Jesus is approached by a leper. Now, one thing that is not mentioned by the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew is that this is a breach of protocol. The Law of Moses commanded that lepers were to be separated from the congregation of Israel. When they were wandering in the wilderness for forty years, lepers were put outside of the camp until such time as they were cleansed of their disease. Then they would show themselves to the priests, so that they could verify that the lepers were healed of their disease, and offer an appropriate sacrifice in thanksgiving to the Lord God for giving them healing. This leper was not supposed to be around other people, much less coming up to the Lord + Jesus and asking Him to be healed.

Our Lord ignores the breach of protocol, however. In reality this leper, like the crowds that followed the Lord + Jesus, also showed great faith. For where is one to go when the trials and tribulations of this life hound a person; where are we to go our sin, or the consequences of sin, are

causing us hurt? Like this leper—like the crowds—we are to cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus. Indeed, that is where we are always to go when we have need—to our Lord and Savior; to our Lord God. This is what faith teaches us. Faith trusts that the Lord God—that our Lord + Jesus—will heal our sin-sick souls. He is the great Physician of body and soul, and He will heal all our infirmities of body and soul, if He is willing.

Is He willing? Our Lord + Jesus says it in the Gospel reading, yes, He is willing. Our sins are forgiven us whenever we come to our Lord + Jesus—whenever we come before His throne and confess our sins—even as we did during the confession and absolution today. He heals all our infirmities. He cleanses us of our spiritual infirmities when in humble penitence we kneel before Him and ask for forgiveness. He sends out His ministers to preach into our ears the words of absolution, that is, the words of forgiveness. Our sins are forgiven us on account of what our Lord + Jesus has done for us on the tree of the holy cross. There He won forgiveness for us. There, on the cross, He won our redemption; He bought us back from sin, death and the power of the devil. In His means of grace, including the Absolution, He gives to us those rewards He won on the cross, including forgiveness of our sins.

He is even willing to heal us of our physical infirmities just as He did for this leper. Sometimes the restoration of our body to full health is gifted to us after we have, through faith, obtained the crown of eternal life. There in Heaven we will be given new and glorious bodies clean and free from any disease or malady; bodies free from sin and the consequences of sin. Sometimes we receive the healing of our bodies while we are still living on this Earth, and in faith we give the Lord God, and His Son + Jesus thanks for cleansing us of our sickness. But whether that healing is here now, or whether we have to wait until we are called to our eternal home, we continue to cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus. We are to be like the crowds, and this leper, who know from Whom comes all comfort and healing; from Whom comes the words that have eternal life. Faith teaches us that this is only found in the Lord + Jesus, and no one else. Not ourselves, no emperor, no king, no president, no governor, no politician, no, salvation is found only in our Lord + Jesus.

The crowds and the leper are not the only ones who clings in faith to the Lord + Jesus. They are not the only ones who know where to find healing and comfort for the woes of this life. For a Roman centurion also comes to our Lord + Jesus to intercede on behalf of his servant who was paralyzed. This centurion who approaches the Lord + Jesus is not of the house of Israel. He is a Gentile. He is an outsider; one who has not been proselytized into the Jewish faith. And yet, He exhibits great faith. Our Lord + Jesus offers to go with this centurion to heal the paralyzed servant. The centurion, on the other hand, tells our Lord that it was not necessary. All the Lord + Jesus needed to do was speak the word, and his servant would be healed.

This centurion knew what it meant to be in charge of people. If he told somebody to jump, they would ask, “How high?” He was used to people obeying his commands. They readily did whatever he asked. The centurion shows great faith when he attributes this same authority to the Lord + Jesus. He saw the Lord + Jesus for Who He was, the Creator of all the Earth. Surely the Creator and Maker of Heaven and Earth could order His creation to act according to His commands. All the Lord + Jesus needed to do, was say the word and it would be done. Just like when the Roman centurion would give an order and it would be done. The Lord + Jesus had not seen such great faith, not even in Israel. His servant was healed that very hour.

The crowds, the leper, and this Roman centurion all give us an example of faith; of placing one’s trust in the Lord God. Our Lord + Jesus saw that faith like the Roman centurion had would fill the whole Earth. Many would come from east and from west and sit down in the Church with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Patriarchs. They would come because they saw in the Lord + Jesus the only means of salvation. They would come because they would believe that forgiveness of their sins was found only

in the Lord + Jesus. They would come because they believed that they would find healing and comfort in the works of the Lord + Jesus. They would come from all over the world. Every tribe and people, language and tongue, and they would sit down with all the rest of the saints and receive the gifts that the Lord + Jesus desired to give them. They would receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. We receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation on account of our faith and trust in the One, True Lord and Savior of the whole world.

This will not be the case for the unbeliever, though. The ones who believed they were the “sons of the kingdom,” the Jews who refused their Messiah, as well as all the rest of the world who do not cling in faith to the One and Only Savior, will be cast out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Therefore, my dear friends, let all those who are “dreadfully tormented” by sin and the consequences of sin, come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us, my dear friends, continue to cling in faith to our One and Only Savior, and desire to be like the crowds who never wanted to be apart from the Lord + Jesus or missed any of His preaching. Let us be like the leper and beg our Lord to heal us of all our infirmities, especially of our spiritual leprosy, so that we may be clean and free from sin. Let us have faith like the Roman centurion—a Gentile like us—who knew that whatever the Lord + Jesus commands of His creation, it will be done.

He reigns in Heaven on the right hand of the Father interceding for us poor sinners. Let us rejoice with the whole Earth! For our Lord God looks upon all our infirmities and stretches forth His right hand to help and defend us in all of our dangers and necessities. Thanks be to God! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Grant us, O Lord, we pray Thee, to trust in Thee with all our hearts; seeing that, as Thou dost always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so Thou dost not forsake those who make their boast of Thy mercy; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

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

*Soli Deo Gloria!*