

The Third Sunday After The Epiphany

January 22, 2023

“And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

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

This Third Sunday after the Epiphany of our Lord signals to us that in the life of the Church, we are very near to the beginning of our preparation for the great season of Great Lent! Within just a few weeks we will be invited by Holy Church to give ourselves to the work of self-examination and renewal of life. It will be a time to give our hearts and minds to the loving contemplation of our Lord’s Passion and Crucifixion, for the sins of the world, and to seek with a loving and contrite heart to journey with Him to the Cross.

Today’s Gospel helps each of us to gain a greater understanding of the purpose of our Lord’s coming to this troubled and darkened world doesn’t it. The Collect as well speaks to us of our desperate need to reach out to our Lord in trust and love, and to seek His healing grace for our disordered and broken lives!

Epiphanytide has shown us that our Blessed Lord Jesus is the one who is the true light of the world. This is the light that shone so brightly from the manger of Bethlehem, and was also the promised light that would bring radiance and truth to the Gentile nations as well! Christ is the Divine light of all men and women-including those of us here this morning. He is the light that shines in the world today as well-that calls us out of the darkness of sin and death, into the wonders of eternal light and life!

This morning we read in St. Matthew’s Gospel of what happens when the Light and Life of Christ enter the darkness and pain of our human condition. It is the blessed account of two different men who came to our Lord seeking relief from suffering. The poor leper, and a centurion, seeking help on behalf of his tormented servant! These men came from different backgrounds, and yet were bound together in their hope that Christ was the answer to their need. The Gospel tells us that in both of these situations, Christ, the Light of the world looked in pity upon these two men, and granted them their heart’s desire-cleansing, and relief. There was no hesitation on our Lord’s part, but rather the heart of Christ, moved by their need, came down to where they were, and sent forth His healing virtue, bringing cleansing and relief from pain and suffering in an instant.

Isn’t it wonderful how the Scripture tells us that Christ’s power brought immediate relief-how everything had suddenly changed for these humble men, as they came to our Lord in confidence and trust! What a testimony to the restoring power of the light of Christ, what an example of the love of God for these men, and for all of us as well!

Friends, there is so much for us to glean from this account isn't there? It is so important that we look within the outward story of these two men and find the inner spiritual application that holds true for us, whether we are looking for physical relief or not! If we are honest with ourselves, and if we are willing to look within ourselves, to look to the life of our souls, we can see how often our hearts and souls need the healing touch of Christ the Light of the World.

There is not one Christian believer that can claim to be totally free from the infirmities that so often plague us inwardly, and that bring darkness, doubt, and fear to our hearts and souls! We are surrounded dear friends with so much that can cause us to become deaf to the inner voice of the Spirit of God, that can make us desire that which will only lead to death and disappointment, rather than fixing our inward eyes and hearts on our Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ. We are so often distracted by our disordered passions, and the false promises of the world, rather than settled upon the grace, mercy, and love of our Blessed Lord!

In other words friends, we need to be like the leper and the centurion, we need to be willing to go in humility and trust to where true and lasting healing is to be found-we need to come to the feet of our Lord and ask for His mercy and help!

When we are seeking the healing and strengthening of our souls, it is important to remember that this process of inner cleansing and healing of the infirmities of our hearts is a constant process of Spiritual renewal and renovation! It begins for us at our Baptism, and continues throughout our lives. This blessed work of God Almighty continues in us regardless of whether we are aware of it or not. As long as we are not driving the Spirit from our hearts and souls by a deliberate act of rejection, we can be sure that quietly, lovingly, and surely, the daily healing and renewing of our souls is going on within is by the overwhelming mercy of our Lord. Knowing this to be true, each of us need to learn to trust Him with the whole of our lives. Our dearest Redeemer has given himself to us completely in love and pity. He has hung upon the cross in agony and loneliness that we might be restored to the true life of blessedness and light in a holy companionship of love and spiritual intimacy with Him, and there is nothing that He has not done for our Salvation and Sanctification.

Knowing and believing all this dear friends, let us come to him for true healing, asking Him to do a work of inner cleansing in our souls so that we all might love Him more dearly, and follow Him more closely as the true friend and healer of both soul and body.

The season of Lent is almost here-may each and everyone of us look forward to this holy time of the Church Year with real anticipation and gratitude! May we all resolve to draw closer to Him by prayer, devout reading of Holy Scripture, a more recollected and grateful receiving of the Blessed Eucharist, and a desire for a new and holier life- a life lived in the power of the Holy Ghost, to the praise and glory of God!

May it be so for each of us here today! Amen