

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA

Sunday of the Paralytic

28 April / 11 May 2025

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit! Amen!

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа! Аминь!

Tone 3

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this morning our Epistle and Gospel readings concern the power of courage, faith and healing.

Epistle: Acts 9:32-42

We begin with a reading from the *Acts of Apostles* attributed to St Luke. Luke writes that after travelling long distances, Peter the Apostle has come to a town called Lydda where he refers to some of the people living there as “saints”. Clearly, as noted in The Orthodox Study Bible (p. 1485) “The term saints refers to all Christian believers.” Among them is a man named Aeneas, “bedridden” for “eight years” and paralyzed. Peter speaks words of comfort, hope and courage to him, saying “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” St Luke tells us that Aeneas “arose immediately”, and that all “who dwelt at Lydda” and nearby Sharon, witnessed his recovery. St Luke continues, writing of a remarkable incident at Joppa, a city on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. He writes that a woman named Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, was well known for her good works among the people living there. Sadly, she became ill and died. What happened next was that two men were sent from Joppa to Lydda to plead Peter to come with them as fast as he could! Could Dorcas be healed? Could Dorcas be revived? Luke now writes that Peter went with the two men who had summoned him, following them to an upper room in the building where Dorcas lay, surrounded by widows weeping for her. Peter asks them to leave him alone with Dorcas while he kneels and prays. He refers to her by her other name, “Tabitha”. “Tabitha arise”, he says to her, and she opens her eyes, and sits up when she sees Peter the Apostle! Peter takes her by the hand, lifts her up from her bed and calls for her friends to come and see her! St Luke writes of this event “And it became known throughout all Joppa and many believed on the Lord.” What is happening is that the power and love of Christ is being given by the Holy Spirit to His disciples. The power of this gift of concern, of love, and healing will expand. The love of God in Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is freely offered to all who will reach out and accept it. Remember yet again that Christ came into the world not to condemn, not to punish, not to destroy, but to save us! This morning’s Epistle reading reminds us of that abiding love, as does this morning’s Gospel reading as well!

GLORY TO GOD!

Gospel: John 5:1-15

The Lord Jesus has given us Two Great Commandments – LOVE GOD! LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR! There are times when this is difficult but there are other times in which with Christ’s help we focus our attention not on ourselves but on the needs

of others. This is a reality which comes to us in both this morning's Epistle and Gospel. In the Epistle, Peter who at the time of the Crucifixion had denied Jesus three times is now a different man! He has learned to help others, not hinder or ignore them. In this morning's reading from St John's Gospel we learn of an event in Jerusalem which takes place at a pool near a place called the Sheep Gate. An area where there are five arches is filled with what St John describes as "a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed..." They are waiting for the swirling of the water which was believed to signal the presence of a healing angel. It was also believed that healing would be granted to the first person to reach the pool. To reach the pool first was the goal! Helping others was totally abandoned! "ME FIRST" was the attitude! Jesus finds a man who had suffered "an infirmity" for thirty eight years! Jesus knows from the position of the man that he has suffered for a long time. He says to the man "Do you want to be made well?" Sadly, the man answers "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up..." Worse, he says to Jesus that when he has tried to reach the pool, he has been pushed aside by those wanting to reach the pool first. Love of neighbour is totally forgotten, pushed aside by those who want to be the first to reach the pool's healing water! It is with compassion that Jesus says to this man "Rise, take up your bed and walk!" The man does exactly what Jesus has told him! He gets up, picks up his bed and walks! Picking up the bed is a powerful indication of the healing of this man! No longer is he confined to his bed! He is no longer a prisoner of his former sickness! The love of Christ has freed him from his former confinement! This miracle of love, however, has taken place on the Sabbath and there are those who are more concerned about rules and regulations than bringing healing to the sick and needy! Such attitudes are always with us in one way or another! Those who prefer words to action question the man who has been healed on the Sabbath. Who did this? The man who has been healed does not know! All he can say is that "He who made me well said to me 'Take up your bed and walk'" Jesus in fact has left the area near the pool. Later, however, he sees the man who had been healed. Where is he now? He is in the Temple, presumably to give thanks for his recovery to health after thirty eight years of sickness! Jesus speaks to him kindly, graciously, caringly. "See", He says, "you have been made well." Curiously, Jesus also says to the man "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you". What does this mean? *The Orthodox Study Bible* (p.1431) refers to the words of St John Chrysostom, noting that the man who was healed by Jesus after suffered for thirty eight years of illness teaches us to have faith, determination, and endurance and not to "lose hope or patience..."

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