

22/07/2025

Sermon for the 6th Sunday of Matthew and the Feast of the Prophet Elijah



By H.E. Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden
St. George Cathedral of Stockholm

Your Excellency,

Dearly beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, on the 6th Sunday of Matthew, we are presented with the story of the healing of the paralytic – an encounter that reveals not only the miraculous power of Christ, but also His divine authority to forgive sins.

Our Lord, seeing the faith of the people who brought the paralytic to Him, speaks words that shock the scribes: “my son; your sins are forgiven.” It is only afterward that Jesus commands him to rise, take up his bed, and walk. In this act, Christ

reveals a truth that lies at the very heart of the Gospel: physical healing is a sign pointing to a deeper and more vital healing – the restoration of the soul.

Sin paralyzes the human being. It isolates us from one another, and ultimately from God. Yet the Lord does not leave us in our condition. When He sees even a glimmer of faith – either our own, or that of those who pray for us – He acts with mercy, restoring both body and soul.

Today, we also commemorate the Holy and Glorious Prophet Elijah. Elijah, or Elias, was a man of extraordinary faith and zeal for the Lord. He lived during a time of great apostasy in Israel, when the people had turned away from God to worship idols. Elijah stood alone against kings and false prophets, proclaiming the truth with boldness and performing great signs by the power of God. He was a man of both fire and prayer.

Just as Jesus heals the paralytic, Elijah too raised the dead, stopped the rain, and was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. His life points forward to Christ – the true healer, the fulfillment of all prophecy, the One who grants eternal life.

Prophet Elijah also reminds us of the importance of prayer in a world that often forgets God. In his time, he stood almost entirely alone, yet he did not waver. Likewise, in our time, we are called to bear witness to Christ – to bring others to Him, just as the friends of the paralytic did. Whether we stand in the midst of suffering, or doubt, Christ is in our midst.

Let us, then, pray that we may have the faith of the paralytic's friends and of the Prophet Elijah, and the humility to recognize our own need for healing, and may we hear, in the depths of our souls, the same life-giving words from our Lord: "your sins are forgiven." Amen!

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