

13/03/2023

Sermon by Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden on the 2nd Sunday in Lent St. Nicholas Finnish Orthodox Parish of Stockholm



Reverend Clergy,

Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with great joy that I find myself among you once again, and especially during this period of Holy and Great Lent. We are already in the second Sunday of Lent. This Sunday, our Church presents us with one of the miracles performed by our Lord – the healing of a paralytic in Capernaum. Four people brought a paralytic to be healed by Christ. However, the crowd that had assembled was too large, and they were unable to approach him.

At that moment, they took off the roof of the house and lowered him down before the Lord. Jesus was amazed at their faith and told the paralytic: “Son, your sins are forgiven (Mark 2:5). We are left to marvel at the words spoken by Christ! His audience had much the same feelings, after all. However, let us take a look at the deeper meaning of this phrase used by our Lord.

“Son, your sins are forgiven.” With these words, the Lord wants to reveal to us his authority over sin, showing us in this manner that he truly is the Son of God. In other words, that he has the power to forgive and wipe away every sin, and to abolish the sting of sin, which is death, and grant us eternal life.

We must remember that each time the Lord would perform a miracle, he never ceased reminding the people, both before and after the healing, of the existence of sin. In other words, he reminds people of every era that sin is the root of all spiritual and bodily disorder. Of course, not every physical malady or other accident befalling man allows us to surmise that it is absolutely a punishment or consequence of sinfulness. However, being that all people are sinners, they are not blameless for all the spiritual and physical misfortunes that come upon them in life. This is why the Lord speaks the phrase we are examining today to the paralytic, because the forgiveness of sin serves as the first and greatest miracle of all.

The miraculous energy of our Lord manifests itself in two manners: the visible and the invisible. Through the visible signs, He heals the sick, feeds the hungry, and raises the dead. Through His invisible miraculous energy, He helps man to recognize and realize the deeper cause of every form of spiritual and bodily misery, distress, and pain, which is sin. St. Paul the Apostle also reminds us of this truth when he says “the sting of death is sin” (1 Cor 15:56) and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

We must realize that it is not the Lord’s purpose to dazzle the multitudes through His miracles. The first and basic purpose of the miracle is not to heal an infirmity or

even raise someone from the dead. It is something greater. It is a connector through which God's love for man travels. In other words, through these miracles, it is revealed to us that Christ took on our pain into his heart and stood in our shoes, experienced our distress, guilt, and misery. This is ultimately why He wants to show us that it is only through His love that man can find his true self.

From the start of the ecclesiastical period of Triodion, which preceded Great Lent, as well as the current great fasting period we are traversing, we entreat God to open the doors of repentance to us. The reason for this is that the virtue of repentance cultivates love for God and our fellow men deep inside our heart, and God accepts this expression of our love and forgives our sins, because "love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8).

People living in our contemporary topsy-turvy world are uneasy, desperate, in pain, tortured by the anxieties and problems that abound, and are awaiting the great miracle. It is an opportunity for us to realize that the great miracle occurs only when we personally interact with the Son of man, Who has "the authority to forgive sin on earth" (Mark 2:10).

I would like to once again thank His Eminence Archbishop Leo of Helsinki and All Finland for his love and the collaboration we enjoy, the clergymen who make the long trip to serve your liturgical and spiritual needs, the director and members of the choir for the rendition of the hymns, and all of you who participate in the liturgical life of this parish.

May the grace and mercy of the Lord be upon you all. I wish you a fruitful continuation of your spiritual struggle and pray that we may be shown worthy to venerate and celebrate the Holy Resurrection! Amen.



[Metropolisofsweden](#)