

SERMON ON THE SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC - April 29, 2018

Today we heard about a man who suffered from paralysis and couldn't walk. His paralysis was the result of sickness and disease. We don't know if he also suffered with pain. This man was remarkable because in the face of the most hopeless and dire circumstances he never gave up. He never despaired and said, "I will take my life because I have no hope." This man persevered like this for 38 years. How many of us have trouble persevering for just ten days, a month, or maybe a year? How many of us persevere and do not give up hope when circumstances seem hopeless? With God there is always hope. The paralyzed man heard about a pool called Bethesda that once a year had Divine healing powers. The first person who went into the pool when the pool was troubled by an angel of the Lord would be healed of their infirmity. Picture him patiently laying by the pool year after year, waiting for the one day in the year when he hoped that somehow he could get into the water and be healed. Many sick, blind, lame and diseased gathered at this pool. Once a year they all scrambled and struggled to be the first one to get into the pool. For the paralyzed man it was impossible, unless someone picked him up and carried him, and it was unlikely that such a thing would ever occur. But he never gave up, he persevered and he patiently waited and always had hope, year after year for 38 years. Today Jesus selects this man and asks him, "Do you want to be healed?" The man is gentle and humble. He doesn't get angry at Jesus' question. He answers meekly that he has no one to carry him into the water to have a chance to be healed. Jesus never baptized anyone. Jesus had no need to use water, because it is His Word that sanctifies and gives healing and saving power to the baptismal water. Therefore, Jesus, the Divine Logos, the Word of God, tells the man to rise, take up his pallet and to walk. All of the healings performed by Jesus are accompanied by faith and repentance. This man did not know who Jesus was, so the Lord does not yet question him about his faith. The man acts at the Word of the Lord and does exactly what Jesus tells him to do. This man is also remarkable because after being healed the first place he goes is to the Temple to pray. Jesus departs because he knows that the Jews will react with malice and hatred. Jesus knows that the Jews will rail at the man for breaking the sabbath law and doing work by carrying his bed on the sabbath. If Jesus is present, the reaction of the Jews will be all that much more the worse. St. John Chrysostom tells us that it is not only that the Jews were upset that the sabbath law was broken. More than that they were angry and upset because they suffered with envy. When a person has envy, no matter what good they may see, no matter what good or kindness you may show to them or others, they will always have hatred and malice and anger in return. After the Jews chastise the man who had been paralyzed, now Jesus returns and finds the man in the Temple. Jesus tells him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you." St. John Chrysostom comments that this reveals that in the case of this man, his paralysis was directly related to personal sin. The Kontakion for the Sunday of the paralytic is the following: "By Your divine intercession, O Lord, / as You raised up the paralytic of old, / so raise up my soul, paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts; / so that being saved I may sing to You: / "Glory to Your power, O compassionate Christ!" Everyone here has received the healing grace of our Lord when we were immersed and washed in the waters of Holy Baptism. Everyone here receives healing every time we go to confession and honestly and sincerely repent for our sins. Everyone here receives healing every time we receive the Divine Body and Blood of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. Everyone here is healed every time we are anointed with the oil of Holy Unction. The word Eucharist comes from the greek Ευχαριστια, which means "to give thanks." The part of the Divine Liturgy when we begin to say the prayers of consecration of the Holy Gifts is called "the anaphora." The anaphora begins with the words, "Let us give thanks unto the Lord." The actress Chrissy Metz, in her autobiography "Only Me", writes that our lives can radically change for the good if we learn to live in a constant state of gratitude. We all have many things to be grateful for. Instead of being grateful, we take so many blessing for granted. For example, think of the paralyzed man. How many of us on a daily basis express gratitude because we are able to walk? Or to talk? Or to see? Or to hear?

Or for the beautiful people in our lives? How often do we take the people closest to us for granted? Gratitude empowers us and makes our lives feel abundant. The very things - or people - we take for granted are what we should be most thankful for. Above all, let us be grateful for our Heavenly Father who loves us more than we will ever know. Let us hear one more time the Kontakion for the feast today: "By Your divine intercession, O Lord, / as You raised up the paralytic of old, / so raise up my soul, paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts; / so that being saved I may sing to You: / "Glory to Your power, O compassionate Christ!"
Amen.