

SERMON - Sunday of the Paralytic, May 19, 2019, John 5:1-15

Christ is Risen! There was a Jewish belief that when Adam was banished from Paradise, he took two seeds with him from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. As the story goes, he accidentally dropped one of the seeds, around which a spring of water came up and hid it. This became the Sheep's Pool in Bethesda which is the scene of today's Gospel. The sheep that were inspected before approval for sacrifice in the temple were washed in this pool and searched for blemishes, hence the name "sheep's pool." Many who suffered from illness and were in search of healing would gather by this pool. The Jews believed that once a year an Angel of the Lord entered the pool in search of the seed lost by Adam centuries ago. The Angel created a whirlpool, in other words, the waters were "troubled." The grace of the presence of the Angel in the water was so strong, that the first person who entered the waters was healed of his or her affliction. A paralytic faithfully remained by the pool for 38 years. He knew that it was impossible to get into the water by his own volition. It would be necessary for someone to take pity on him and carry him into the water. Only in this way could he possibly try to be the first one to enter the water when the water was stirred by the Angel. Everyone there had their own illnesses and sufferings, and no one had love that was strong enough to sacrifice their own healing for the sake of the paralytic. We should never forget that our Savior is the ultimate Physician and Healer of all sickness and suffering, both physical and spiritual. Spiritual sickness results when we sin and either do not acknowledge or accept that we have sinned, or we try to justify our sins, or we repeatedly commit the same sins without even struggling and asking God's help to overcome them. Spiritual illness leads to physical illness. Apparently this is the case with the paralytic in today's Gospel. Jesus asks the paralytic, "Do you want to be healed?" In other words, "Do you acknowledge and repent for your sins which have caused this paralysis?" Having affirmed his desire to be healed, although not spoken but understood, to be healed both spiritually and physically, Jesus heals the man's paralysis. Later in the temple Jesus tells the man, "Sin no more, lest something worse happen to you." Brothers and sisters, all of us suffer from spiritual illness. All of us have sinned. Only the Lord is without sin. If not physically, then we all certainly suffer from spiritual paralysis in one degree or another. It is understood that no one except the Lord is perfect. The key, however, is our attitude and how we deal with this human predicament. Do we have humility and remorse for our sins and do we struggle with our sins and ask God to help us to overcome them? Do we weep for our sins, or do we justify ourselves and deliberately sin without remorse or repentance? These choices that we make determine our fate, whether or not our sins will result in worse suffering and even manifest themselves as physical illness. Ultimately our choices have eternal consequences, whether we will rejoice with the Lord in the next life or continue to suffer even beyond the grave. Remember David the psalmist in the 50th psalm who said, "a broken and contrite heart God will not despise." David's sins were great and very awful, yet God could forgive even David because his heart was sincerely sorry and he repented with humble contrition and remorse. The hope of salvation is within the grasp of everyone. The Lord loves all of His creation, and it is His desire that all His children should be saved. Is there a parent who does not wish the best and happiness and health for all of his or her children? I don't think so. God, our Heavenly Father, desires the same for all of His children as well. The saints were all sinners too. What separates us from the saints, however, is the depth of their repentance, humility and love; so profound that we are lightyears away in our humble struggles and prayers. May the Lord grant unto all of us an image of repentance. May all of us have hearts filled with humble repentance, love, hope and faith. May we all, in our own humble way, pray and struggle to keep the Lord's commandments and uprightly walk the road of our Savior all the days of our lives. When the Lord asks us in our hearts, "Do you want to be healed?", let us with a firm resolve answer, "Yes Lord, I want to be healed. I acknowledge my sins which are ever before me. Help me in my struggles to overcome my sins." God will not abandon us if we turn to Him in such a way, and like the paralytic in today's Gospel, we too will

be healed. The Lord will then gently warn us like a loving and caring parent, “Go and sin no more, lest something worse happen to you.” Amen!