



Remember me in Your Kingdom

Massachusetts, March 8, 2020

Sermon: “2nd Sunday of Lent”

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On Sundays during Lent we are reading the Epistle to the Hebrews. This Epistle is concerned with showing us that Jesus Christ is both human and divine. In particular, St. Paul wants to show us Christ’s divine nature, because everyone at that time knew Jesus was a human being, since so many people had seen Him, or met people who had seen Him. So the problem was not that Jesus lives, or is human, but to know His true divine identity. We need to know that Jesus is God with us.

The Epistle is also very much concerned with the death of Jesus on the Cross, and its meaning. In regards to the death of Christ, and its meaning, the author has three important points to make.

- First, the death of Christ on the cross leads to the forgiveness of our sins.
- Second, the death of Christ on the cross opens to human beings the gates of heaven. We were excluded from heaven by the sin of Adam, but now we can go to heaven. We symbolize this at the Hajmeh, when the priest knocks on the doors of the church, and then everyone follows him into the church, and the doors to the altar are open.
- Third, Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, offering His death to the Father on our behalf. Christ intercedes for us because He died on the cross for us, and is also a human being. Jesus also presents our prayers to the Father, therefore our prayers go directly to our Heavenly Father.

Another important point of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that Jesus, who is God, spoke directly to us, and offered us the way to live and attain salvation. If we ignore Him, we will be punished because He is not an angel or messenger, but God Himself. The Old Testament was delivered through angels and prophets, who were God’s messengers, and there was a punishment for all infractions against it. How much more, will we be punished for ignoring the voice of Christ in the New Testament? Because the Gospel is the words and actions of Christ, is why when it is read in church, we use incense and lit candles, and we come and stand up front near it, for when the Gospel is read, it is Jesus Himself who is speaking to us.

In today's Gospel, we learn that Christ performed the miraculous cure because the people had faith. This is something that we see in all of the miracle stories of Christ. Jesus requires faith, because He does not force anything on us, even though it is good for us, and for our salvation. We have to want the miracle or blessing. Also, Jesus wants us to do our part. He does more than us because He performs the miracle. Jesus wants us to have faith; that is His requirement. We do less than what He does, but He still insists that we do our part, as small as it is.

The Gospel story revolves around the idea of the forgiveness of sins. Jesus forgave the man his sins before He cured him. The forgiveness of sins is more important than the miraculous cure, for forgiveness will let us into Heaven. The bodily cure will serve us temporarily on earth, but it is not eternal like Heaven. Jesus cures the man to prove that He has the power to forgive sins. The lesser event, the physical miracle, is the proof of the greater event, the forgiveness of sins. The miracle also serves to increase the faith of the onlookers. Jesus requires faith from us, and in turn, the miracle builds faith up. This is frequently the reason why Jesus performs miracles in the Gospel. We end up with a circle. Jesus requires faith to perform a miracle, then He performs the miraculous cure, then the miracle helps to make the faith of the people stronger.

The people of the Gospel story had to have faith in Christ, but they did not know who He is. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us who Jesus is: He is God, who became a human being and walked on earth. More than the people of the Gospel story, we should have faith in Jesus Christ. We know who He is. We have the miracle stories of the Gospels, and countless other miracles that happened throughout history until our own time. We have countless prayers that Christ has answered throughout history to our own time. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says, we should hold fast to our faith, and never give it up.