



Around the Word
Bible Study
 Epiphany, 2017

The Light of Christ
 St. Matthew 8:1-13

**The Good and Gracious
 Will of God:**

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. [The leper] doubted not that the will of God is disposed to every good action, saying: if Thou wilt: this does not imply doubt on the part of the leper, but rather the expression of his mind regarding Christ's judgment. For since Christ is good, He wills not to bestow that which is harmful, even though He be asked... It is as if the leper said: I believe that whatsoever is good, Thou wilt it. But I know not if what I seek is for me a good. But this I clearly doubt not, but rather believe: that if this be good for me, Thou dost will it also."

—St. John Chrysostom (*The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*; Vol.1:305-6)

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Introduction: The Light of the Word made flesh!

Often, miracles are seen as God's display of power and command over all things. While this is true, at the same time something sacramental is being shown here. What is often forgotten is that God is a man and He has come not to just do spiritual things, but physical things as well. Forgiveness spoken by Jesus doesn't just sound nice, but recreates the sinner in his body.

Opening: Psalm 97

¹The LORD reigns, let the | earth rejoice;*
 let the many coast- | lands be glad!

²**Clouds and thick darkness are all a- | round him;***

righteousness and justice are the foundation | of his throne.

³Fire goes be- | fore him*
 and burns up his adversaries | all around.

⁴**His lightnings light | up the world;***
the earth sees and | trembles.

⁵The mountains melt like wax be- | fore the LORD,*
 before the Lord of | all the earth.

⁶**The heavens proclaim his | righteousness,***
and all the peoples see his | glory.

⁷All worshipers of images are put to shame,
 who make their boast in worthless | idols;*
 worship him, | all you gods!

⁸**Zion hears and is glad,**
and the daughters of Ju- | dah rejoice,*
because of your judgments, | O LORD.

⁹For you, O LORD, are most high over | all the earth;*
 you are exalted far a- | bove all gods.

¹⁰**O you who love the LORD, hate | evil!***
He preserves the lives of his saints;
he delivers them from the hand of the | wicked.

¹¹Light is sown for the | righteous,*
 and joy for the up- | right in heart.

¹²**Rejoice in the LORD, O you | righteous,***
and give thanks to his | holy name!
Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

3:1ff, 19:20; Deuteronomy 9:15, 10:1, 12:2, 33:2; 1 Kings 11:7; 18:20, 19:11; 2 Kings 6:17; 2 Chronicles 3:1; Joel 3:17.

Authority rests in the high places. Whether it's the true God or demons worshipped as false idols, the higher you can get into the heavens, the better. Israel constantly struggled with false altars on high places starting with Solomon. See 1 Kings 11:7.

We see Jesus taking Moses' seat here. Where Moses went on high and brought the Law, now Jesus sits as the Teacher, in the same manner. However, Jesus brings a stricter Law than Moses, thus something other than a "far away God" and a "stricter law" is found on the mountains. See Genesis 22:2; 2 Chronicles 3:1; Matthew 17:9.

Note that Abraham offering Isaac and Solomon's Temple are on the same mountain. The Lord also comes down from the mountain. Where does Christ go after He comes down from the mountain? See Luke 2:7, 9:22.

v.2-3: And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Leprosy, in Scripture, could refer to a variety of skin ailments. One thing they all had in common, though, was that they could not be treated. In Leviticus 14, all we hear of is the rite of purification and re-admittance into the congregation of Israel, not the method for removing the disease.

Leprosy was so horrible that it was deemed as a punishment for sin and a sign of God's wrath. See Numbers 12:1-10; 2 Samuel 3:29; 2 Kings 5:27; 2 Chronicles 26:16-19.

Pronounced "unclean", the leper could not come into contact with anyone else and risk them also being unclean. Thus, leper colonies are born

Read St. Matthew 8:1-13

v.1: When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him.

For the last 3 chapters of Matthew, Jesus has been sitting on a mountain preaching to them and teaching with authority. What sort of things sit on mountains in the Old Testament? See Genesis 8:4; Exodus

(Leviticus 7:21), and just like in Ben-Hur, you do not go in and nobody comes out.

In that light, what do you suppose St. Luke meant when he said, "a certain village" in another Jesus-leper encounter? See Luke 17:12.

What does touching the leper do to Jesus? See Leviticus 7:21.

What does touching Jesus do to the leper? See Matthew 8:3.

Cleaner than clean, Jesus is not subject to leprosy, because all disease finds its end in the great Physician (Hosea 6:1-2; Luke 10:25-37). Instead of the leper being cast out, Jesus is cast out in His place, having touched an unclean thing.

v.4: And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

Jesus is not here to simply diagnose whether people are unclean or they had been healed from it. He comes to take on the impurities that hinder men and keep them in bondage. Jesus used touch and the greatest power in the world to heal this man. What was that power? See Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26.

What cleansing makes us fit for God's presence today? See Romans 6:4-11.

Still under the Law, the leper must obey those who sit in Moses' seat (Matthew 23:2) and "offer the gift" until one comes to free Him from the Law (Romans 10:4).

v.5-7: When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him."

St. Peter tells us in Acts 10:43 that even Gentiles will receive forgiveness, where heretofore they had been excluded (Leviticus 20:24-26). Yet we know that it was not racial or national exclusion, but an exclusion of unrepentant hearts (John 8:34-36).

Compare Matthew 2:16 and Luke 2:43 to v.6, here. Do you find compelling evidence to say this was the centurion's son instead of just a servant? See Galatians 4:1.

Remembering Jesus just "took ill" by touching the leper and that Jesus will suffer and die for just such impurities, why is it important that the servant be a son? See Matthew 3:17, 27:54; Galatians 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-2.

v.8-10: But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have

Bible Study

The Light of Christ St. Matthew 8:1-13

you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

Here is a stranger in Israel, yet produces faith that even Jesus marvels at. What were the unbelieving Jews missing? See John 5:39-40.

v.11-12: I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the

outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"East" is our epiphany word! The Word that shines bright in the darkness reveals that salvation is for all people. That it is not the paralytic or the gentile that is tossed out, but the Son. Even the Jew has his chance to repent and be saved. Where especially is this "all" laid out for the Church today? See Matthew 28:19-20.



v.13: And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it

be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

By the Light of prophesy, by the light of the stars, and now by the light of the Word made flesh do we behold His Glory. Jesus will talk a good game, but He will act a good game (Isaiah 42:4). Jesus teaches well, but then puts His Creative Word into action and everything that He preaches comes to pass.

For, much more important than a worker of miracles, is a God Who keeps His word. "Blessed are the poor"? Let's see it. "Worry not"? Show me. "Seek first the kingdom"? Reveal it to me. Jesus puts His preaching to action by communing with His baptized Church. His Word moves hearts, but also heals bodies. The power that created the world undoes sin, physically, in Christ.

Closing: Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me (LSB, 756)

Art: *Jesus Heals the Centurion's Servant*. Date: 1571, Artist: Veronese, Country: Spain

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