



ST. STEPHEN'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH
11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Sixth Sunday after Trinity
February 3, 2019

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.”

It is a common problem with modern culture that we dismiss the miraculous in the Gospels as symbolic rather than historic. To do so, is heresy. The reports of these two miraculous healing encounters are factual. Miracles, or signs, as St. John identifies them in his Gospel, are landmarks for us. We recognize the Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ because He does, in fact and in history, what no other man could do. Our confidence in our faith comes from the fact that we were told in advance, in Scripture, to look for specific miracles as proof that God's Covenant would be fulfilled.

But, the Gospel accounts are not just history. These events are not just credentials. The miracles included in the Gospel reflect truth about the Nature of God and the nature of His will for us. In the Gospel this morning, two men sought Jesus for healing. These two miracles are like bookends that instruct us how we should approach God for the healing we need in our own lives.

The first miracle describes the remarkable encounter with the leper. Leprosy is a horrible disease. It is an irreversible sentence of death that is realized in progressive corruption of the

flesh. Lepers were so feared for the horror of their disease and the threat of infection that they were cast out of society. They lived as the walking dead, unclean, physically corrupted, shunned by society, exiled from the company of God's people, consigned to live out their sentence of death in the hellish environs of the waste places.

We don't know the source of the Epiphany of grace that enabled this leper to recognize his salvation in Jesus and to approach the Lord so boldly. St. Matthew reports that Jesus was surrounded by great multitudes. Every tradition and law requires that lepers avoid the crowd, proclaim their un-cleanliness and unworthiness, and lurk in the waste places to await death in despair and isolation, but this man boldly approaches Jesus and worships Him.

“Lord, if thou wilt,” the leper says, “thou canst make me clean.” He acknowledges his condition and his own helplessness against his condition. Then, he makes his act of faith in the loving kindness of God. He not only acknowledges the power of God to change his wretched life, he presumes to trust in the good will of the Lord toward him to affect his salvation.

Listen to the answer Jesus gives Him. “I will, be thou clean.” What incomparable comfort! The Lord of the Universe expressed His will that His unworthy subject be made clean and restored to health. “Herein lies love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son

to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 St. John 4:10

Just as the leper demonstrates how we are to approach the Lord, the Centurion demonstrates how we are to live in faith after we have been converted. The character of the Centurion’s miracle is very different than the leper’s. The heart of the miracle with the leper is God’s will to heal and restore. Jesus is the center of this account, and his glory is revealed in the immediate and undeniable healing of the corruption of this outcast standing before Him.

Jesus is still the source of healing love for the Centurion’s daughter, but the center of the account is the Centurion. There is no dramatic healing apparent at this encounter. The sick girl is a day’s journey away. This encounter is a lesson for us about how we live in Jesus in our particular time in history where the miracles aren’t so dramatic.

The leper is immediately and visibly healed. The Centurion, on the other hand receivesa promise, a promise that must be accepted on faith. “Go thou thy way. As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee”. He returned to his home in hope, but it was only at the end of his journey that Centurion was able to comprehend and enjoy the fulfillment of the promise made by Jesus. The Lord’s will was done for him at the moment “the Word” was spoken, but the realization of the promise was reserved for the end of the journey.

Isn’t that just the way it feels in our walk with Christ at this point in History! We have encountered the Lord, put our lives in His hands, and received.....His promise. He says to us, “As you have believed, so be it done unto thee”. And so we continue on our journey, trusting in faith that the world has changed, that we have

changed, and that His promise for us will bear fruit. The Centurion had a short walk in comparison to our own. The Lord knows that at the point we approach Him and are converted, we are babies in our faith. The walk ahead of us with Him is long. Doubt, despair and the devil sit poised to prey upon us we take each and every step.

Our Lord, in His love and wisdom, knows the challenge of our walk and provides for us on our journey. We have a gift that the Centurion did not have to sustain us on our journey. Jesus doesn’t send us on our way alone. He comes with us to support us. Though His person is not with us in History, Jesus Christ is truly present in our lives in His Word and in the Eucharist.

Jesus knew we couldn’t sustain our walk home without His real and constant Presence in our lives, so He instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion. With eyes of faith, we see past the mere elements of Bread and Wine to the Real Presence of our Lord, in His Body and His Blood, that He has given to sustain our lives and preserve us in our walk.

In faith, we are comforted that Jesus has made Himself present in our lives to sustain on us our journey. In hope we look forward to the end of our journey, when we will share His Glory in our Resurrection with Him at the Second Coming. And so, we join with the Centurion in saying, “Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the Word only, and my soul shall be healed.”

And He answers us, “ Go thy way. As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen