

The energy in thankfulness.

Healing of the 10 Lepers.

12-19-2017

In the name of Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

[This homily is online in audio and text form.

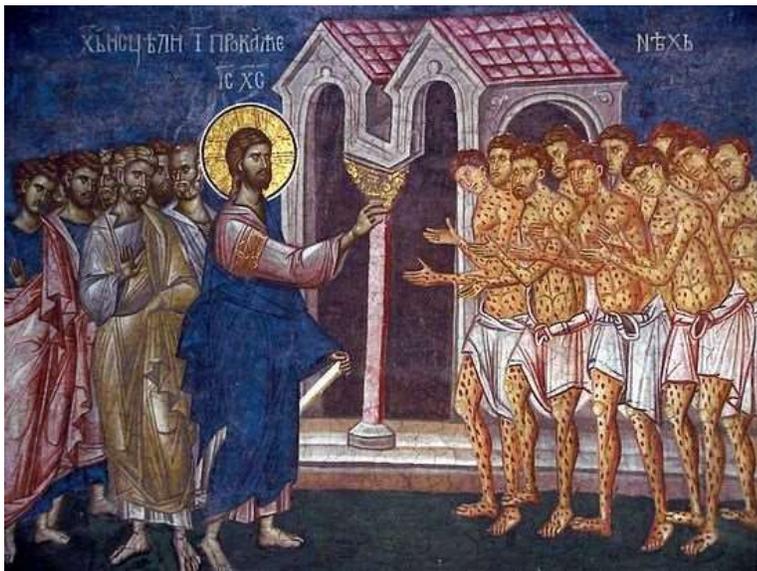
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I want to tell you two things today. One is the most beautiful truth for man in the universe. It is inexplicable, it cannot be understood, it cannot be grasped, and yet -- there is. The other is also inexplicable, but unfortunately, we can grasp it because of the proof of our own experience. Hello using photographs amuse and ever shall be how are you today about in the epistle today. Let's discuss first the first truth of the universe, that directly impacts this first thing that I want to share. Of course, the seminal truth of the universe is that God is, He is totally self-sufficient, He is completely unknowable to anyone, unless He chooses to be knowable. He created all things, and in Him all things exist.

Man is too small to even know that God exists. Man is unable to understand anything about God, much less act like Him. But God, who created all things, and is not bounded by anything, can do anything. Since God is love, He chose to make us in order to give Himself to us. He alone is capable of not only creating and maintaining life but also making that life to know that He exists. So, the first great truth that I want to tell you is that God has made Himself known to man because He loves man. Since He made man in His image, He made him capable of being even united to Himself.

We will talk about the epistle in a moment, but first I want to tell you the second unfortunate truth. Man, even though, he is given great things by God and is made in God's image and will someday be higher than the Angels and be able to inquire into things that angels dare not even think about -- this same man -- you and me --

forgets God, it is not thankful, and lives in a worldly and even unclean way. The Gospel talks about this truth when it describes the healing of the 10 lepers and that only one leper came back to give thanks to God.

Let us talk a little bit about Jesus Christ and how Paul describes this first great truth – that God, by the force of his will, and through the incarnation makes man able to partake of His Nature.

The apostle tells us that we will be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light". That's theosis, that's been filled with God and being in God, that is being united to God. And the apostle also says "he has delivered us from the power of darkness". This is because of his dear Son. Man can know God, and be united with God, and become like God only because God has become man. The apostle tells us that "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins". This is much more than just God choosing to not punish us. This is the God man, because he is also man, making every man capable of obliterating the sin that abides within him, that darkness.

So far, the things that the apostle has said are at least understandable in some fashion to everyone. But then the apostle, as is his habit, speaks of things that are so high and so wondrous that only those who are purified can understand them. Therefore, we who are impure cannot understand them in their essence, but we should speak of them and we should meditate on them and they should inspire us to be like the leper who was a Samaritan and he came to thank God for all things.

The apostle tells us that Jesus Christ is the "image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature". These are high words, impossible to understand, but in a crude way we can attempt to explain them. In another place Jesus Christ said he who has seen Him has seen the Father. Since Jesus is as much God as the Father is, to see Jesus is to see the Father.

The words "firstborn of every creature" are very mysterious. In three ways Jesus is firstborn. He was eternally born of the Father — we call this in the symbol of faith "only begotten of the Father before all ages". His was a birth, if we can even use that impoverished word to describe God that was not a beginning but rather a being. At all times Jesus Christ is and was the Son of the Father.

The second way in which Jesus is firstborn is that He is the first and the last to be born of a virgin, without the seed of man and to become a God-man.

The third way in which Jesus is firstborn is that He is the first and, because of His will, the first of many that died and will rise again with a perfected human body and a perfected human soul.

The apostle tells us other remarkable things to "by Him all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible" – and then he describes four of the ranks of the angelic host, invisible to us but plainly visible to Him, the thrones and dominions and principalities and powers.

To be created by God, and to be destined to be higher than all created things, even the great and terrible and powerful angels is such a gift that man should never forget and always live his life according to this great truth.

The selection we read from the apostle finishes with him telling us that Jesus Christ is "before all things and in him all things consist and that he is the head of the body, the church". All of these these words of the apostle really, in their totality, tell us the entire Gospel – that is the "good news", because "Gospel" means "good news".

Let's see two reactions to this good news.

Entering a certain village, the Lord encountered 10 lepers. Leprosy is known today by its modern name Hansen's disease, and is an infection that causes the flesh to become snowy white and to eventually fall off. Lepers would commonly lose their fingers, their toes and their noses and their ears, and other parts of their flesh. It is a terrible affliction, even to this day in places that antibiotics are not available (it is easily treatable with antibiotics). Those who had leprosy were considered to be unclean and according to the Jews crude understanding, cruel understanding, to be incapable of being in God's presence and to be cursed by God. So, these cursed men cried out to God "Lord Jesus Master of mercy in us". And the Lord was merciful and healed them all.

It is instructive for us to understand that these 10 men all did two very good things. Everybody does good things, but very few people do enough good things.

First of all, they cried out to the Lord for mercy. This prayer sounds very much like the Jesus prayer. And so, we cry out to God for mercy with the Jesus prayer. You should say the Jesus prayer.

Another good thing that they did was that they were obedient to Jesus when He gave them a peculiar command. He told him to go wash, but He did not heal them first. The Old Testament has very strict instructions for how a leper who was healed must go and be washed. He must be examined by the priests so that they can see that he is completely free of leprosy and then he is free to reenter society it is no longer considered to be cursed. But the healing must occur before the inspection. Jesus set them for the inspection before their healing. They were obedient and they went. We have a saying in the church, preserved by our monastics, that first is obedience then understanding. We modern, secular people - we try to reverse this. There many things that we should do, we might not understand why but we should do them, because they are right to do. There many things we do not understand. We will never understand holy things without obedience first.

It is important to emphasize this – even though only one leper received full healing, all of them did some things that were good. The ones who were not fully healed were undone by their forgetfulness and their indifference.

It is also important to understand that the one who went back to God and was fully healed – the Lord said only of him that his faith made him whole – was a Samaritan.

A Samaritan was considered to be the most unclean of men by the Jews. Even a Samaritan without leprosy would be considered to be unclean. And yet this unclean man was full of thanks and his soul told him that he needed to go back, not to mortal priests, but to the High Priest, and give thanks and worship Him.

It is very easy brothers and sister to do some good things. It is very easy to pray for a little while. It is very easy to struggle in the Christian life for a little while or even maybe for a long while. It is very difficult to do these things all the way to the end of our life. That is why the Scriptures tell us that he who endures to the end will be saved.

This is a terrible in a frightening thing to know. The apostles asked regarding things like this: "who then can be saved?" The Lord answered that with man this is impossible but with God all things are possible.

So how is our salvation possible, even though we are unclean and like lepers or like the blind or like the paralytics? Our salvation is possible because of God, but we must be partakers of the salvation. Is not a passive experience. We are lepers to be sure. There is much in us that is unclean. And yet God has healed us and *is* healing us.

Which are we: are we the nine or are we the one?

The Scriptures tell us how we can become the one.

We can be among the few the travel the narrow road. The nine traveled the wide road and they were not healed. They were not more unclean than the one who came back to Christ and was totally healed. The virtue that they lacked was thankfulness. Thankfulness is an energy in the soul that brings the soul close to God. It doesn't matter if the soul is pure or is unclean – if there is thankfulness the soul will find its way to God. The soul will know God because God speaks to the soul. This is the secret to living a triumphant Christian life: Thankfulness.

Of course, thankfulness is not something that exists only by itself, without power such as sending a form letter to someone that says thank you for something. Thankfulness is what makes a man desire to obey God in all things and follow the commandments. Thankfulness is what makes a man draw near to God even when he has sinned, because he has been near to God before he knows that God will receive him again. Thankfulness and its sister remembrance, guards the soul against sin.

If you read the Scriptures carefully and with understanding, even if you are a sinner, even if you are great sinner, you should become very confident. God receives the unclean, and those that recognize this and give thanks to Him and order their life according to this Thanksgiving, only those are healed. We need not bring any ability to God in order to be able to pass His test. We need only bring a thankful heart. Such a heart God can and will enter. And where God is there is life and there is light and the impurity and darkness and sin are burned away.

Are you a thankful person, or do you complain a lot? If you are a thankful person, then you will struggle to follow the commandments because you love God, and because you remember what He is done for you. and the things in your life the same big to you now, they will be pretty small compared to the beautiful things that the apostle has said about our redemption today.

If you are a sinner then practice being more thankful. You will become less of a sinner.

May God help us. Amen.

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Colossians 1:12-18 12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Luke 17:12-19 12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.