

Pastor's Sermon
The Tenth Sunday of Luke
By V. Rev. Timothy Baclig
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The setting of the miracle of the woman spoken of in today's Gospel reading is at a synagogue where the Lord was teaching. The love of God and His great mercy is central to the Gospel lesson. It is the good news of this season when we prepare to celebrate His birth.

The Lord repeatedly called the people to repentance from the practice of a religion that fails to practice mercy. Every Lenten season, our lessons help us be careful about hypocrisy. He rebukes those who claim to know the Law as being ignorant of the very thing in which they should be more knowledgeable and better instructed than anyone.

"You hypocrites," He says, "Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

The ruler of the synagogue condemned the Lord for healing on the Sabbath. For him religion consisted of the observance of laws that could not be set aside even for the sake of mercy. The ruler's reaction to the healing of the woman who "had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years" illustrates how radically misunderstood and misused the Law had become among those whom God had so favored and of whom he expected so much.

You may recall from one of the readings of the twelve Gospels (Matthew 23:13-39) on Great and Holy Thursday the words of our Lord: "Woe to you teachers of the Law, Sadducees, Pharisees hypocrites"... You brood of vipers..."...[loving] the praise of men more than the praise from God..."

In today's lesson the Lord heals the woman by His word—"Woman, you are set free from your infirmity"—and then by His touch: "He put His hands on her; and immediately she was straightened up and praised God" (vv.12-13). The miracle is remarkable for two reasons: **First, the woman was not seeking to be healed and no one spoke on her behalf. Second, the Lord demonstrates that He is the incarnate God by the simple declaration that she was healed.**

The rejection of Christ as the incarnate God by the Jews in His day is no different from those who claim that the eternal God could not possibly humble Himself, be born in human flesh as a man. Some can only understand Christ to be a created being. To this point, **St. Gregory of Nazianzus** says, **“Do you [think] conceive of Him as less... because he humbles Himself for the sake of the (one) that is bent down to the ground, that He may exalt [raise up] with Himself [all] that {which} is bent double under the weight of sin?”**

Our Lord was never afraid or threatened by anyone or any circumstance. Nor was he controlled by any person or any situation. He did not need to prove who He was; nor did He need to demonstrate anything to justify Lordship. This was not His aim or purpose in His coming. If we miss this point, than it will be very difficult to grasp the depth of meaning that is revealed in the upcoming Feast of His incarnation (called: “The Great Dispensation”) **“I behold a mystery, great and most wonderful... For some of us: this way of being humble is something we learn by being crushed or by being broken. This was for our Lord something that He not only understood, but something He chose and demonstrated before His crucifixion by His every word and deed.**

Every crisis in our life can do one of two things: It can lead us closer to God by way of the Cross, or it can alienate us from God and cause us to reject His call to holiness. The lesson therefore is clear: There are the more weighty matters of the Law that we cannot ignore. The practice of true religion is not neglecting what is obvious: namely, God’s love, mercy and compassion which fulfill the Law.

Many of us, as creatures of habit, dislike disruptions to our routine or what we are familiar with or accustomed to. When you and I are most comfortable with things being done a certain way, change is very difficult. We loose our orientation, and being disoriented can be devastating to our pride. Meaning can be lost as we define what is meant by what we do with no thought to why we are doing it. Today’s lesson forces us to recognize that we can be misguided and loose sight of what really matters—as far as God is concerned.

As we begin our countdown to Christmas, may we not loose sight of the reason for the season: God has come. We are preparing to celebrate His full revelation in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He takes on human flesh and assumes our entire nature, except for sin; but for the purpose of taking on the sin of the world. He renews and restores all that was lost with Adam. As the New Adam He fulfills the Law and is our righteousness.