

of the Church will spend many centuries puzzling out the relationship of Divine and Human in Christ. This weekend we meditate on this important source in scripture for understanding this mystery.

The Hebrews pericope ends with the admonishment, “Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.” We are called to focus on what we learn about God. We can never stop learning.

The ministry story from Mark today places the healing of the paralytic front and center. Here four friends make an extraordinary effort to get the paralytic to Jesus despite the odds. They all demonstrate a powerful faith in the ability of Jesus to help their friend. They know that Jesus is a man of God. They approach with faith and are not disappointed.

The dialogue with the paralytic highlights this faith. But Jesus also connects this faith to a forgiveness of sin. Jesus reorders the priorities. The healing is not primary, the forgiveness of sin is. If the paralytic wants to be whole, he must acknowledge this sinfulness and seek forgiveness from the Lord. Jesus readily grants this forgiveness. Then, from this forgiveness, flows the healing power.

Once again, the healing episode offers a lesson of discipleship. The followers of Christ must have their priorities in order, first the kingdom of God then the life on earth.

“In this season of abstinence, You have risen as light, O Christ, upon those who walk in the darkness of sin. Let us see the glorious day of your Passion, so that we may sing to You: Arise, O God, and have mercy on us.”

Sunday Matins at the Praises

We approach the Lord as the paralytic this season, with the guidance and support of our friends and a firm hope for the forgiveness of our sins. Our eyes are fixed on the Passion that makes that forgiveness possible and the resurrection that we joyfully share in Christ.

Steve Puluka

Scripture in the Great Fast

Saturday

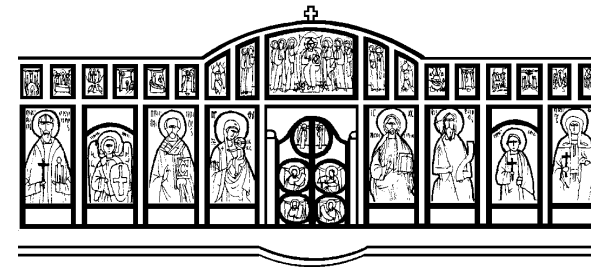
Hebrews 3:12-16

Mark 1:35-44

Sunday

Hebrews 1:10—2:3

Mark 2:1-12



“ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he (Jesus) got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. “Everyone is searching for you.” He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”

Mark 1:35-38

Second Weekend of the Great Fast

The second weekend of the Great Fast continues the themes of OT fulfillment and discipleship in the scripture pericopes. The Hebrews passages take OT quotations and demonstrate their fulfillment in Christ. The Markan stories develop aspects of discipleship, but also have a strong undertone of fulfillment. Each of these scenes from the ministry of Jesus plays to specific aspects of the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus.

Sunday this week is also dedicated to St. Gregory Palamas. The first Sunday of the Fast recalls the triumph over the Iconoclasts and restoration of Icons to worship, the victory of truth over false piety. St. Gregory represents a similar, if

“Why have
You driven
me far from
your face, O
inaccessible
Light? The
outer
darkness has
enveloped
me,
wretched
creature
that I am.
Make me
return, I
pray You,
and direct
my paths
toward the
light of your
law.”

Saturday

less dramatic, victory in the 14th century. The Hesychasts were monks that espoused a theology based on an experience of God in prayer. St. Gregory wrote extensively on this theology (see right) in opposition to those who insisted that God could only be described in active terms of Greek philosophy. For a short time these advocates won the day, but ultimately the Hesychast philosophy prevailed. The commemoration was seen as similar to the victory for Icons and therefore placed on the second Sunday of the Fast.

This is also an All souls Saturday. On these days we remember that Christ has conquered death and those that have fallen asleep in the Lord are still part of our community. We pray for them, just as we pray for each other.

“In your goodness, O Lord, remember your servants, and pardon all the sins committed in this life. There is no one who is without sin, except You alone who grants repose to the departed.”

Saturday Matins Troparia

Saturday

In the opening of Saturday's Gospel from Mark (see opening quotation), we see Jesus' example of prayer. Discipleship calls us to this life of prayer. Awakening from sleep we are called to worship.

The Gospel goes on to have Jesus encounter and heal a leper. The healing finds a place on this weekend because of the connection to the Law. Leprosy has specific commands in the Torah. Jesus heals the leper by a touch. Touching the leper makes Jesus ritually unclean, but he does not shrink from this contact. When Jesus heals the leper, he sends him to the priests, following the law of Moses. The entire episode plays out these connections between Jesus and the OT law.

Jesus stands in the tradition of the Torah, not in opposition to it.

The lesson from Hebrews we are reminded of the Exodus from Egypt. When leaving Egypt some of the people were rebellious and grumbled, complaining about many things. Ultimately, they created the golden calf and abandoned God. The Exodus gives us the Torah that Jesus holds up as the example in Mark's gospel, but it also shows us the danger of following our own way. The Law came down from the mountain to encounter a rebellious people finding their own golden god.

We stand in a tradition that has both positive and negative examples. Which one are we following? Have we hardened our hearts by going our own way, a rebellion against the way of God. Hebrews asks us to “Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

“Woe to me who have passed all my days in laziness. Behold, the end is near and I have not yet repented! O holy martyrs who have nobly completed your course, beseech the Lord to lead me to a good conclusion of this Fast.”

Saturday Matins Ode 8

Sunday

On Sunday our reading from Hebrews opens with quotations from two Psalms. Once again, Jesus is the fulfillment of these promises God makes in the OT. Psalm 110 promises the seat at the right hand of God to his anointed one. Hebrews connects this promise to Jesus. This promise gives Jesus a greater place than any other creature, even the angels. Here we see the beginnings of our knowledge that Jesus is truly God, even while he is human. The fathers

“Your voice,
which is
always ready
to teach,
resounds in
the ears of
our hearts; it
awakens
even the
most slothful
souls. And
by your
inspired
words, you
show us the
steps of the
ladder which
leads us from
earth to God.
O holy
Gregory,
wonder of
Thessalonica,
intercede
with Christ,
that with his
divine
brightness.

Sunday

