

Date: November 20, 2021
Subject: 22nd Sunday After Pentecost

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Wishing all of you a joyous Thanksgiving Day.

LUKE 40-56

And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.

And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:

For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.

And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd.

And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him and how she was healed immediately.

And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.

But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

This Gospel reading describes two amazing miracles. The first one discusses a healing of a long-suffering woman. The second one is about the resurrecting of a twelve year old maiden. These miracles were amazing enough in and of themselves. But what is so important and edifying about them is the circumstances under which they occurred. They teach us such valuable and encouraging spiritual lessons.

We see Jesus arriving by boat, having left the Gadarenes, who did not want Him in their country. We discussed what happened there in last week's Gospel reading. The people here, however, were impatiently waiting for Him and immediately tightly encircled Him. He was then approached by a man who pleaded for his help. This man, the ruler of the local synagogue, begged Him to come to his house and heal his twelve year old daughter, who was dying.

Jesus agreed to go, and began to maneuver through the crowd when, unnoticed by Him, a woman touched the border of His garment. She had been hopelessly suffering for twelve years from a hemorrhage. She had spent all her money on doctors, who were unable to cure her. But when she simply touched Christ's garment, she was immediately made whole.

What is very important about this miracle is that in some sense, it was not Jesus who healed her, but His garment. She did not ask Him to be healed, and He was not aware of what was happening, as can be seen from His words: *Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.* What powerful confirmation of the fact that even articles possessed by Jesus and the saints have miracle-working power!

We live in a world where a great number of people reject the great miracle-working powers of relics and icons. This lack of faith infects even Christians, despite the fact that so many cases are found both in Scripture and Church history that illustrate this to be true. In fact, the Seventh Ecumenical Council stipulated that this belief be a canonical requirement. That is why it was so strange and very disheartening when, during the present pandemic, there were Orthodox church leaders who forbid the veneration of icons in churches, suggesting that these holy items, instead of healing people, could infect them with Covid.

The second miracle also happened under circumstances which are very significant. To understand this significance we should stop and think about how we treat people whom we dislike, especially someone who has offended us and whom we consider to be our enemy. We dislike someone and seek to get even. We probably would not come to his aid if such an occasion presented itself. We would, with self-satisfaction, think that he had it coming to him, that justice was served. Why should I help him?

But we read in the Sermon on the Mount the Savior's following words: *I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Thus, by going to resurrect the daughter of the synagogue leader, Jesus was demonstrating that it is not enough to just say those words. One has to live by them. This leader, Jairus, was, in fact, an enemy of the Savior. We see him publicly earlier attacking Jesus in his synogogue, after Jesus had healed a man with a withered arm.

What Jesus did vividly show us was the great power that loving one's enemy has in softening hard hearts. Jairus hated Jesus, whom he considered to be a danger to the ruling class, the class that was already plotting the murder of Christ as confirmed by what happened after Jesus healed the man with the withered arm: *And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.* But God saw, deeply hiding in Jairus' heart, the potential for good faith, and in His infinite mercy, saved Jarius through the death of his daughter. Jairus had to run for help to his enemy to beg for the very same kind of help that he had previously attacked him for. And Jesus, true to His teachings, responded without delay and resurrected the girl who had died before Jesus was able to reach her.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are true Christians only if we live in full harmony with the teaching of our Savior. This means living a life of loving God and our neighbor. This kind of love is foreign to the love that is taught by the world. Therefore, while we live in this life, we are called to live in the world, but not to be of this world. The Savior lived with us as a true person and demonstrated by His personal example how to live correctly. His way of living is clearly demonstrated to us in the Gospel and further expanded through Divine Tradition. So, if we want to share with our Savior a blessed eternity, all that we have to do is live faithfully according to the example that He give us while living on earth.

With Much Love in Christ,
Archpriest Serge Kotar

