Tr19(2022)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

*“Jesus entered into a ship and passed over, and came into his own city.”*

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This passage we heard today also is recounted by Ss. Mark and Luke. From St. Mark we learn some other aspects fleshing out Matthew's account here. Mark's recount of Jesus' miraculous curing of the man sick of the palsy puts his location in Capernaum on the northern edge of Galilee.

By this time Capernaum on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee had become the base of Jesus ministry. Galilee, being not under Jerusalem but administered separately, presented far fewer run-ins with Jewish leaders, and thus enabled Jesus' ministry to flourish.

Capernaum was with the actual hometown of five of his Apostles including St. Peter. So Jesus grew up in Nazareth, but Capernaum was where he lived his final three years. It was his adopted hometown and center of his ministry.

This man in our Gospel who was sick of the palsy, or paralysis, was lowered through the roof because he could not get in due to the crowd. Ss. Luke and Mark differ as to whether it was the typical roof in the area thatched with palms and mud or the much more expensive tile type of roof.

While less detailed, Matthew's passage presents a remarkable contrast which teaches so much. Most of today's Gospel passage deals with Jesus performing the miraculous healing which manifested his divine power over the forces of nature. But it also has two, easy to overlook, aspects which can teach us too.

The first is that Jesus cured the sick of the palsy **because** he saw the faith of *others*. It may be that the *curee* personally had given up hope of ever being rid of the palsy, of the tremors. We do not know. But his **friends** had faith. They believed that Jesus could help.

This teaches, among other things, that praying for others, even if they may have given up hope, can lead to a miracle for them nonetheless. This is part of the reason we remember each liturgy all those whom we know are in special need. Just because the object of our prayers may not be praying for himself, such as when one suffers from an addiction, does not mean help is unobtainable through the faith and prayers of **others**.

But another very important, even critical, point can be learned from the very beginning of our passage: **Jesus... got into a boat**. While being the son of God, Jesus... got into a boat. He *commuted* across the Sea of Galilee like any other person would, just like we might take light-rail in Denver or the Metro in DC or the "Tube" in London.

The man who could and did walk on water and helped another man, Peter, to do so sat inside... a man-made boat. The builder or painter of the earth who created the water, seas, and lakes let the waves carry **him** somewhere. He who dried up the Red Sea so the Israelites could walk over on dry land, chose to take the chance of getting soaked and cold neither stilling the waves nor walking across a dried sea floor like Moses.

While just one sentence, this is one which unmistakably tells us that Jesus lived as a human being. He lived a human life. He, being divine, had imprisoned himself inside a human body to live as we each do every day. How does one know how it feels to sail on water unless he rides in a boat? How does one know how it cry unless he is sad? How would Jesus know how it feels for us to be tempted unless experiencing everyday life? How could he bring us into a new life without knowing what our **old** one was like?

From the Gospels we know ***that*** Jesus was tempted, as we each are every day. We also know that he suffered physical pain during his Passion. We know that he suffered the parting of soul and body at death as we will. We know that he got angry at the moneychangers and at least once at his own disciples. We know that at least sometimes he had no place “lay his head”. We know that he felt hunger and thirst. We know Jesus cried over Lazarus. There also is a pretty clear suggestion that in contrast to John the Baptist, ...that Jesus did in fact drink wine. And, he, like most of us who did not grow up in this area, Jesus had adopted a hometown.

Thus, in one short Gospel passage we have Jesus showing both of his sides, both of his natures: human and divine. He was a normal everyday boat commuter, and also the divine healer of men, and ultimately the world. When combined with the knowledge that prayers by others **can** help those who may be lacking in faith, we learn that as Christians never to doubt whether Jesus can understand our challenges or whether he stands able and willing to help us.

For two millennia our world has been torn between people, including theologians, who just could or **can** not accept Jesus' two natures. They either have wanted to see him as a... swell person and great teacher who helped people regain their health through improving their own internal *confidence*. Or, they have wanted to deny that he actually lived like everyone else, holding out that Jesus was more of a vision and just pretended to suffer and hunger.

The first, denial of Jesus' divinity, is by far the most common in our society today. In our logical, scientific world, matters which our minds can not fathom are not accepted as possible. Yet science often is wrong as Galileo showed.

It was accepted scientific fact once that the world was flat; it once was accepted that the earth was the center of the universe, and for forty years science has been in agreement that whole milk caused heart problems, until this week.

We might remember that ten years back famed Princeton professor Dr. Stephen Hawking released a book, *The Grand Design*, making the case that God was not necessary for the creation of the universe. He wrote that the laws of physics were sufficient for the universe's creation.

Yet Dr. Hawking was taken to task, surprisingly and maybe perhaps by Divine providence, taken to task **not** by a theologian, but by a philosophy professor of all things. He pointed out that Hawking's conclusion about the laws of physics just begged the question, “Well now then, how did the laws of *physics* **get** going?”

While not wanting to pick-on Dr. Hawking who despite a terrible physical handicap contributed so much to the study of quantum mechanics in the realm of physics, Christians ought to ponder his, and others' conclusions. We might remembe that God is “unnecessary” or “dead”, as *Life* magazine infamously stated in the mid-1960s. In so pondering we should keep in mind Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians from today, the “Queen of Epistles”.

We need always to remember that St. Paul, no intellectual slouch he either, wrote about nonbelievers walking in the "vanity of their minds". He pointed out that a person's mind can be darkened through ignorance of God. And of course if one is ignorant of God, then one neither will believe that God exists nor that He *does* miraculous actions which defy the **known** laws of the universe. Miracles can be mighty and unique such as the Red Sea or Creation itself, or as *everyday* as another beautiful sunrise, a field after a rain shower, to mighty crops growing from tiny seeds.

In fact, as we here today each probably sense, ignorance of God is a major problem in Western society today. St. Thomas Aquinas explained Satan's fall as due to his wanting to be his own god. If one is ones own god, then one does not need another god and one can be ignorant of Him.

The result of such ignorance is a moving away from others. It is a hardening or, quite literally from the Greek, the **petrifying** of ones heart, which makes a person ever more and more comfortable with sinful activities. Any individual (or society) can quickly slide further and further into wickedness as one moves past caring or “feeling” for others because of internalizing the belief that: "Hey, **I** am the monarch of my own life; **I** am most important".

The truth is that we **need** the Holy Spirit “to direct and rule our hearts”, as we asked in our opening collect. So, in our faith that Jesus understands our human condition very well and stands ready and quite capable to help even those who themselves may lack faith, let ***us*** pray**:**

"O heavenly Father, who hast filled the world with beauty; Open, we beseech thee, the eyes of all to behold thy mighty hand in all thy works; that mankind may grow to know thee, and learn to serve thee, with *gladness* and singleness of heart, for the sake of him by whom all things were **made**, thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen". +