Tr.24(2023)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

When most or all of us were young we were taught in school about the First Thanksgiving. Our Thanksgiving Day celebrations, while modeled on the first Thanks-giving in November of 1621 by the surviving 53 pilgrims off the Mayflower, is actually not so much a day not of **commemoration** as a day of praise and thanksgiving. WE ourselves primarily are thanking the Almighty for all the Blessings which he has brought **our** way and our nation's way in the last twelve months.

We as a people have been setting aside a special day just for this purpose since 1863, although earlier Thanksgiving days had been proclaimed for various causes by federal and state officials from the days of Washington onward.

Yet, it was President Lincoln who, during the Civil War, tried to bring together disparate parts of the fractured American society on that Fourth Thursday of November in that very dangerous year. With the exception of a few years during the Great Depression when Thanksgiving was moved up a week to try to help the economy by extending the Christmas shopping season, the day has been on the fourth, not necessarily last, Thursday in November.

During Reconstruction in the 1870s, secular aspects of *modern* Thanksgivings began to creep in to the prayer and feasting. In 1876 Yale... took on Princeton in football, and we all know where that has led. The idea of having civic parades began in the next decade... with the modern parade era being born in 1920 when a certain department store in Manhattan held a parade of just **50 people** with Santa as the caboose. Yes, you guessed it, it was... the now defunct, **Gimbels**.

Since our family festivities are modeled upon that first Thanksgiving three and a half centuries ago we might ask, what happened back then? Obviously, there was neither football nor parades to start.

Rather, the governor of the colony, William Bradford, after a restorative summer of warmth and plenty and a strong autumn harvest (due in large measure to native American know-how) proclaimed a festival of Thanksgiving to our Lord by the pilgrims who had lived through that first dreadful year. Indeed half of them had not survived from Holland to the coast of Massachusetts. Depending upon how you group them, there were 23-25 family units, not surprisingly mostly of single individuals.

Not long after, dare I say “kick-off”, ninety Wam-pah-nog braves with their king Mayh-SOO-oyt showed up out of the blue bearing venison. Probably not surprisingly, that first Thanksgiving was very much a male dominated occasion with only 5 adolescent pilgrim maidens, six young girls, and four married women still alive.

The twelve dozen or more souls spent the next three days in celebration growing in friendship and respect enjoying races, shooting muskets, and dining on duck, goose, eel, cod, shellfish, stews, TURKEYS, and yes, someone had managed to find some liquor and to brew some beer.

These early pilgrims, as well as the local natives, had very much for which to be thankful: from survival to a healthy harvest, to friendship. While the Wampanoag Indians most likely thanked their great spirit, **The**  Pilgrims did NOT forget to thank the Almighty of the *Bible* for His great grace and many great blessings. .

*"Come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live".* +

As Trinity season ends we should reflect on this longest of Church seasons. Trinity-tide is centered not on expectation as with Advent, or Joy as with Christmas and Easter, or penitence as with Lent. Rather, Trinity season, or as the non-English Church traditionally has called it "Pentecost", has been a season to focus on growth of our **spirit**: growing spiritually.

For this reason many of the **collects** focus on purifying, strengthening, and absolving while the lessons focus upon miracles, turning from sin, and above all growing in "good works". Thus, our collect today has us asking for absolution--the pronouncement of forgiveness-- from sins, while our Epistle focuses upon the importance of fervent prayer.

St Paul's exhortation in our Epistle is unique in that it was written to a congregation which he never visited. In fact, it was written to a fairly small town in Phrygia in north central Turkey. One which **once** had been very important, but no longer was.

Very little is left of the city today. Colossae was next to the Galatia area where St. Paul DID, as we know, spend time. So news and teachings of Paul easily could have traveled by foot.

Today's Gospel recounts two miraculous healings, one of this ruler's child and the other of the woman who merely touched Jesus' garment. This passage presents them in contrast with each other. But both are instructive about seeking the Lord's help with a problem.

The same story is recounted also in Luke and Mark. From them we learn that the ruler's name here was Jairus [JY-rus]and that he was the head of the local synagogue. His position as such was not so much a teaching post as that of supervision of worship. He would have made sure that worship, or mourning, was done in the RIGHT way. As such he normally would not have been friendly towards Jesus, but probably was simply desperate for any possible cure.

The fact that the ruler approached Jesus does show some **hope** that Jesus could help, a kernel of faith. The manner of his approach, not surprisingly, was direct and precise. He requested that Jesus come to his house and do something in particular, namely, lay his hand upon her.

He obviously did not want Jesus to get sidetracked. He did not want HIS request to “get lost in the shuffle” of other peoples' business. And he **certainly** was not going to trust in any sort of “long distance” healing, unlike a certain nobleman we heard about a few weeks back. No, Jesus needed to come personally and, of course, he would be WATCHED.

In contrast to this ruler's seed of faith we have the mourners at his house. They mocked Jesus for even thinking that he could cure the ruler's daughter. Now, given that mourners usually were **hired** for such occasions, they might have been motivated largely over fear of losing their fee. They simply displayed no faith in Jesus at all, at least until afterwards. Then we heard that Jesus' fame then went “abroad into all that land”. We might say they were typical of the “seeing is believing” crowd that we run into today.

The major contrast, however, is of course with the woman. Her affliction of continual bleeding not only made her ritually impure but also any person who came in any contact with her at all including acquaintances and even her husband, if she had one.

Politely, she should not even have been in the crowd because she risked contaminating every single person there. She would have been a social pariah almost like a leper. Her condition was humiliating to put it mildly. The *Talmud* provided eleven different “cures” for her to try.

We know that her affliction also had lasted a very long time—**12** years, the same age as the ruler's daughter, which presents some sermons in itself. This woman also was desperate.

Her approach to Jesus, however, was much different than the ruler's. She came in humility: she came towards Jesus from behind, not the front; at some point she went to her knees. We know this since she touched the hem, or bottom, of Jesus' garment.

She came in very deep faith. This woman came to Jesus already BELIEVING he would help. She did not need Jesus to touch her; she believed she needed just to touch **him**.

We thus have then a unique miracle here. Unlike Jesus' other healings in the Gospels, this occurred without him first being made conscious of the person's need. In all his other healings, Jesus' attention first is drawn to the sick, either by the person himself in crying out, or by another person on his behalf (with the ruler here), or simply by Jesus himself spotting the person.

While very deep, we should note that the woman's belief was not totally perfect. She did still think that it was necessary to have some actual, physical contact with Jesus to get what she needed, that is, to be cured, almost like superstition.

We might remember in comparison the Roman centurion whom upon asking Jesus to cure his not-in-sight servant told Jesus “only say the word and my servant will be healed”. Yet, Jesus did not criticize her for her imperfect faith, but **complimented** her on the depth of it. She had displayed “the right attitude”, and was rewarded not just with a cure, but with a compliment from the Son of God.

Now from a practical standpoint we might ask, “what's the difference? They both got what they wanted and **needed**?!” Yet there can be a world of difference between merely getting a miraculous cure and getting the same cure along with a **compliment** from the son of God. To say that there is no difference so long as one gets what he **needs** is akin to being really hungry and being served Spam on a cruise ship.

Our own reactions to requests for help are largely based upon how we are moved by the situation by, say, the attitude of the person seeking aid. Someone who approaches us in a manner suggesting that he presumes we should help is less likely to get more than the minimal aid we think we can get away with. Someone else who seems almost ashamed to ask for our aid is much more likely to get the “royal” treatment from us, as we ourselves reflect on how “this could be me or my child in need”.

A familiar example within any family can be a child who is having trouble with math. He might scream, “mom you gotta help me with this stupid math!”, or he can come teary eyed and say “mom, would you *please* help me with math again?!” Either way he will get help, assuming the parent is at all caring, but the manner of assistance could easily vary. In the first scenario a parent might help just enough to get the child to calm down, but in the latter one might go into greater detail, take more time, and, possibly, when it is all over even compliment the child, with a cookie.

It is important to remember that Jesus helped this woman, despite her not personally addressing him, not standing in front of him, nor even being in his sight. Neither had anyone even brought her matter to his attention, like the ruler today had done for his own daughter, or the nobleman of weeks back, or even the Roman centurion. Rather, her quiet, humble petition was met even in the middle of a crowd while Jesus' back was turned to “other business”! We should also note that her quiet pleading to herself was fulfilled before the ruler's precision “request” was.

Thus, we should take to heart several things. First, we should never wait to pray until we feel we have perfect faith; we never will then to the joy of the devil. Secondly, we should never question whether our prayers, our needs, will be lost in the shuffle if we do not bring them front and center to God, with specificity and clarity, or in a specific form . We do not need to get God's attention before we “ASK” for help.

Indeed, as we see here, we may obtain the desired help from God without even saying the actual word “please”! (Although to avoid being akin to the nine non-thanking lepers, we ought to say “thank you” upon realizing our prayer has been answered.) No, our DESIRE to be helped and our FAITH that we Can Be helped by God is what really counts.

This should be a source of great comfort. Putting our needs before God is not like a project for work or school. Humble prayers, unspoken petitions, will be heard just as readily as a, direct, specific request, PERHAPS SWIFTER, if we approach the Lord in the right way, with simply the right “**attitude**”. Humility in prayer may gain us more than we had dared to hope for, as with this woman who was complimented by God himself?! Amen.” +