

those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” (Rom. 8:28)

Archangel Gabriel to the Theotokos: “For nothing will be impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)

St. Paul to the Phillipians: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6)

St. Peter: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:3-9)

Jesus Himself: “. . . do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. . . . ‘Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?’ ” (Matt. 6:25-26)

The paralytic was in a hopeless situation. Jesus loved him, found him in the midst of all the others and healed him. **There is no situation that is hopeless when Jesus is present.**

He is present right now. He is standing with us! He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. In the Divine Liturgy we receive His very body and blood into our bodies. Can there be any hopeless situation?

Conclusion

In the Anaphora prayers of St. Basil’s Divine Liturgy, the priest prays these words: “For Thou, O Lord, art the Helper of the helpless, the Hope of the Hopeless, the Savior of the storm-tossed, the Haven of the voyager, the Physician of the sick.”

Whatever bed of hopelessness you are on, you need to know that God is with you and He loves you! Jesus is standing next to you, and **there is no situation that is hopeless**, for He is our God and our Hope. Hear His words to all of us, just as He spoke them to the paralytic: “Take up your bed and walk!” Amen!



The Hope of the Hopeless

“God specializes in making hopeless situations disappear—of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat—of making the impossible, possible—yes, even of making evil, good.”

Homily given at All Saints Orthodox Church
on the 4th Sunday of Pascha, 2009
by Fr. Nicholas Sorensen

†Gospel: John 5:1–15 (RSV)

At that time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethesda, which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and troubled the water; whoever stepped in first, after the troubling of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. One man was there, who had been ill for 38 years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk?'" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befalls you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus Who had healed him.

Introduction:

Our Gospel lesson this morning has something very important to say about the condition of hopelessness. Today millions of people are faced with so many difficult and apparently hopeless situations: the economy, health, government, jobs, marriages, and children. All can lead to a condition of hopelessness and despair. People in these situations don't know what to do. They feel powerless and impotent. They are literally at the end of their rope. Even their own safety nets, if they were fortunate enough to have them, have broken. There seems to be either very little hope or no hope!" Hopelessness is very much a part of our world today.

No Situation Is Hopeless

If anyone was ever in a hopeless situation it was the paralytic in our text. He had been paralyzed for 38 years, hoping against hope to get into the pool of Bethesda before anyone else and be healed. The possibility that he might be able to do that was almost zero. Anyone looking at him for those 38 years would have considered him a totally hopeless case.

In the OT, our God specialized in hopeless situations. From the story of Noah building a boat on dry land to God's directions to Abraham to begin a journey without knowing the destination; from the adoption and

salvation of a small, insignificant, stubborn, and rebellious people called Hebrews, to the saving of the 3 Holy children in the fiery furnace—God specializes in making hopeless situations disappear—of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat—of making the impossible, possible—yes, even of making evil, good.

In the NT, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ by becoming man and living among us dispelled the deception of hopelessness forever. He came to save all mankind, even the most hopeless. In our text, He went immediately to the most hopeless of those around the pool of Bethesda—the paralytic—and healed him.

He did the same thing with the death of Lazarus. He waited 4 days after Lazarus' death to make sure that all would consider this a hopeless situation—a situation to which Jesus brought hope to the hopeless and help to the helpless by raising Lazarus from the dead.

Christ's suffering and death on the cross was the most hopeless of all (if even God can be tortured and killed is there any hope for us?) and yet three days later, He rose from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

If Jesus can raise the dead Lazarus, heal the man paralyzed for 38 years, and conquer death by His own death, is there anything that He cannot do? Is there any situation that is hopeless if He is with us?

Jesus Is with Us

And that is exactly the wonderful truth that we all desperately need to hear and believe today. **God is with us! Jesus is standing in our midst! And He loves us—the good, the bad, and the ugly—His friends and His enemies.** "For God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have ever lasting life."

The words of Holy Scripture speak more eloquently and powerfully than anything that I could say or write. Hear God's Word of Truth and Comfort for all people but especially for the hopeless:

St. Paul to the Corinthians: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. (1 Cor. 10:13)

St. Paul to the Romans: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31)

Again St. Paul: "Know that God causes all things to work together for good to