

## “Christ’s Earthly Ministry Continues to This Day”

### Homily on the Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

Hebrews 1:10-2:3 ; Mark 2:1-12

Fr. Anthony

**Retell Story:** Christ was going about His earthly ministry. Preaching in synagogues, in the crowds, and in the houses. Going out amidst the people and healing them. Teaching everyone about God’s plan of salvation for them. A great crowd came to see Him on this day. As He preached, the friends of a sick man did whatever it took to get him to Christ. Christ healed both his soul and body.

Can you imagine the glory of having Christ, the God who made us,

- Coming into the houses and synagogues teaching. Is there a better teacher? Knows His subject perfectly. Knows us and our needs intimately. Desires that we come to the knowledge of the truth.
- Moving in the midst of the sick. Is there a better doctor? He is the one who gave us flesh. The one who breathed the spirit into our bodies. The one who desires our health. He is the Great Physician, and he was available to heal the sick.
- [A Note: Teaching ministry was paramount (snippet of a sermon in St. Luke 4: 16-21): in this story we see that the miracles were not just to alleviate pain and suffering, but to teach people about Salvation through Him. He healed the man to show the Jewish leaders that he had authority to forgive sins. He could not heal everyone’s body, but He could teach everyone how to become whole for eternity. Which is greater? Matthew 10: 28 – Christ tells us to fear the things that kill the soul (not the body)]
- But Christ was there, doing both. Not just for the privileged, but for everyone.

For those who appreciate the wisdom and power of Christ, can lead to a sense of jealousy or loss: “if only I had been alive during that time.”

- The Misfit in Flannery O’Connor’s story “A Good Man is Hard to Find” expresses this very same sentiment. He blames his nihilism on the fact that he did not live in those times because if “he had then he’s a known” and been able to live a better life (paraphrase from story).
- This is the way the world tends to act: “it is a wonderful story, and if Christ were here then I could believe it” but as He is not, then I cannot be sure... so I’ll just live my life as best I can. Hedging bets. Like the Church at Laodicea (Revelations 3: 14-22), we are neither hot or cold. “If I knew, then I would bring those I love to be healed (as did the men in the Gospel reading today), but I don’t, so...”

This is foolishness. Two reasons:

- Even in Christ’s time, there were those who rejected Him.
  - We know of the Jews that could not accept His claims.
  - But also many of his own disciples (St. John 6, and the obvious example of Judas).
- People continue to reject Him.
  - They reject the facts of His life and resurrection. Every manner of heresy and heard-heartedness.
  - They reject the fact of His ongoing Incarnation in the Holy Orthodox Church.
    - They reject His saving Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist.
    - They reject His healing absolution in the Mystery of Confession.
    - They reject the Truth of physical manifestation and continuation of His Body Body (the Church) through Ordination and Apostolic Succession.
    - They reject His Incarnation by rejecting veneration of His Holy Icons.
  - It is as the priest’s advice before confession warns “lest you visit the Physician and leave unhealed”.

The world is mired in sin. In disease. In sickness. There is only one real cure, one real doctor of our souls and bodies. And He is here, among us. “Christ is in our midst”. Offering Himself so that we might be made whole. The man with palsy was smart enough to know an opportunity for healing when he saw it. His friends loved him enough to overcome any obstacle to get Him to Christ. Me we, and all the world, be granted such discernment.