

Saint_Thomas_on_the_Gospel_for_the_16th_Sunday_after_Pentecost.

And it came to pass, when Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees, on the sabbath day, to eat bread, that they watched him. And behold, there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy. And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? But they held their peace. But he taking him, healed him, and sent him away. And answering them, he said: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out, on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him to these things. And he spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them: When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honourable than thou be invited by him: And he that invited thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place: and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place; that when he who invited thee, cometh, he may say to thee: Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee. Because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

CYRIL; Although our Lord knew the malice of the Pharisees, yet He became their guest, that He might benefit by His words and miracles those who were present. Whence it follows, And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him; to see whether He would despise the observance of the law, or do any thing that was forbidden on the sabbath day. When then the man with the dropsy came into the midst of them, He rebukes by a question the insolence of the Pharisees, who wished to detect Him; as it is said, And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering, &c.

BEDE; When it is said that Jesus answered, there is a reference to the words which went before, And they watched him. For the Lord knew the thoughts of men.

THEOPHYL. But by His question He exposes their folly. For while God blessed the sabbath, they forbade to do good on the sabbath; but the day which does not admit the works of the good is accursed.

BEDE; But they, who were asked, are rightly silent, for they perceived that whatever they said, would be against themselves. For if it is lawful to heal on the sabbath day, why did they watch the Savior whether He would heal? If it is not lawful, why do they take care of their cattle on the sabbath? Hence it follows, But they held their peace.

CYRIL; Disregarding then the snares of the Jews, He cures the dropsical, who from fear of the Pharisees did not ask to be healed on account of the sabbath, but only stood up, that when Jesus beheld him, He might have compassion on him and heal him. And the Lord knowing this, asked not whether he wished to be made whole, but forthwith healed him. Whence it follows; And he took him, and healed him, and let him go. Wherein our Lord took no thought not to offend the Pharisees, but only that He might benefit him who needed healing. For it becomes us, when a great good is the result, not to care if fools take offense.

CYRIL; But seeing the Pharisees awkwardly silent, Christ baffles their determined impudence by some important considerations. As it follows; And he answered and said to them, Which of

you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

THEOPHYL. As though He said, If the law forbids to have mercy on the sabbath-day, have no care of your son when in danger on the sabbath-day. But why speak I of a son, when you do not even neglect an ox if you see it in danger?

BEDE; By these words He so refutes His watchers, the Pharisees, as to condemn them also of covetousness, who in the deliverance of animals consult their own desire of wealth. How much more then ought Christ to deliver a man, who is much better than cattle!

AUG. Now He has aptly compared the dropsical man to an animal which has fallen into a ditch, (for he is troubled by water,) as He compared that woman, whom He spoke of as bound, and whom He Himself loosed, to a beast which is let loose to be led to water.

BEDE; By a suitable example then He settles the question, showing that they violate the sabbath by a work of covetousness, who contend that he does so by, a work of charity. Hence it follows, And they could not answer him again to these things. Mystically, the dropsical man is compared to him who is weighed down by an overflowing stream of carnal pleasures. For the disease of dropsy derives the name of a watery humor.

AUG. Or we rightly compare the dropsical man to a covetous rich man. For as the former, the more he increases in unnatural moisture the greater his thirst; so also the other, the more abundant his riches, which he does not employ well, the more ardently he desires them.

GREG; Rightly then is the dropsical man healed in the Pharisees' presence, for by the bodily infirmity of the one, is expressed the mental disease of the other.

BEDE; In this example also He well refers to the ox and the ass; so as to represent either the wise and the foolish, or both nations; that is, the Jew oppressed by the burden of the law, the Gentile not subject to reason. For the Lord rescues from the pit of concupiscence all who are sunk therein.

AMBROSE; First the dropsical man is cured, in whom the abundant discharges of the flesh crushed down the powers of the soul quenched the ardor of the Spirit. Next, humility is taught, when at the nuptial feast the desire of the highest place is forbidden. As it is said, And he spoke, Sit not down in the highest room.

CYRIL; For to rush forward hastily to honors which are not fitting for us, indicates rashness. and casts a slur upon our actions. Hence it follows, lest a more honorable man than you be invited, &c.

CHRYS. And so the seeker of honor obtained not that which he coveted, but suffered a defeat, and busying himself how he might be loaded with honors, is treated with dishonor. And because nothing is of so much worth as modesty, He leads His hearer to the opposite of this; not only for him to seek the highest place, but bidding him search for the lowest. As it follows; But when you are bidden go and sit down in the lowest room.

CYRIL; For if a man wishes not to be set before others, he obtains this honor according to the divine word. As it follows; That when he that bade you comes, he may say to you, Friend, go up higher. In these words He does not harshly chide, but gently admonishes; for a word of advice is enough for the wise. And thus for their humility men are crowned with honors; as it follows, Then shall you have worship.

BASIL; To take then the lowest place at a feast, according to our Lord's command, is becoming to every man, but again to rush contentiously after this is to be condemned as a breach of order and cause of tumult; and a strife raised about it, will place you on a level with those who dispute concerning the highest place. Wherefore, as our Lord here says, it becomes him who makes the feast to arrange the order of sitting down. Thus in patience and love should we mutually bear ourselves, following all things decently according to order, not for external appearance or public display; nor should we seem to study or affect humility by violent contradiction, but rather gain it by condescension or by patience. For resistance or opposition is a far stronger token of pride than taking the first seat at meat, when we obtain it by authority.

THEOPHYL. Now let no one deem the above precepts of Christ to be trifling, and unworthy of the sublimity and grandeur of the Word of God. For you would not call him a merciful physician who professed to heal the gout, but refused to cure a scar on the finger or a tooth-ache. Besides, how can that passion of vainglory appear slight, which moved or agitated those who sought the first seats? It became then the Master of humility to cut off every branch of the bad root. But observe this also, that when the supper was ready, and the wretched guests were contending for precedency before the eyes of the Savior, there was a fit occasion for advice.

CYRIL; Having shown therefore from so slight an example the degradation of the ambitious and the exaltation of the humble-minded, He adds a great thing to a little, pronouncing a general sentence, as it follows, For every one who exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. This is spoken according to the divine judgment, not after human experience, in which they who desire after glory obtain it, while others who humble themselves remain inglorious.

THEOPHYL. Moreover, he is not to be respected in the end, nor by all men, who thrusts himself into honors; but while by some he is honored, by others he is disparaged, and sometimes even by the very men who outwardly honor him.

BEDE; But as the Evangelist calls this admonition a parable, we must briefly examine what is its mystical meaning. Whosoever being bidden has come to the marriage feast of Christ's Church, being united to the members of the Church by faith, let him not exalt himself as higher than others by boasting of his merits. For he will have to give place to one more honorable who is bidden afterwards, seeing that he is overtaken by the activity of those who followed him, and with shame he occupies the lowest place, now that knowing better things of the others he brings low whatever high thoughts he once had of his own works. But a man sits in the lowest place according to that verse, The greater you are, humble yourself in all things. But the Lord when He comes, whomsoever He shall find humble, blessing him with the name of friend, He will command him to go up higher. For whoever humbles himself as a little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. But it is well said, Then shall you have glory, that you may not begin to seek now what is kept for you in the end. It may also be understood, even in this life, for daily does God come to His marriage feast, despising the proud; and often giving to the humble such great gifts of His Spirit, that the assembly of those who sit at meat, i.e. the faithful, glorify them in wonder. But in the general conclusion which is added, it is plainly declared that the preceding discourse of our Lord must be understood typically. For not every one who exalts himself before men is abased; nor is he who humbles himself in their sight, exalted by them.

But whoever exalts himself because of his merits, the Lord shall bring low, and him who humbles himself on account of his mercies, shall He exalt.

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