

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. It may seem like it. It may seem like the sinfulness of the world, the fallenness of all that we see and hear and touch, it may seem like our war is with men. The Christian is scandalized when he hears talk of the killing of the unborn. In the Old Testament the most cruel and horrible violence was to rend the womb and put the child to death. And yet today many promote the exact same violence.

The one who believes in God, the God that made them male and female, is ashamed that among us male and female are now confused. It is a rejection of the very created order. It is a sinful disorder, a perversion of what God made. So too the derision and hatred, the mockery of and disdain for the Christian that is at work all around us – in our government, in our schools, in our society. It certainly does seem to be a war waged by men, and yet it is clear that no man is worthy of our hope. It can seem hopeless.

But the Apostle helps us to understand that men are just the foot-soldiers in the battle. We wrestle not against men, not against flesh and blood. We wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness. Dark and powerful forces war against us. Men are just pawns in the battle.

And against such, against principalities and powers and spiritual hosts of wickedness, we do not have a chance. Our weakness is our flesh. Our weakness is the sin we have inherited. Our weakness is the sin that each of us has committed. The enemy has his hooks in our flesh. It is a war, a war for hearts and souls, a war for minds, a war for the eternal lives of men. And we are outmatched. According to our flesh the war is already won, and we are the spoils of the enemy.

Indeed we cannot even truly conceive of the spiritual realms that St. Paul describes. We are fleshly people. Seeing and touching are proof. The unseen for fallen men is a source of doubt. And so it made sense to the nobleman that Jesus would have to be physically present to heal his son. He would have to leave Cana and travel to Capernaum to be of any help.

Any good doctor would have to. He would have to see the boy, diagnose the illness, and prescribe a cure, if it were possible. Or he might have to tell the nobleman that there was no hope. Even a charlatan or a so called “faith healer” would need to be in the presence of the son to do what they could do.

So the nobleman, wracked with concern for his dying son, begs the Lord “Sir, come down before my child dies!” And any of us would do the same. Many of us have done the same – prayed fervently that God would heal one that we love, spare them from death. For that, death, is the just consequence of sin. And death touches every sinner.

“Sir, come down before my child dies!” What he did not know is that the Lord to whom he prayed had already come down. He came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and was made Man. He had already brought heaven to earth. He had already brought life to the dying. He had already brought forgiveness for the sinner. He came to redeem fallen men body and soul. The Man the nobleman begs for healing is God. And with God, there is always hope.

He speaks and it is. He commands wind and waves. He commands stars and sun and moon. By His Word were all things made, simply by His speaking, simply by His command “Let there be...” It is He that fills heaven and earth, He of whom David confesses “If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.” He is the omnipresent God, the God of heaven and earth. There is not where He is not. And with Him nothing is impossible. With Him there is always hope.

So with a Word, he declares the boy alive. His Word is life. At His speaking it was done. With a Word he heals the boy from afar. St. John recounts that the nobleman believed the Word. The Promise worked faith. He turned and went his way to see his healed son. He believed. And his hope was fulfilled in the testimony of his servants. “Your son lives.”

The Lord that gave life to the nobleman’s son came down from heaven. He suffered what He spared the nobleman’s son from suffering. He died. And yet He lives. He is stronger than death. He is stronger than sin, stronger than the devil. In Christ you are no longer outmatched. You have a Champion. Your God, your Lord, is Lord of Life. He is Lord of love. To you according to your new man the war is already won. The victory is yours in Christ. By proclamation you too live. Your sins are forgiven. You too are healed.

You are healed with a Word, a Word attached to an outward sign. The water does for you what the nobleman’s servants did for him – it confirms that in the Word of Christ there is healing and life. It is an outward sign of a spiritual Mystery, a concrete substance comprehended with God’s command. With that saving Word God is present. By proclamation you are healed as your sins are forgiven, as you receive new life. By declaration you live, and you are made the temple of the living God.

So you believe in that which you cannot see. As the Apostle writes: Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. We are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of our souls. Like the nobleman, at Christ’s Word of healing and life, you believe, and you go forth to live out your life trusting in His Promise. In Christ, you are more than pawns in the battle. You are God’s sons. And God’s sons live.

Today the Lord speaks from afar, from 2000 years ago, and still His Words work what they promise. By the Mystery of His Sacramental presence, He who is enthroned in heaven places His Body with bread, here, on this altar. He makes wine His Blood. By His Word in faith you eat and drink Christ, the same Christ that healed the nobleman’s son. You eat and drink, you hear and believe, and you are healed.

The God of Life vests you in the panoply of His Divine protection. He vests you as He vested David, who lay down Saul’s armor and took up the armor of God to defeat the giant foe. And while you must fight against the temptations and disappointments of the fallen world, the war is already won for you by Christ. You have the victory. The healing is yours. He has declared you righteous. Eternal life is yours.

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