

In this morning's gospel we hear about Jesus healing a blind man. The Lord performed this wayside miracle of the blind man so that even His passage along the road would yield a profitable teaching for His disciples and for us: that we should in all things, at all times, and in every place do what is beneficial and never be idle. The blind man believed that Jesus was the awaited Messiah. Being a Jew, it is certain that he knew that the Christ would be of the seed of David. Therefore, he cries out with a great voice, "Son of David, have mercy on me." Calling Jesus, the "Son of David" indicated that he believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

In those days asking someone to have mercy was just standard way of asking for alms. The blind man approached Jesus and said "Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me!" And the people surrounding Jesus tried to hush the man. Why would they do this? Was it because they just assumed that the man was asking for alms? They would've known that he was blind. Perhaps he was wanting his sight back. Jesus had healed many people. In fact, he had healed other blind man.

Jesus, knowing that the man was blind, knew that the man wanted Him to heal him of his blindness. So why didn't Jesus just heal him? He didn't want to be appear presumptuous. He did not want to appear to those who were present that he gave the blind man something different from what the man wanted. If the man was only looking for alms, then for Jesus to have healed him would have been a vainglorious showing of power. Jesus would've been showing off his ability to perform miracles when all the man was asking for was alms.

Therefore, Jesus summoned him asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight. The man believed with faith that Jesus was the Son of David, which is another name for the Messiah. He had such faith that when those around him tried to silence him, he cried out even louder.

We learn from the blind man that when we ask God with faith God will hear our prayer and won't give us something other than what we ask for, unless what we are asking for is not for our benefit.

What was the blind man's response to his being healed? He followed Jesus, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. When we

are given answers to our prayers, do we give glory to God? Do we do even more to change our lives and become an even more devoted follower of Christ? Let us commit to giving glory to God in all things.

I want to read a short sermon by St. Theophan the Recluse concerning prayer.

“Why is it, you ask, that one can pray for so many years with a prayer book, and still not have prayer in his heart? I think the reason is that people only spend a little time lifting themselves up to God when they complete their prayer rule, and in other times, they do not remember God.

For example, they finish their morning prayers, and think that their relation to God is fulfilled by them; then the whole day passes in work, and such a person does not attend to God. Then in the evening, the thought returns to him that he must quickly stand at prayer and complete his evening rule.

In this case, it happens that even if the Lord grants a person spiritual feelings at the time of the morning prayer, the bustle and business of the day drowns them out.

As a result, it happens that one does not often feel like praying and cannot get control of himself even to soften his heart a little bit. In such an atmosphere, prayer develops and ripens poorly.

This problem (is it not ubiquitous?) needs to be corrected, that is, one must ensure that the soul does not only make petition to God when standing in prayer, but during the whole day, as much as possible, one must unceasingly ascend to Him and remain with Him.

In order to begin this task, one must first, during the course of the day, cry out to God more often, even if only with a few words, according to need and the work of the day. Beginning anything, for example, say ‘Bless, O Lord!’ When you finish something, say, ‘Glory to Thee, O Lord’, and not only with your lips, but with feeling in your heart.

If passions arise, say, ‘Save me, O Lord, I am perishing.’

If the darkness of disturbing thoughts comes up, cry out: 'Lead my soul out of prison.'

If dishonest deeds present themselves and sin leads you to them, pray, 'Set me, O Lord, in the way', or 'do not give up my feet to stumbling.'

If sin takes hold of you and leads you to despair, cry out with the voice of the publican, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Do this in every circumstance, or simply say often, 'Lord, have mercy', 'Most Holy Theotokos save us', 'Holy Angel, my guardian, protect me', or other such words.

Say such prayers as often as possible, always making the effort for them come from your heart, as if squeezed out of it. When we do this, we will frequently ascend to God in our hearts, making frequent petitions and prayers. Such increased frequency will bring about the habit of mental conversation with God."

Let us hear what St. Theophan has said about prayer and learn to pray from our heart and continually.