

Week 5 of Lent / the Great Lent

1. Gathering & Prayer

- Take a few moments to recall the previous session. What particularly touched you? What new insight about the human struggle, or divine grace, did you receive? Share as you wish.

- Opening Prayer, giving thanks for the insights and asking that our hearts may remain open to returning more fully to God.

2. Coptic Orthodox Gospel

Theme: The Paralytic Man

Gospel: John 5:1-18

Reflection:

Christ heals the sick soul who seems to be hopeless finding no one to help him. Jesus warns against return to sin again (v14).

- Was the Paralytic man without help?
- Why would Jesus ask the Paralytic Man if he wanted to be healed?
- What impact would Jesus' healing have on this man's life?
 - Think of the positive aspects that would ensue.
 - Think of the challenges that would ensue.
- Do you want to be made well?



Reflections on the Coptic Orthodox Gospel from a Protestant perspective

Do you want to be made well? (John 5:6b)

What a strange question to ask one who had been ill for thirty eight years, unable to move or care for himself. Or is it?

We all know people who experience poor health, or perhaps even enjoy poor health. It provides a topic of conversation. It provides a focus for life – poor me! It provides an excuse for languishing in a dependency mode of life. It provides an excuse for abrogation of responsibility. Or is this unjustly critical of people who do experience poor health?

Why then did Jesus ask this question of the man, “Do you want to be made well?”

As a person unable to care for himself, this man could depend on others to meet his essential needs. In fact, when Jesus challenged him with this question, he avoided answering and merely responded in a way that emphasized his pitiful plight and his dependence on others. To be made well would lead to a whole new life of work and responsibility for himself and his life. Was this the reason for Jesus’ question?

Then Jesus intervened in a way that encouraged him, maybe commanded him to act and be healed. Jesus had provided the means for healing, but that means required a response from the man. The healing resulted from a combination of grace and cooperation, not grace and coercion. This was not quite the end of the matter as in verse 14 we see Jesus again speaking with the man, commanding him to sin no more, a continuation of his response to the grace provided.

How committed are we to being healed by Jesus and continuing in that new healthy state? Clearly God is available and desirous of our healing. It is in his very grace filled nature, but we have a choice about responding to his healing grace, initially and continually.

3. Closing Prayer

In silence, choose one feature from the time together and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something that God thinks is particularly important.

This may involve a feeling—encouraging or discouraging. It may be a word or gesture that has significance for you. Or it may be something that is emerging that seemed at the time rather insignificant.

Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether of intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

Some people may choose to share a word, or an insight, or a prayer: others may prefer to remain silent.

Say Together

God of new life, through the waters of Baptism each and every one of us is called to be a minister of the Church. Renew our call so that with passion, new vision and zeal we may together journey towards growth as your Church. May we your faithful people be:— brave enough to proclaim the Good News, enthused enough to share our story, loving enough to only see the good in others, and kind enough that our actions reflect the light and hope of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In all we are and in all we do, let us give glory to the Father, Son and Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

You may wish to offer one other a sign of peace as this time draws to a close.