

## **The Sermon on the Mount, Cure of a Paralytic**

Jesus rowed with several of the disciples over the lake and landed one hour to the north of Matthew's. Already many pagans, as well as those whom Jesus had cured and the newly baptized, had repaired to the mountain east of Bethsaida-Julias where Jesus was to teach. All around stood the camps of the pagans. The disciples who had been fishing on the night of the miraculous draught asked Jesus whether they too should go with Him, for their recent success had freed them from anxiety upon the score of provisions, and they felt that all was in His hands.



Jesus replied that they should baptize those that were still in Capharnaum, and after that employ their time at their accustomed occupations, as the immense number of strangers then in and around the city rendered extra supplies necessary.

Before crossing the lake, Jesus delivered to His disciples a comprehensive instruction. In it He gave them an idea of the whole plan of the discourses upon which He intended to dwell for a long time. He told them that they (the disciples) were the salt of the earth destined to vivify and preserve others, consequently that they themselves must not lose their savor. Jesus explained all this to them at full length, making use of numerous examples and parables. After that He rowed across the lake.

The disciples (the fishermen) and Saturnin began their work of baptizing in the valley of Capharnaum. The son of the widow of Naim was here baptized and named Martial, Saturnin imposing hands upon him. The holy women did not follow Jesus to the instructions, but remained behind to celebrate with the widow of Naim the baptismal feast of her son.

There were with Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea's nephews, who had come from Jerusalem; Nathanael; Manahem of Korah; and many other disciples. In these last days I saw about thirty of them gathered together in Capharnaum. On landing at the east side of the lake just below the mouth of the Jordan, the traveler ascended the mountain to the east and then, turning westward, went on to the spot upon which the instruction was to be given. Another way

could be taken, namely, that over the Jordan bridge to the north of the lake. But this latter way, on account of the wild character of the country and its numerous ravines, was rather a difficult road to the mountain. Bethsaida-Julias was situated on the eastern bank of the mouth of the Jordan, the river there forming a bend. The western shore was high, and to it ran a road.

There was no teacher's chair on the mountain, only an eminence surrounded by a mound of earth and covered by an awning. The view from the west and southwest extended over the lake and to the opposite mountains. One could even descry Mount Thabor. Crowds of people, most of them pagans that had received Baptism, were encamped around. There were Jews also present.

Separation between them was not so rigorously observed here, since communication between the Jews and Gentiles was greater in these parts, and on this side of the lake the latter enjoyed certain privileges. Jesus began by enumerating the Eight Beatitudes, and then went on to explain the first: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." He related examples and parables, spoke of the Messiah, and especially of the conversion of the Gentiles. Now was accomplished what the Prophet foretold of the Desired of Nations: "And I will move all nations. and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." 2:8). There was no curing on this day, for the sick had been healed on the preceding days. The Pharisees had come over in one of their own boats and they listened to Jesus' words with chagrin and jealousy. The people had brought with them food, which they ate during the pauses of the instruction. Jesus and the disciples had fish, bread, and honey, also little flasks of some kind of juice, or balm, a few drops of which were mixed with the water they drank.

Toward evening the people from Capharnaum, Bethsaida, and other neighboring places returned to their homes in the boats that awaited them on the lake. Jesus and His disciples went down toward the valley of the Jordan and into a shepherd inn, where they passed the night. Jesus still continued to teach the disciples, thus to prepare them for their future mission.

Jesus devoted fourteen days to instructions on the Eight Beatitudes, and spent the intervening Sabbath in Capharnaum. On the following day He continued His preaching on the mountain. Mary, Mary Cleophas, Maroni of Naim, and two other women were present. When Jesus with the Apostles

and disciples went back to the lake, He spoke of their vocation in these words: "Ye are the light of the world!" He illustrated by the similitude of the city seated on a mountain, the light on the candlestick, and the fulfilling of the Law. Then He rowed to Bethsaida, and put up at Andrew's.

Among the neophytes whom Saturnin baptized on those days near Capharnaum were some Jews from Achaia whose ancestors had fled thither at the time of the Babylonian Captivity.

Bethsaida-Julias was a recently built city inhabited mostly by pagans. There were, however, some Jews, and the city possessed a famous school in which all kinds of knowledge were taught. Jesus had not yet visited it, but the inhabitants went out to the instruction and also to Capharnaum, where their sick were cured. Bethsaida-Julias was beautifully situated in the narrow valley of the Jordan, built a little up on the eastern side of the mountain, one-half hour from the point where the river flows into the lake. One hour northward, a stone bridge spanned the Jordan.

While going down from the mountain whereon He had been teaching, Jesus again instructed the disciples, and spoke of the sufferings and sharp persecutions in store for them. He slept that night in Peter's barque. When Jesus next day went down from the mountain to Capharnaum, He found a crowd of people assembled to bid Him welcome. He repaired to Peter's house near the city. It stood outside the gate to the right on entering the city from the valley. When it was known that Jesus and the disciples were in the house, a crowd soon gathered around Him. The Scribes and Pharisees also hastened out to hear Him. The whole court around the open hall in which Jesus sat and taught with the disciples and Scribes was full.

He spoke of the Ten Commandments and, coming to the words recorded in the Gospel of the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill," He based upon them His instruction on the forgiveness of injuries and the love of one's enemies. Just at this moment a loud noise arose on the roof of the hall, and through the usual opening in the ceiling a paralytic on his bed was lowered by four men, who cried out: "Lord, have pity upon a poor sick man!" He was let down by two cords into the midst of the assembly before Jesus. The friends of the sick man had tried in vain to carry him through the crowd into the courtyard, and had at last mounted the outside steps to the roof of the hall, whose trap door they opened. All eyes were fixed upon the invalid, and the Pharisees were vexed

at what appeared to them a great misdemeanor, a piece of unheard-of impertinence. But Jesus, who was pleased at the faith of the poor people, stepped forward and addressed the paralytic, who lay there motionless: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee!" words which were, as usual, particularly distasteful to the Pharisees. They thought within themselves: "That is blasphemy! Who but God can forgive sins?" Jesus saw their thoughts and said: "Wherefore have ye such thoughts of bitterness in your heart? Which is easier to say to the paralytic: Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, I say to thee" (here Jesus turned to the paralytic): "Arise! Take up thy bed, and go into thy house!"

And immediately the man arose cured, rolled up the coverlets of his bed, laid the laths of the frame together, took them under his arm and upon his shoulder, and accompanied by those that had brought him and some other friends went off singing canticles of praise while the whole multitude shouted for joy. The Pharisees, full of rage, slipped away, one by one. It was now the Sabbath, and Jesus, followed by the multitude, repaired to the synagogue.