

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

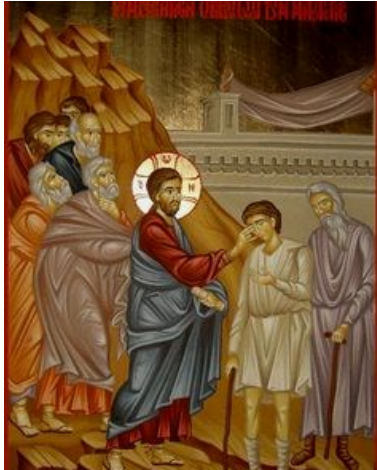
Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!



Volume 11 Issue 499

31st Sunday after Pentecost— Jesus heals Blind Bartimaeus

January 23, 2022



"As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.'" Beggars would often be found at the city gate where people are passing in and out. He is probably used to calling out to those who pass

by, asking for money, begging for alms. Blindness and diseases of the eye were common illness in the ancient world. Those who lost one of their senses would often develop their other sense much more.

But it takes no special insight for the blind man to realize that the number of people on the road crowding into the city is much larger than usual. A pushing, shoving crowd competes to stay up with someone who attracts their attention. The blind man cries out to whoever can hear him, "What is going on?" And one of the bystanders says, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

Once he is told that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, he begins to yell at the top of his lungs: "He called out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

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+ 31st Sunday after Pentecost +
+The chains of the Apostle Peter+

Epistle: 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Gospel: Luke 18: 35-43

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity - Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

We are dedicated to living out Christ's commandment to, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

Time-Our Great Opportunity, by Archimandrite Alexander of Essex

Saint Nicholas Cabasilas says that life in Christ is sowed in this world but will bear fruit in all its fulness in the other.

One reason for which even we Christians waste our time, is that we do not have an attitude of obedience towards our spiritual fathers, nor to the tradition of the Church. Whoever does not know the mystery of obedience, wastes the time of his life, though humanly speaking he may have great and bright achievements.

Outside obedience, he will not be able to gather but a few crumbs from the rich table of the tradition of our Fathers. In 'The Ladder' it is said that 3 young men went to see an Elder and ask for a word. To the third, the saint said: 'Remember that, "in our patience we possess our souls" (Luke 21:19); find a strict Elder and be obedient to him in all things.' Then the young man asked him: 'And if that Elder does not live a spiritual life, should I still stay?'

The saint then answered

him: 'Even if you see that he is worse than all, do not judge him, but say to yourself the words that Christ said to Judas: "Friend, wherefore art thou come? (Matt. 26:50) To judge or be judged?" Be patient and then you will see that the grace of God will extinguish within you every pride and every other carnal desire.'

We see that those who surrender to obedience with simplicity, do not even notice temptations that can crush others.

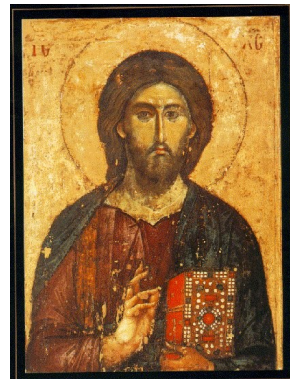
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We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor, please

call Fr. Matthew at 607-280-1586

Glory be to Jesus Christ.
Glory be Forever.





Troparion to St. George

As the deliverer
of captives
and defender
of the poor,
healer of the infirm
and champion of kings,
victorious great
martyr George
intercede with Christ
our God

News and Notes

We welcome all who are worshipping with us today. We are also happy to announce that coffee social has resumed following the Divine Liturgy.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

Please keep the following in your prayers: Esther, Clement John, Mother Onufria, Meg, Larissa, Jack, Stephen, Louise, George, Evan, Ryan, Sandy, Samuel, Anatoly, Alexey, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Doug, Heidi, Laura, Elizabeth, Matthew, Corella, Ron, Daniel, Frankie, Pat, Bill, Carol, Pam, Gladys, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

Prayer and Holiness

“We do not know what God looks like, as we read in John 1:18, No man hath seen God at any time. This is true, but we can meet with Him in prayer. Go into your room, into your heart, and above all, truly think of Whom you will speak, and then say: “I thank you, O Lord, for leading me to speak with You; the greatest sinner of

all!” And then stand and speak with God. After all, what does He want from us? That we should cast away from within us all the sin that defiles us. Throughout the day, enter into the depth of your soul and speak with Him who forgives all your iniquities (cf. Ps. 103:2). And then say: “Forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, for I did not know that they occur before Your eyes! I was after all dead-hearted and did not think about You.” Do that throughout the day and learn to stand before God, for thus will you cleanse yourself and prepare for the coming Judgment.

All prayers are beautiful, and it is good that you read both the Book of Hours and in the Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Mother of God. But if you have little time, stand before God as I taught you, and speak to Him from all the fullness of your heart. Do this and begin to feel God! And you will realize that everything that you do, you do before God! And again, remember that when your prayers cease, then sin begins! Even the cessation of prayer itself is sin. Indeed, God said, “Be holy!”

Time our great opportunity, con't from p.1

This is relevant for all the faithful, not only for monks. If we had true obedience to the institutions of the Church, God would grant us to also become bearers of her Tradition.

After Christ, we live in the year of the Lord (Luke 4:17). We say so often in the services, ‘Blessed is the Kingdom of God NOW and forever and unto the ages of ages.’ This means that the purpose of the time of our life is that we gather within us at every instant the seals of the presence of Christ, so that we may enter His eternity. Christ remained that which He was, and assumed that which He was not, the human nature.

The Church marks all these things in the services of the day. Which hour is more blessed than the 6th, when Christ nailed His Body to the Cross and crucified sin? Or than the 9th, when He said ‘It is finished,’ in order to reveal that God’s plan for man was accomplished? Which hour is more blessed than the night when Christ was born or the night when He was risen from the dead? As king Solo-

mon said: ‘While gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, Thine all-powerful word leaped from



heaven, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior carrying the sharp sword of thy authentic command’ (Wis. 18:14-16), of His au-

thentic will to save man.

Question: How is memory connected to time?

Fr. Peter: There is a spiritual memory, which is an act of prayer, and there is a psychological memory, which is a mere remembrance of past events. Through spiritual remembrance, we bring the things we remember before God with prayer and thanksgiving. We pray for the departed saying, ‘everlasting remembrance’, in the sense that those whom God remembers live truly, whereas God’s oblivion is eternal death.

Similarly, prayerful remembrance is an act that sanctifies and even redeems our past, just as ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law’ (Gal. 3:13) through His own Blood and ‘gave Himself as a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45). There is no other way for us to redeem and sanctify either past, or present, or future, but only if we bring them before God in prayer.

(continued next issue)

(Homily on the Blind Bartimaeus, cont'd from p.1)

But this is no helpless, feeble cry for help. It is loud and insistent. He keeps on shouting. He won't be shut up, even though the crowd continues to tell him to stop. Some people are intimidated and subdued by their own handicaps. It's possible to almost give up. But not our Blind man.

What motivates his uncontainable cry for healing? Faith. To call someone "Son of David" as a title is equivalent to calling someone, "Messiah," for it signifies to the Jews a person who is the promised descendent of David who will sit upon the throne of Israel. During most of his ministry, Jesus doesn't encourage others to refer to him as the Messiah, because the political implications of this title would soon prevent him from being able to minister effectively (Matthew 16:16, 20). But now his hour is come. His face is set towards Jerusalem where he will be crucified.

The blind man's request for mercy uses the same words that other beggars use. But this beggar's address to Jesus is startling. When he asks the "Son of David" for mercy, he is expecting far more than money. And he has faith that the Son of David, the Messiah, will grant his request. "Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Lord, I want to see,' he replied." (18:40-42) But why does Jesus ask the obvious?

I can think of two reasons: (1) to energize faith and cause it to be vocalized, or (2) to help the person himself determine what he wanted from Jesus. This question is nearly unique to Jesus' ministry.

Jesus' question, "What do you want me to do for you?" can be useful for us, his disciples, in our own ministry to people. For example we can ask each other, our youth and those outside the faith "How do you want us to pray for you?" or "What do you want Jesus to do for you?" The fact is, some people do NOT really want to be healed -- a blessing, a prayer, perhaps, but not real healing. In the case of Blind man, Jesus is trying to get him to vocalize his faith, since Jesus responds to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." (18:42) Jesus speaks a word, a command for healing, and the healing takes place immediately.



What is so special about the blind man's faith? Once he hears that Jesus is there, he immediately begins to ask mercy of Jesus as Messiah, exhibiting insight into Jesus' true mission. But he also has an unstoppable faith, a faith that won't take no for an answer. The crowd tells him to shut up, and he calls out all the louder. People are embarrassed as the local beggar goes ballistic when Jesus comes to town, but he doesn't care. He has an intensity of desire that overcomes obstacles, rebuke, and embarrassment to achieve what he desires. Jesus is pleased.

Jesus is a bridge to the Father, always pointing people to a relationship with the Father. Jesus is trying to make people trust God on their own. Many can see Jesus only, but Jesus keeps encouraging their faith and pointing them to the invisible Father. We also can serve as bridges for people. At first, they are often VERY dependent upon us. We shouldn't be afraid of that, but not seek it. Rather we should see it as a stage of faith. Our goal is to help transfer their faith in us to faith in their Heavenly Father. Only when we have achieved this have we succeeded, only then have we become like Jesus.

"Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God." (18:43) The once-blind man now becomes a disciple and joins Jesus' disciples. He now is ready. He is a man of faith, and is more than ready to leave begging and take up giving to others. This blind man serves a tremendous encouragement to others who are in the same physical or spiritual that he was. The story of the blind man now known to the church as Bartimaeus is a powerful example to us of how it pleases Jesus for our faith to see its opportunity, grasp it, and refuse to let it go until we receive what we need from God. Who would have thought this beggar would instantly become a giver!

The fathers also give a spiritual interpretation to this miracle, with the blind men symbolizing future generations who would come to faith only by hearing, without the benefit of seeing Christ in person. Those who tried to silence the blind man are persecutors and tyrants who, in every generation try to silence the Church. Nevertheless, under persecution the Church all the more confesses Jesus Christ and calls us to do the same.

For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

It is natural that the Prayer ends with the glorification of God and not with the request to be delivered from the devil. The Almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords has the final word in this world and not the devil, who by God's concession seems to influence the strings of history. The devil may bring about disorder, he may temporarily prevail over the world with his cohorts, but in the end God's Will will be done. The rule of the Antichrist is temporary. Christ is the eternal Lord and King. One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

For this reason and for this reason only, the glory belongs to the Trinitarian God. Again, St. John Chrysostom notes, "Since He led us into a state of anxiety with the recollection of the enemy and destroyed our inertness, He encourages us and reanimates our spirit, reminding us of the King, whose subjects we are. He reveals Himself stronger than anyone and says, "For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory". Therefore, since the kingdom is His, no one should be afraid because one can resist Him and share the power with Him" (St. John Chrysostom).

Final Thoughts

As far as my weakness and the limited time have permitted us, we have probed deeply into the divine words of the Lord's Prayer. Our heart is full of thankfulness towards the benevolent Lord who has handed over to us this holy prayer as power, light and consolation in our life. All the petitions of the Lord's Prayer help us liberate ourselves from our selfishness. They help us live not selfishly for ourselves, but for our God and our fellow-man. The more we rid ourselves of selfishness, the more God comes into us.

Allow me to say something bold, not from my personal experience, but from the experience of the Saints and from the experience of Mount Athos: If we totally get rid of our egoism and selfishness, then the whole God will come in us. Besides, the Lord Himself says so, "If someone loves me, he will keep my word, and my father will love him, and we will come and dwell in him". Then man can enjoy the most real joy and peace, the joy that the Lord promised to His disciples and that no one can take away from him. It is sad that many people in our days do

not say or do not want to say the Lord's prayer.

We are informed that many teachers, when the Lord's Prayer is recited at school, either do not go into the school courtyard to pray together with the students, or they stand with their hands behind their backs to show they are doing something they do not believe in. Those who renounce Christ and His Prayer, consciously or unconsciously, those who live self-centeredly and selfishly, say another prayer: -They do not say, "Our Father which art in heaven", but they say, "Myself, I have you for god on the earth". -They do not say, "Thy Kingdom come", but, "my Kingdom come". -They do not say, "Thy will be done", but, "my will be done".



They do not say, "Give us this day our daily bread", but, "I provide with extravagance and luxury material good for myself". -They do not say, "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us", but, "I ask no one to forgive me, as I forgive no one". -They do not say, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil", but "I seek a little licit and illicit pleasures and hate everything painful". -They do not say, "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory", but, "For mine is the kingdom and the power and the glory". No only those who deny Christ, but even we Christians, happen to have, from time to time, temptations and downfalls in this self-centered, individualistic and diabolic life. This very self-centeredness, though, is what makes our life today an im-

passe.

Our country's crisis in politics, in education, in interpersonal relationship, in the economy, I think is due to all this. We have denied the spirit of Christ, the spirit of the Lord's Prayer. I see no solution to this impasse, if the rulers and the ruled do not repent. No political party and no ideology can save us. There will be a solution and a light, if we, the contemporary Orthodox people, desire to say again humbly and simply the "Lord's Prayer" and, even more, if we comply with the spirit of this prayer. If the majority do not want to do this, let us struggle to do it ourselves, we, the faithful and churchgoers. The danger of being led astray by the heavy chains of atheist individualism that tighten around us is not small, and without realizing it we may substitute our love for God and for man with selfishness.