

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church

Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

Christ is in our Midst! He is and ever shall be!



Volume 11 Issue 537

19th Sunday after Pentecost-The Rich Man & Lazarus

October 23, 2022



God is so rich in love and mercy. He gives us opportunities to love and to serve to His glory and our deification, to become more God-like. He gives us the Scriptures and the divine services to form us in the mind of the Church, the mind of the Kingdom. He feeds us with the sacramental life of that Kingdom even now as a foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet, the Kingdom of Heaven.

The fruit we're expected to manifest in our lives is how we live out our faith in witness and response to those around us. To be with God in the next life, you and I are admonished to desire that life, the life in Him, above all else, to be rich toward God and others, and 'poor' toward the distractions and temptations of the world, its power, hold, and callousness and indifference.

The question then is, how do we each respond to that which God's entrusted to us. Do we avail ourselves of these God-given means of our growth in divine grace, of opportunities to love, serve, and witness or do we prefer, like so many, to focus on gratifying our own wants?

Today's parable of the rich man and Lazarus reminds us that we can run the risk of taking God, and His love
(continued p. 3)

++ 19th Sunday after Pentecost ++

+ St James the Apostle +

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 11:31-12:9

Gospel: Luke 16: 19-31

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.*

A talk on the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol (part 3)

However, at that time, his Elder, Fr. Nicephoros, was already sick with Alzheimer's. Fr. Ephraim was a perfect novice, which made him a great saint of our time.

Another time, Fr. Ephraim went down to the pier from Karoulia to send a letter. When a boat pulled up to the dock, Fr. Ephraim jumped in. The boatman was talking with another monk just then and didn't notice him. Fr. Ephraim gave the letter to one of the passengers, but before he could get out of

the boat, the boatman had already pushed off from the dock. "Blessed one, let me get out," asked Fr. Ephraim. The boatman was a layman, a simple man, blunt, and prone to flashes of anger. He got angry at Fr. Ephraim that he had to turn back to the shore, and started shouting and swearing at him.

When Fr. Ephraim returned to his cell in Katounakia, his conscience started to reproach him for having upset the boatman. "I grieved him and tempted him. How can I serve the

Liturgy now?" he thought. And in the middle of the night, he headed from Katounakia to St. Anne's Skete, where the boatman lived.

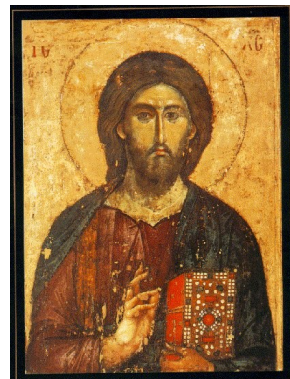
The road in this place is a dangerous descent, scary to even think about. Then on the way back, he had to climb up, too. Nevertheless, Fr. Ephraim reached the boatman's place and prostrated to him: "Forgive me. I upset you this morning."

With these examples, I want to show that God's people always want one
(continued p.2)

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: Mother Onufria, Fr. Michael, Meg, Larissa, Jack, Stephen, Evan, Ryan, Anatoly, Alexey, Heidi, Maverick, Corella, Ron, Daniel, Frankie, Loretta, Mackenzie, Mike, Jessica, Grace, Gladys, Lisa, Jeff, Bonnalee, Joann, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

Christ and the Gospel

“For my sake and the Gospel’s.” Christ calls for a decisive change of orientation of the self, a radical switch of outlook from purely worldly values and pleasures to Christ-like values and attributes. Think and do things to honor Christ. Think according to the thoughts of Christ in order to acquire the “mind” of Christ. Act according to the example of Christ in order to grow into the likeness and maturity of

Christ. Love as He loved in order that we may abide in God’s love for “God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” (1 John 4:16).

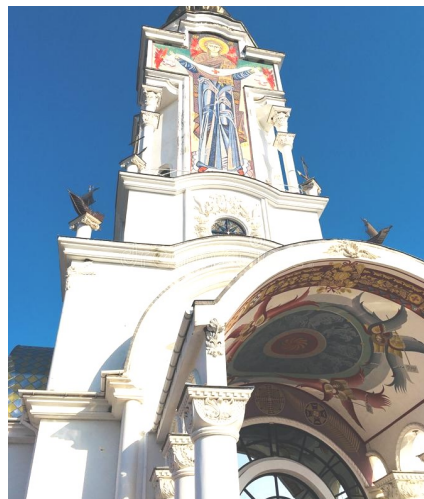
But how can I think, speak and act like Christ when Christ was God on earth and I am a weak and fragile human being? Imitate Christ, the saints teach us, insofar as it is possible for us to do so. The starting point is the Gospel, its power, its blessings, its virtues. “The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith . . . for in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith.” (Rom. 1:16-17)

“For my sake and the Gospel’s.” The Good Shepherd calls us to practice His attributes of humility, self-sacrifice, forgiveness and love for others, by which the world might think that we “lose” our life. That’s part of the cost of being a disciple. Leave behind the chaotic noise of the world and fulfill all of our tasks, the same task we do at home, at work and in society, but do so with the faithfulness and love of Christ.

A talk on the Divine Liturgy, cont’d from p.1

thing—that God would be King over everything they do in their life, over their very being. They don’t tolerate anything in their life being outside the gates of the Kingdom of God. And we, living in the world, must be especially attentive to this. Sometimes I get the impression that for many of us, the soul seems to be divided into several separate rooms by internal partitions. One room is for our piety, our Church life. Another room is for our secular life. We behave completely differently in this room, as if putting on a different mask. The third room is for our job. Sometimes you see someone in church—he’s soft, calm, pleasant to talk to. Then you see him at work—unapproachable, gloomy, somber. You want to say to him: “Just smile! What happened to you? You were completely different at church.” A person is different at home, with his family. He’s different behind the wheel. A car is also a kind of room in his soul. How many times I have heard in confession: “Father, when

I’m driving, I often curse and swear at other drivers.” It’s impossible to wish for the grace of God to reign in your soul if it’s divided into parts, into many rooms. Above all, you



need to acquire inner integrity, inner unity. Your mouth, your mind, and your actions—everything within you must be overshadowed by the grace of God.

A man who has received the grace of God doesn’t change with a change in

situation or environment. Everything about him—his thoughts, words, and actions, both secret and manifest, both those committed in private and in public—remain the same, without change. The Fathers of the Church insisted that we must not be fickle and changeable, no matter who is in front of us, no matter where we find ourselves. Whether you’re before a crowd of millions or in private, you should remain the same, behaving the same. When you’re alone, feel like the whole world is watching you. And when the whole world is watching you, feel like you’re alone. Everywhere and anywhere, sense the presence of God, and nothing else but Him.

In the face of the powerful of this world, of those on whom your material wellbeing depends, or those whom you fear, don’t be a sycophant; don’t change your behavior. But behave the same way with everyone, correctly—be humble. I’m not talking about an inferiority complex, but
(continued p.4, column 2)

(Homily on The Rich Man & Lazarus, cont'd from p.1)

and mercy, for granted: we remember that we'll all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of how we've lived, of what our response has been to God's gracious offer of life and love with Him. Some of the Fathers say that our judgment on that "Last Day" will be based on how we know God now, how we love God now, how we say "Yes" to God now in this life, day to day—or, sadly—how we have said, "No" to God in all of the above.

This parable is an example of such judgment through self-examination, and so, it's an opportunity for us to become convicted of our need to grow in faith and put it more into practice, not living just for ourselves but for the love of God and those whom God brings into our lives. God brings Lazarus into the life of the rich man, who treats Lazarus with scorn in this life.

Even in the next life, he still sees Lazarus as his slave, existing solely for his need, saying, "Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue." In this life, this man's wealth was his god; he lives for his own selfish pleasure, surrounding himself with all sorts of creature comforts. He has

'knowledge' of God, but does not know or love God as we see in his lack of concern or compassion for Lazarus, or what God thinks about his actions. Lazarus, "full of sores," laid at his gate, and longed to eat the crumbs off the rich man's table. Lazarus dies and is taken up to God's near presence, i.e. 'the bosom of Abraham.' The rich man also dies and is buried. Having been deprived of his needs in this life, Lazarus enjoys the heavenly banquet in the true and eternal life with God and His Saints. Lazarus is in eternal and perpetual memory before God. This is the basis for our prayers for our departed Orthodox brethren. We desire for them "Memory Eternal" before God who is Eternal Life. God knows Lazarus by name, just as He will remember the name of each of us who have lived with the priority of the Kingdom of Heaven in this life: in true repentance and communion, carrying our cross to follow Christ, to die to the old self and live to God and His truth in the new.

The rich man, on the other hand, having lived only for

himself and his own self-pleasure in this life, is deprived of God's near presence in eternal life. *His name is not even remembered before God.* From God's perspective, as St. John Chrysostom puts it, the rich man was already 'buried' in life by his "couches, rugs, furnishings, sweet oils, perfumes... wine, varieties of food, and flatterers." In other words, because these things were his 'god' and his 'god' is temporal—all these things are buried with him.

It's tempting to see this story from an "us versus them" perspective. "Oh, I'm not like that rich man." But it behooves us to examine ourselves for a moment in light of the rich man just as we do in the Triodion period before Great Lent when we examine ourselves in light of the

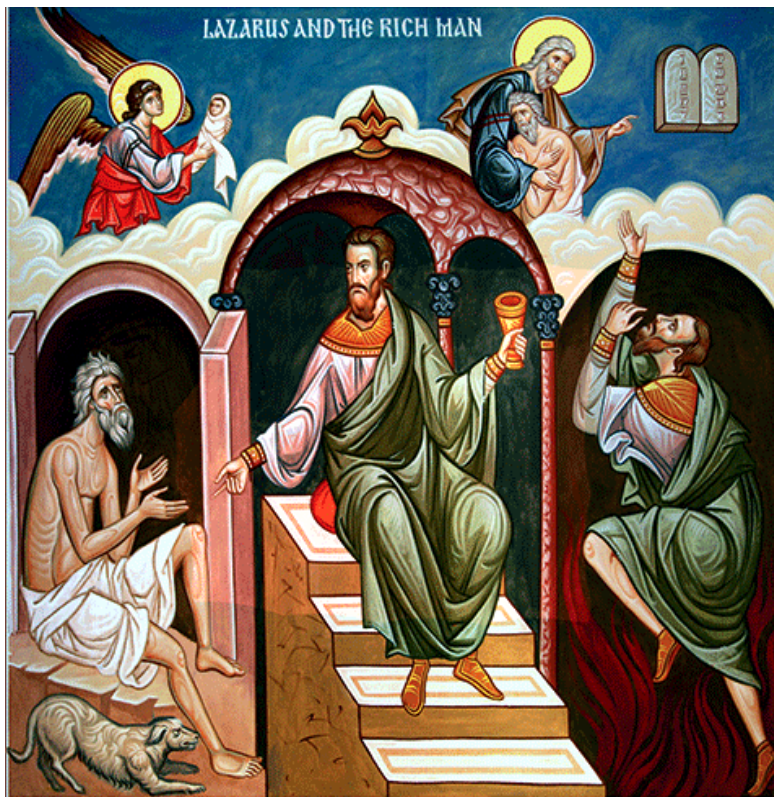
Pharisee. All of us have been given 'riches' of one kind or multiple kinds or another—gifts, talents, intelligence, abilities, resources or other kinds of earthly treasure.

Certainly, just by living in America, we live at a standard of living above most of the world. The truth is that all of us will be asked what we've done with those riches entrusted to us at the Second Coming. All of us will be asked how we've demonstrated our love for God and those around us, how we've furthered the work of the Church and lived out Christ's Gospel, not just for ourselves but for the Church.

It should also be noted, however, that this parable is not a story condemning wealth. Rather, it's an illustration of what happens if we allow our soul to become cold-hearted, selfish and vain-glorious toward God, the Church, and our fellow man and become 'poor' or stingy towards Him and those around us—*whatever our means.* Already, the rich man is withering and dying to God in this life, even as he fills himself with so much sumptuous bounty and indifference to others.

To this, St. John asks, "Do you see how by the place, by the things that waste there (in the rich man's house), he draws men off from this desire that is here, and rivets them to Heaven... For if you transfer your wealth there where neither rust or moth corrupts, nor thieves break through and steal, you will both expel this disease and establish your soul in the greatest abundance.

(continued p.4, column 1)



Our Lord reminds us in this regard, saying, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21). Ask yourself, are you longing for heaven? Is your ‘treasure’ in Christ God and His unending Kingdom? If it is not, repent of any coldness of heart and start now to live with the priority of Christ and His Church before you, pray for greater love for God, your brothers and sisters, and your fellow man.

All of us need to be wary of the ‘disease,’ of wanting to have our ease, of using others, even God, for our own ends, of being cold-hearted toward Him and the needs of His Church and others. We conquer this disease by keeping our ‘vigil lamps’ lit, by examining how and for Whom we’re living now, how we’re loving, serving,

and giving. How much have we been willing to be Christ’s “light” and “salt” in this world, modeling the Gospel in word and deed, how generous are we in giving our “first fruits” to God in obedience to Him and His calling. To this end, it can be helpful to periodically do an inventory of our riches—material and spiritual—to evaluate how we’re using them, whether for our own temporal use or for the building up of the Kingdom, that is, our life with God, our salvation, *and that of those around us*. This is the purpose of our pledge and commitment card, which we will offer up to God in good faith for 2020 at our Patronal Feast, Nov. 7. We offer back to God from the “first fruits” He’s so graciously entrusted to us of our time, talents, treasure.

And so, we come away from this parable reminded that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, that Christ is coming back again to judge the living and the dead. God beckons even now to prepare and consider for Whom we live our earthly lives, that our names too, like Lazarus, may be remembered by God in His eternal Kingdom. May we love Christ God first, being sensitive to the needs of those around us—both to their physical and their spiritual welfare. May we give a “first fruits” of ourselves to God’s glory and our deification, serving and loving God, that we, like Lazarus, may be inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven now and in the life to come.

To God be the Glory. Amen.

about the noble humility of the children of God. Such behavior personally makes a big impression on me. I have seen this humility in contemporary ascetic saints, whom various high-ranking officials came to meet: prime ministers, presidents, people whose names are known all over the world.

When dealing with such visitors, there wasn’t a shadow of change in the behavior of the ascetics, nor a shadow of obsequiousness or flattery. They received every visitor with spiritual nobility, and spoke with them, regardless of who they were. They knew nothing of people-pleasing. For this very reason, God reigned in their souls, in their whole being. You could see how they were filled with grace. I remember when I observed these holy people, I saw that even their clothes exuded grace. They wore the simplest, oldest, shabbiest clothes. But these clothes, and the cells of the ascetics, and their belongings all radiated great grace.

It was the same with the ancient saints. It is said about St. Basil the Great, for example, that he had a slight limp. The same is said about his fellow countrymen, the Cappadocians: They all limped. Thus, they imitated the saint! What great influence he had on them! St. Basil limped because of a problem with his feet, but the Cappadocians limped in imitation of him, because the grace hidden in his soul made such an impression upon them that they imitated even the external behavior of the saint.

And the modern holy ascetics have made such a great impression on their visitors that you could see how people began to imitate them in something external. The reason for this impression was the great grace that poured out not only from the holy ascetics, but from everything around them: from their clothes, or rather, the tatters they wore; from their cells; from the stumps they used instead of chairs; and everything else. This is a witness that a man has Christ as King in his life, ruling over his entire being—his mind, heart, words, and deeds. One time someone drank a glass of water from [Elder Paisios](#) and later said that he had never drunk such delicious water anywhere. Or, for example, pilgrims often praise monastery food, how delicious it is. And how is it made? Without oil, just water. Grace is what makes everything so wonderful.

(continued next issue)

