

# 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 10 Issue 476

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost– Parable of the Vineyard

August 22, 2021



In this week's Gospel, Christ is warning the people to take their work seriously. In the parable, the landowner had grown weary of the way the vinedressers had misappropriated his vineyard and how they had treated his representatives. Now he had sent his own son to correct them. This was their last chance to repent of their be-

havior and see themselves as stewards and servants of God's will – and of his son.

The warning to the Jews was clear: they had ignored God's instructions and they had ignored the corrections offered by the prophets. At the time of this Gospel proclamation, God had sent his own son. If they ignored him and his instructions – worse yet, if they killed him and tried to set themselves up in his place, not only would the vineyard finally be taken away from them, they would be punished according to the wickedness of their deeds.

But this warning was not just for the religious leaders of yesterday, it is a warning to us now as well. With this parable, Christ is reminding us of the terms of the contract when it comes to our own parish: he has not given us

*(continued p. 3)*

+ 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost +  
++ Venerable Isaac of Optina ++

Epistle: 1 Cor 16: 13-24

Gospel: Matthew 21: 33-42

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.*

## **Discourse on Love, by Archimandrite George Kapsanis**

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ handed down to us the perfect teaching on salvation. And he himself was the first to implement what he taught. It is he who 'practices and teaches' (Matt 5, 19). He also gave us the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of real love.

But the most outstanding Good Samaritan is Christ himself, who took upon himself our nature tortured by robbers, that is the demons, the passions, and human wickedness, then raised it and

gave it life through his death on the Cross and his resurrection.

We all know now that perfect Christian love is universal; it's love for everyone, even for our enemies. This is something we all know but find it difficult to live. Even among those closest to us, in our families, at work, there are people we don't much like.

Sometimes this is the case even though they've done nothing to us, or something very small, or something we think they may have done. It's

enough for us to feel cold and sometimes actually hostile towards them.

But where's the Christian love in such cases? We have to struggle really hard to break free of such antipathies, which rob us of Christ's love and don't help us to be his true disciples.

Saint Paul teaches that this perfect love of Christ can't be achieved merely through our own powers, because all of us, to a greater or lesser extent, are sick, spiritually unwell.

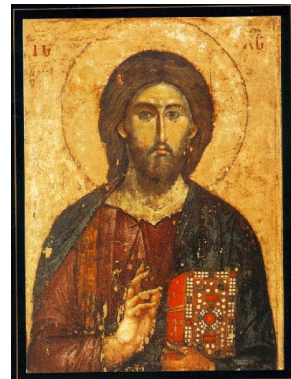
*(continued on p.2)*

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  
for our souls  
salvation.

**News and Notes**

We welcome all who are worshipping with us today. We are also happy to announce that coffee social has resumed out on the church lawn 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, Abraham, Susan, Jenny, Deb, Dan, Bob, Catherine, Skip, Doug, Heidi, Laura, Elizabeth Matthew, Corella, Ron, Daniel, Frankie, Pat, Joan, Terena, Loretta, Bill, Mike, Carol, Pam, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

**Divine Potential**

It takes courage and righteous anger to set oneself on spiritual life. The first commandment of life according to the Gospel is the following: "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Mark 8:34). Do you want to be with God? Do you

want to lead a spiritual life? Have the courage to cut off evil passions, sins and addictions. Give them up with anger and contempt. Then you will be able to follow the Lord and receive a white robe. This commandment must be remembered daily, constantly renewing your determination to lead a spiritual life. As the Holy Martyr Gregory (Lebedev) said, "keep undeniable values deep in your soul".

Spiritual values are so excitingly bright that if you hold on to them, the whole world will become dull and unnecessary. According to the word of the saint, it is essential to "be infected with the brightness" of this value: "What do you need for this? You need to straighten your determination every day, at the right time. The Spiritual life is a struggle. This struggle is not only with sin in oneself, but also against the spirits of evil. That is why everything is so serious here and everything is so difficult. That is why it is necessary to rely on God who has mercy, and not on yourself. That is why it is necessary to declare war on the evil in oneself.

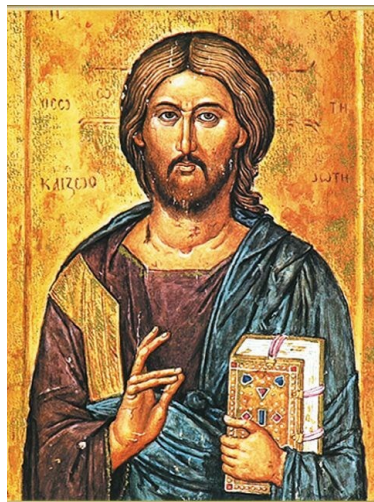
**Discourse on Love, continued from p.1**

Our will is feeble and our mind is darkened. It needs the illumination of the Holy Spirit. You will recall that this is why, in his Epistle to the Galatians, Saint Paul includes love among the greatest of the virtues: 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Gal. 5, 22-23).

So we will try, then, we'll strive to acquire love, but it's necessary that we also request the grace of the Holy Spirit: to enlighten us, to cleanse us of the passions and lack of love and to give us the gift of love. Then, when the Holy Spirit responds to our request, to our prayer, to our desire and to our efforts, he will give us the gift of real love. Then we'll be proper and good disciples of the teacher of love, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'll just tell you a story I remember then I'll finish. It's about a little Orthodox Greek boy who lived in Alexandria, in Egypt. When he played with other children, little Muslims, if they hit him, he didn't hit them back,

he didn't respond in kind. The other children, his friends, once asked him: 'If people hit us, we hit them back. But we've noticed that when you get hit, you don't strike back, you don't give as good as you get'. And this



blessed and enlightened child replied: 'I'm a disciple of Christ. Christ told us not to strike back. So I don't'. One of the other children, a Muslim, heard this and it moved him. When he grew up he came to know Christ and be-

came Christian. He was baptized and became Christian.

That's what disciples of Christ should be like. We should imitate him in all things and in love. We should always cultivate this spirit of real love towards all people, particularly those for whom we feel coolness and towards whom we have negative feelings. There's no need for us to go looking for enemies to love, because often enough we can't even love the people we live with, who are in our home, among our relatives, sometimes in our community.

So this is why, fathers and Christian brothers who are here now\*, let's all begin to make a sincere effort to accept every person, whoever they are, as our brother or sister and to love them as we should love Christ himself.

May we therefore be blessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit in this matter, which is the be all and end all of the Christian life. As I've said, without love we can't be true disciples of Christ.

*(Homily on The Vineyard , cont'd from p.1)*

this parish. We do not own it to do with it as we want. He is simply leasing it to us. It is not ours by right, but by his own good will. And if we do not run things according to his desire, then we separate ourselves from his grace. He will send us warnings to get us back on track, but if we ignore those as well, he will find others to take our place and we ourselves will suffer according to our own wickedness.

In what way does God send his son to us to ensure that we are doing things according to his will? There are at least three ways: Wherever two or more are gathered in his name, he is there (St. Matthew 18:20). His spirit guides those who work in his name. The leaders of this parish are given a blessing to manifest his will in a special way, but this is something that we are all called to participate in. Because God's son is in and amongst us, we monitor and police ourselves.

He sends us sojourners, people in need of a home, people in need of spiritual food and drink, people in need of love. Whatever we do for "the least of these", we do for him as well (St. Matthew 25:40). These are a continual check on our management of this parish. He is manifested most clearly in his living Body and Blood at the Holy Eucharist. The way we approach this mystery demonstrates our love of Christ and service to His Father.

So, in the light of today's parable, we have to ask ourselves, how are we doing? Have we done what the vinedressers did; have we thought of this parish as our own? How have we treated those he has sent us to instruct us? How have we treated him as he manifests himself among us? Is everything we do here done to glorify him and spread the good news of salvation through his son?

On this Sunday in August, let us rededicate ourselves to Christ and his work. We know what happens outside these doors when people refuse to work. What it does to their own souls, what it does to our economy, and what it does to our culture. The simple fact is that when people outside these doors refuse to work, everyone is affected.

How much more true is that of what happens inside

these doors, in the life of the church. We are the body of Christ in this world. We are called to do his work, to transform the world according to his will. When we refuse to work, when we shirk our duties, everyone is affected. It is too bad that we think of Sunday as a day off – it isn't. It is the culmination of all we do. The work we do here is so important that we are forbidden to do any other work on this day.

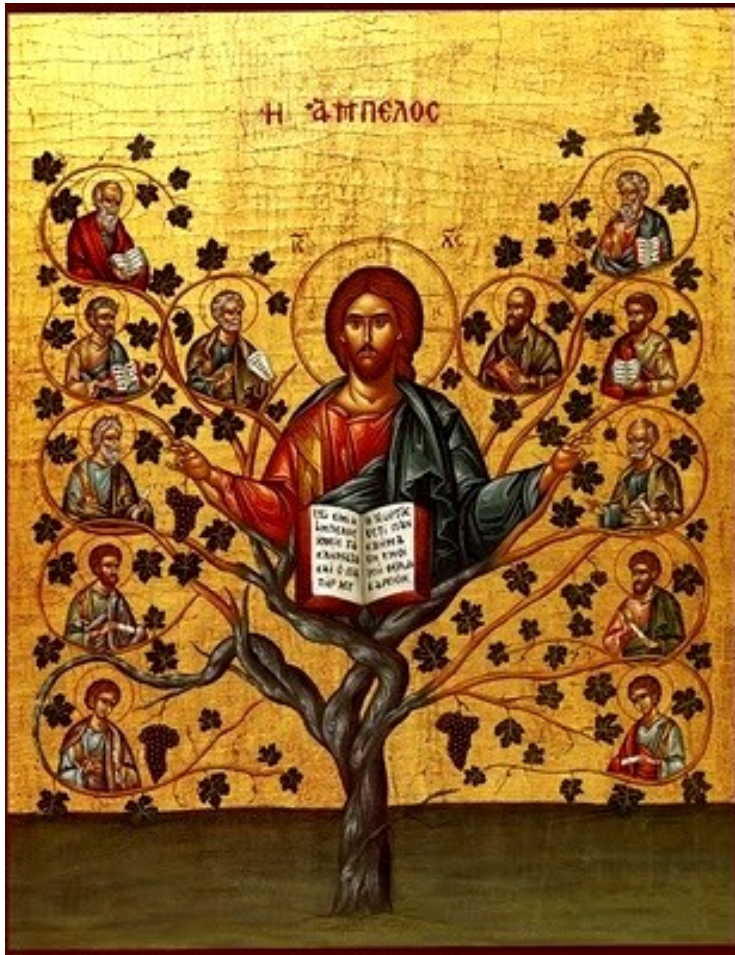
We call what we do together the "liturgy"; this literally means "the work of the people." Why do we so often treat this work as if it were unimportant? People who would never dream of showing up late to their jobs – much less skipping it entirely – think very little of doing this very same on Sunday. We know better; it isn't right.

Outside these doors, very few people have the kind of jobs that allow them to see how much their efforts contribute to the health of our society; for people like farmers and nurses, the contribution is obvious, but for others it is much more abstract. I want you to know that what you do here, what we all do here together, is making a real difference. The changes Christ is making to this world through his church are profound. Occasionally we get to see glimpses.

You can see it in the healing that goes on among those of us who have been hurt (the example of the recently widowed priest in our community, a man who is struggling with the most profound grief and heartache, but who even know – at this very moment – is being healed through his service to the Church); you can see it in the

joy that we share when we gather and fellowship together; you can see it in the awe that grows among us during our celebrations; you can see it in the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation that is practiced through confession here; and you can see it in our communal participation in Christ's Body and Blood.

The Liturgy on Sunday and Feast days is good work. It is what good people do. It is what God's people do.. Because the work we do here is done in Christ, we don't just become better – we are perfected; and through this labor, the world doesn't just flourish – it is recreated in Glory. Let's rededicate ourselves to Christ and his work. To God be the Glory. Amen.



## The Epistle to Diognetes (part 4)

They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Philippians 3:20 They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. 2 Corinthians 6:9 They are poor, yet make many rich; 2 Corinthians 6:10 they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and blessed; 2 Corinthians 4:12 they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evildoers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred.

### Chapter 6. The relation of Christians to the world

To sum up all in one word what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world. The invisible soul is guarded by the visible body, and Christian are known indeed to be in the world, but their godliness remains invisible.

The flesh hates the soul, and wars against it, 1 Peter 2:11 though itself suffering no injury, because it is prevented from enjoying pleasures; the world also hates the Christians, though in nowise injured, because they abjure pleasures. The soul loves the flesh that hates it, and [loves also] the members; Christians likewise love those that hate them. The soul is imprisoned in the body, yet keeps together that very body; and Christians are confined in the world as in a prison, and yet they keep together the world.

The immortal soul dwells in a mortal tabernacle; and Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible [bodies], looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens. The soul, when but ill-provided with food and drink, becomes better; in like manner, the Christians, though subjected day by day to punishment, increase the more in number. God has assigned them this illustrious position,

which it were unlawful for them to forsake.

### Chapter 7. The manifestation of Christ

For, as I said, this was no mere earthly invention which was delivered to them, nor is it a mere human system of opinion, which they judge it right to preserve so carefully, nor has a dispensation of mere human mysteries been committed to them. But truly God Himself, who is almighty, the Creator of all things, and invisible, has sent from heaven, and placed among men, [Him who is] the truth, and the holy and incomprehensible Word, and has firmly established Him in their hearts.

He did not, as one might have imagined, send to men any servant, or angel, or ruler, or any one of those who bear sway over earthly things, or one of those to whom the government of things in the heavens has been entrusted, but the very Creator and Fashioner of all things — by whom He made the heavens — by whom he enclosed the sea within its proper bounds — whose ordinances all the stars faithfully observe — from whom the sun has received the measure of his daily course to be observed — whom the moon obeys, being commanded to shine in the night, and whom the stars also obey, following the moon in her course; by whom all things have been arranged, and placed within their proper limits, and to whom all are subject — the heavens and the things that are therein, the earth and the things that are therein, the sea and the things that are therein — fire,

air, and the abyss — the things which are in the heights, the things which are in the depths, and the things which lie between.

This [messenger] He sent to them. Was it then, as one might conceive, for the purpose of exercising tyranny, or of inspiring fear and terror? By no means, but under the influence of clemency and meekness. As a king sends his son, who is also a king, so sent He Him; as God He sent Him; as to men He sent Him; as a Saviour He sent Him, and as seeking to persuade, not to compel us; for violence has no place in the character of God. As calling us He sent Him, not as vengefully pursuing us; as loving us He sent Him, not as judging us. For He will yet send Him to judge us, and who shall endure His appearing? Malachi 3:2

(continued next issue)

