

Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church

October 22, 2023

Tone 3



20th Sunday After Pentecost

*The Holy Seven Youths
("Seven Sleepers") of Ephesus*

Divine Liturgy

Readings

(Readings on Back)

- ♦ Galatians 1:11-19
- ♦ Luke 16:19-31

Announcements:

Holy Land Pilgrimage Presentation

Please join us for *A Trip to the Holy Land: Following in the Footsteps of Our Lord*. TODAY, immediately after Divine Liturgy. A complimentary Middle Eastern Luncheon will be served. (Free-will offerings will be accepted; proceeds will be sent to Ss. Mary and Martha School/Orphanage in Bethany)

If you wish to make a donation, make check payable to Sts. Peter and Paul with orphanage or Sts. Mary and Martha on memo line. Cash offerings will also be accepted.

St. Herman's Meal Project

We will gather in the church basement at 9:00am on Tuesday, October 24th to prepare a meal for the St. Herman's House. All are welcome to come and participate in this outreach effort!

Annual Turkey Drive

As we approach the Thanksgiving Holiday, be on the lookout for turkeys on sale. We are looking for about 20 turkeys to be donated and cooked, to take to St Herman's House. They will be deboned and served to those in need on Thanksgiving Day. See Fr Joseph or Sam Jacob for more details.

This Week

Tuesday, October 24

6:15pm - Parish Council

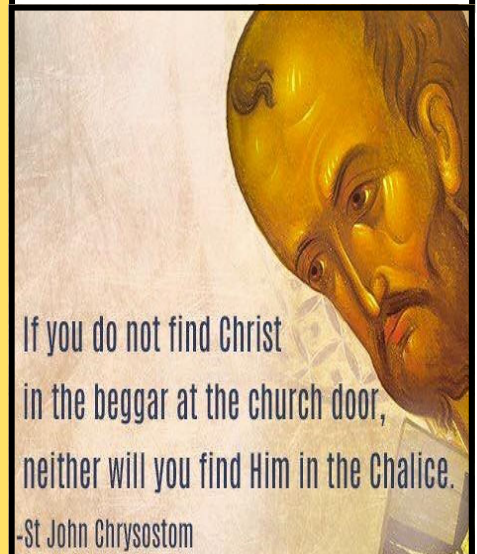
Saturday, October 28

6:00pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, October 29

9:00am - 3rd & 6th Hours

9:30am - Divine Liturgy



If you do not find Christ
in the beggar at the church door,
neither will you find Him in the Chalice.

-St John Chrysostom

Meditation on Today's Readings

Today's Gospel challenges us in its soberness: We see one man who suffered in this life, saved, and another man, who had everything in this life, condemned. This image is such a challenge because we live in an age where many assume they're good (by their own definition of what 'good' is) and, therefore, 'automatically' going to heaven. But this subjective understanding of Heaven just doesn't square with the Gospel, which makes it clear that the Kingdom of Heaven means foremost this: life with and in God, participation in the divine life of the Holy Trinity, and the bearing of the fruit of that theosis in how and for Whom we live out our earthly lives.

This fruit is manifested in how we live out our faith in witness and response to those around us. To be with God, you and I are admonished to desire that life 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 towards the needs of others, whether spiritual and/or physical.

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

The big question isn't what God does for us, but rather, how do we each respond to that which He'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? Unused tools are of little use to us.

We can run the risk of taking God, and His love 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, and 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. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is an example of such judgment through self-examination, and so, it's an opportunity for conviction, for growth, and for change.

It's tempting to see this story from an "us versus them" perspective. Oh, I'm not like that rich man. But we are encouraged to examine ourselves for a moment in light of the rich man just as we do in the Triodion period before 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. All of us will be asked what we have done with those riches entrusted to us at Christ's awesome Second Coming. All of us will be asked how we have demonstrated our love for God and those around us in need.

This parable is not a story condemning wealth, but rather an illustration of what happens if we allow our soul to become cold-hearted, selfish and vain-glorious toward God and our fellow man and become 'poor' or stingy towards God and those around us—whatever our means. Already, the rich man is withering and dying to God in this life.

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 and that God beckons even now to prepare and consider who and for Whom we live our earthly lives. May we love God and be sensitive to the needs of those around us—both to their physical and to their spiritual welfare. May we give a "first fruits" of ourselves to God's glory and our deification, serving and loving God and our neighbor.



Today's Saints

The Seven Youths of Ephesus: Maximilian, Iamblicus, Martinian, John, Dionysius, Exacustodianus (Constantine) and Antoninus, lived in the third century. Saint Maximilian was the son of the Ephesus city administrator, and the other six youths were sons of illustrious citizens of Ephesus. The youths were friends from childhood, and all were in military service together.

When the emperor Decius (249-251) arrived in Ephesus, he commanded all the citizens to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. Torture and death awaited anyone who disobeyed. The seven youths were denounced by informants, and were summoned to reply to the charges. Appearing before the emperor, the young men confessed their faith in Christ.

Their military belts and insignia were quickly taken from them. Decius permitted them to go free, however, hoping that they would change their minds while he was off on a military campaign. The youths fled from the city and hid in a cave on Mount Ochlon, where they passed their time in prayer, preparing for martyrdom.

Learning where the young men were hidden, the emperor ordered that the entrance of the cave be sealed with stones so that the saints would perish from hunger and thirst. The Lord placed the youths into a miraculous sleep lasting almost two centuries. In the meantime, the persecutions against Christians had ceased.

The Lord had kept the youths alive, and they awoke from their sleep, unaware that almost two hundred years had passed. Their bodies and clothing were completely undecayed. The emperor himself arrived in Ephesus and spoke with the young men in the cave. Then the holy youths, in sight of everyone, lay their heads upon the ground and fell asleep again, this time until the General Resurrection.

The emperor wanted to place each of the youths into a jeweled coffin, but they appeared to him in a dream and said that their bodies were to be left upon the ground in the cave.

There is a prayer of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in the GREAT BOOK OF NEEDS (Trebnik) for those who are ill and cannot sleep. The Seven Sleepers are also mentioned in the service for the Church New Year, September 1.

Prayers Appreciated for:

Living:

Marge

Tina, Katherine,
Paula, Marianne,
Suleiman, Steve
Janet, Christina

Departed:

Blaise
Elizabeth

Tall Candles

Tall candles are given by
Ray Asik
in memory of all past and
current members of our
Parish Community.

WEEKLY READINGS

Monday, Oct. 23

*Holy Apostle James, the Brother
of the Lord*

Philippians 4:10-23
Luke 10:22-24

Tuesday, Oct. 24

Bl. Elesbaan, King of Ethiopia
Colossians 1:1-2, 7-11
Luke 11:1-10

Wed, Oct. 25

St. Tabitha
Colossians 1:18-23
Luke 11:9-13

Thurs, Oct. 26

St. Demetrios the Myrrh-gusher
Colossians 1:24-29
Luke 11:14-23

Friday, Oct. 27

St. Claudia Procula
Colossians 2:1-7
Luke 11:23-26

Saturday, Oct. 28

Ven. Job of Pochaev
2 Cor. 3:12-18
Luke 8:16-21

Kontakion - Those who renounced the perishing comforts of this world, preferring the eternal things of Heaven, were incorrupt after death and rose from the dead and buried the snares of the devils! O Faithful, let us then honor them, singing a hymn of praise to Christ!



Today's Scripture Readings

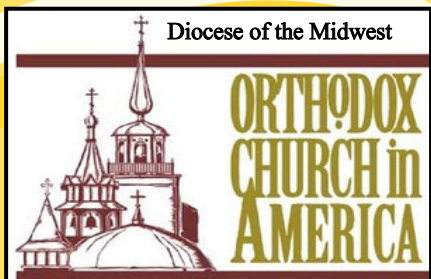
Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!



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