

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (08.28.2022.)

Mt.18:23-35

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (KJV)

The servant of the king requested patience. He wanted more time to be able to pay his debt. How many contemporary believers seek the patience of God and are in need of more time to repent of sins?

How often do believers fail to live in ways pleasing to God and fall deeper into debt through increased sinfulness? The Psalmist said: “If You, Lord should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” (Ps. 129/130:3)

Each believer is behooved to constantly appreciate the patience and mercies of God and renew attempts to be faithful to God. The king was moved with compassion.

The Psalmist said: “Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” (Ps. 105/106:1) The king released his servant and forgave his debt.

The king’s goodness benefited not only the servant, but also the servant’s family. Individuals do not live in isolation. A person’s relationship with God determines the nature of personal relationships.

The goodness of God to a particular individual impacts the relationships the person has because it affects the nature of the person. The king’s servant was the recipient of mercy and goodness.

The servant did not make the king’s goodness and mercy a part his personal life. Believers are expected to live in ways established by the Lord Jesus Christ. Growth in Christ is expected from the time of Holy Baptism.

Christians are expected to increasingly take on the qualities present in Christ. How many professed Christian truly exhibit qualities of Christ in their daily personal and professional lives?

If more professed Christians truly lived in ways pleasing to Christ the relationships between many family members, neighbors and nations would be vastly different.

The forgiven servant of the king had an opportunity to show mercy and forgiveness to his personal servant. The forgiven servant was not forgiving. He was quite demanding and punitive.

How many employers are punitive to their employees when they could be more forgiving? How many husbands and wives could improve their relationships between themselves or with their children by being more forgiving?

How many families would be strengthened if forgiveness was more prevalent in relationships among family members? How many friendships would be renewed, repaired and enriched if individuals were more forgiving?

The forgiven servant punished his own servant for failing to pay his accounts. How many individuals with great wealth have received acts of forgiveness enabling them to keep their wealth while being less than kind to individuals indebted to them?

How many government officials pass stringent laws requiring strict adherence by their constituents but exempting themselves from adherence? How many Christians have been forgiven many times but are unforgiving with others?

The forgiven servant chose to be punitive in his personal affairs with his personal servant. He did not take into account the goodness demonstrated to him by the king. How many Christians take time each day to consider the forgiveness and mercy shown by God and correspondingly change the way their personal lives are lived? The present Gospel is intended to change individual lives. Listeners to the Gospel are expected to become more “Christ-like”. The Gospel has the power to change lives. Individuals must be receptive for change to occur.

Hardened hearts and ears that do not hear prevent change from taking place. Closed minds prohibit change from taking place. Narrow-mindedness keeps positive change from taking place.

Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” (Mt. 7:21) Being a Christian means living at the highest possible standards of life.

Fr. Rodney Torbic,
Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania

The Prologue from Ochrid
St Nikolai of Zhicha

1. THE DORMITION [THE FALLING ASLEEP - THE ASSUMPTION] OF THE MOST-HOLY BIRTH-GIVER OF GOD (THEOTOKOS)

The Lord Who, on Mt. Sinai, gave the Fifth Commandment, *Honor your father and your mother* (Exodus 20:12), showed by His own example how one should respect one's parents. Hanging on the Cross in agony, He remembered His Mother, and indicating to the Apostle John, He said to her: *Woman behold your son* (John 19:26). After that, He said to John: *Behold your mother* (John 19:27). And so, providing for His Mother, He breathed His last. John had a home on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, in which the Theotokos then lived. She dwelt there to the end of her days on earth. By her prayers, kind guidance, meekness and patience, she greatly assisted Her Son's apostles. She spent most of her remaining time on earth in Jerusalem, often visiting those places that reminded her of the great events and of the great

works of her Son. She especially visited Golgotha, Bethlehem and the Mount of Olives. Of her few distant journeys, her visit to St. Ignatius the God-bearer [Theophorus] in Antioch is recorded; as is her visit to Lazarus (whom our Lord resurrected on the fourth day), the Bishop of Cyprus. She also visited the Holy Mountain [Athos], which she blessed; and she stayed in Ephesus with St. John the Evangelist [The Theologian] during the time of the great persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. In her old age, she often prayed to her Lord and God on the Mount of Olives, the site of His Ascension, that He take her from this world as soon as possible. On one of these occasions, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and revealed to her that she would find repose within three days. The angel gave her a palm-branch, which was to be carried in her funeral procession. She returned home with great joy, hoping in her heart to see her Son's apostles just once more in this life. The Lord fulfilled her wish, and the apostles, borne by angels in the clouds, gathered together at the house on Mount Zion. With great rejoicing she saw them, encouraged them, counseled them, and comforted them. Then she peacefully gave up her soul to God without pain or physical illness. The apostles took up her coffin, from which a heavenly fragrance arose--and, in the company of many Christians, bore it to the Garden of Gethsemane, to the sepulchre of her parents, Saints Joachim and Anna. By God's providence, the procession was concealed by a cloud from the evil Jews. Even so, Aphthonius [Anthony], a Jewish priest, grabbed the coffin with the intention of overturning it, but an angel of God severed both his hands. He then cried out to the apostles for help, and was healed upon declaring his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Thomas was absent--again, according to God's providence--in order that a new and all-glorious mystery of the Holy Theotokos would be revealed. On the third day, Thomas arrived and desired to venerate [kiss] the body of the Holy Most-pure One. But when the apostles opened the sepulchre, they found only the winding sheet: the body was not in the tomb! That evening, the Theotokos, surrounded by a host of angels, appeared to the apostles and said to them: "Rejoice, I will be with you always." It is not exactly known how old the Theotokos was at the time of her Falling Asleep, but the overwhelming opinion is that she was over sixty years of age.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE MOST-HOLY BIRTH-GIVER OF GOD [THE THEOTOKOS]

Thus spoke the Lord Most-high:

"From your heart, Virgin pure,
Living water will flow,
That those who thirst will drink Christ."

Life-bearing source,
We all boast of you!

Those who thirst will drink Christ.
By Him, the bitter is sweetened;
By Him, the scales are washed from blind eyes;
And by Him, the grief of those in sorrow is healed.

Life-bearing source,
We all boast of you!

Sweet drink sprung from eternity,
Our arid age, the brook filling:
Once more toward heaven raised,
Our exhausted world becomes refreshed.

Life-bearing source,
We all boast of you!

Glory to You, O Most-pure One!
Glory to You, O Mother of God!
For us the Living Christ You did bear,
The living water of grace!
Life-bearing source

We all boast of you!

REFLECTION

Each one of the faithful can learn much--indeed, very much--from the life of the Virgin Theotokos. I would like to mention only two things. First, she frequently went to Golgotha, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, Bethlehem, and other places redolent [reminiscent] of her Son. She prayed on bended knees at all of these places--especially at Golgotha. Thus she gave the first example and impetus to the faithful of visiting holy places out of love toward Him Who by His presence, His passion and His glory made these places holy and significant. Second, we learn how she prayed for a quick departure from this life, so that, when separated from her body, her soul would not encounter the prince of darkness and his horrors, and hidden from the dark regions would not see the punishment of those darkened by sin. Do you see how terrible it is for the soul to pass through the toll-houses [mitarstva]? When she--who gave birth to the Destroyer of hades, and who herself has tremendous power over demons--prayed thus, what then is left for us? Out of extreme humility, she commended herself to God, and did not trust in her own deeds. So much less should we trust in our deeds, and even more we should commend ourselves into the hands of God, crying out for His mercy, especially at the time of the departure of the soul from the body.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the wondrous sign by which Samuel confirmed his words before the people (1 Samuel 12 - [also known as 1 Kings 12]):

1. How Samuel told the people it was evil in the sight of the Lord that they sought a king for themselves other than the Lord, the true King;
2. How for the confirmation of his words, he called upon God for thunder and rain;
3. How the thunder and rain descended, and how the people were in fear of God, and of Samuel.

HOMILY

About the Most-glorious Child

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

In all of human history, to what mortal man could all of these titles, all of this authority, and all of this glory apply? There is no one. That is why St. Chrysostom says: "It is impossible to understand this in regard to any other man, but only in reference to Christ." The prophet here clearly expresses two natures in the Savior: the human and the divine. *A Child is born*--this signifies a human nature. *Unto us a Son is given*--this unites the two natures in one person, the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin in the person of the Incarnate Lord. The remaining titles signify the Divine Nature of the Lord Jesus. His government is *upon His shoulder*--the government is His, His own, and is not borrowed. *Mighty Counsel*--is this not the Holy Trinity? The angel--or messenger and herald--of this Triune Counsel is the Son of God, the Pre-eternal Word. *Wonderful Counseller*--for all that is wonderful, all that is new that has come to mankind is from Him and through Him. *The Mighty God*--what would Arius and his modern adherents, who deny the divinity of the Lord Jesus, say to this? *The Prince of Peace*--for from Him is lasting peace; outside Him is war, without and within. *The Everlasting Father* [the Father of future times]-as He is the Lord of the past, so also is He the Lord of the future. Furthermore, He is also the Father of the Church, the Creator of the new world, the Founder of the Kingdom of God.

Isaiah himself, the son of Amos, saw this wonderful and true vision some seven hundred years before it was revealed to the entire universe.

O Lord Jesus, You are to the prophets the most glorious prophecy, and to the faithful the most glorious revelation. Unlock our minds, so that the wonderful glory of Your majesty can enter into our minds; and unlock our hearts, so that they would be filled by Your life-creating love.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ ***Friday – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM - Confession***
- ❖ ***12th Sunday after Pentecost– Semptember 04th – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy***

Donations August 21, 2022

Offering - \$750.00 Candles - \$130.00

Large Candles

In Memory of Connie Bartis from the Bartis Family
In Memory of Connie Bartis from Frank Palmer
In Memory of Connie Bartis from Kathy & Gerry Szmyd
In Memory of Nick & Sarah Davich from Carol McAllister
In Memory of Nicholas Davich Jr. from Carol McAllister
In Memory of Dudukovich & Knezevich Families from Mark Stokrp



Friday September 16th 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM
Saturday, September 17th Noon to 9:30 PM
Sign up to work in the Lobby!!!

**NUT and APRICOT ROLLS
FOR SALE - \$12
PLEASE SEE Rose, Suzette or Dick!**