

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

971 St. Clair Rd, Johnstown, PA 15905

Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

(814) 244-4063

The Thirty Second Sunday after Pentecost (01.30.2022)

Luke 18:18-27

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. (KJV)

The Lord Jesus Christ reaffirmed the value of God's commandments in the present Gospel. In addition, Jesus showed compassion on the poor by telling the rich man to sell his goods and distribute the funds to the poor.

When the rich man had disposed himself of his possessions, he was to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The rich man's initial interest was in experiencing eternal life. The way to eternal life was the basis for the question posed to Jesus.

The rich man followed God's commandments but his commitment to God was only partial. The rich man had a firm and irrevocable attachment to his material goods.

The rich man's material goods had a stronger grip on his life than the interest in following Jesus Christ and seeking eternal life. Each person hearing this Gospel benefits by evaluating the strength of the personal interest in eternal life.

Listeners to the present Gospel have the opportunity to assess whether the commandments of God are followed. If a person does not follow the commandments, change is possible now to begin immediately to follow them.

Each believer does well to consider the personal attitude to the poor and unfortunate people in this world. Aiding the poor and unfortunate is a way to lay up treasure in heaven.

The interest in pursuing eternal life is measured by the willingness to completely commit to following Christ. When material interests keep a person from following Jesus Christ, the path to eternal life is in jeopardy.

The Lord Jesus Christ made clear the value of the soul exceeds the value of the whole world. Jesus said: “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mk. 8:36)

Contemporary society is consumer oriented. Gathering a large amount of personal goods and wealth is often encouraged. Great wealth abounds in a part of the present world while many suffer in great poverty and material hardship.

The way a person manages material possessions will show the degree Jesus Christ governs the heart, mind and soul. The use of personal wealth and possessions managed with the love of Christ makes a decided difference in life.

The Lord Jesus Christ is clear that a rich person can enter the Kingdom of God. The determining factors for entering the Kingdom and experiencing eternal life rests with the person’s relationship with Christ and the use of personal wealth.

God’s Holy Church proclaims the present Gospel reading each year for believers to look carefully at personal values and commitment to the Lord God. Believers can easily be corrupted by material interests.

Interest in accruing personal wealth can blind individuals to suffering neighbors nearby. Time devoted to properly raising children can be neglected because parents are seeking greater material wealth.

The hunger in the soul seeking eternal life requires Jesus Christ to be the primary interest and goal of life. When interest in material wealth exceeds interest in Christ, experiencing salvation of the soul and eternal life are in jeopardy.

Believers have the opportunity to correct the path of life at any point by seeking to repent and turning to Christ for assistance. The Lord Jesus Christ welcomes persons seeking to repent and follow Christ.

The rich man in the present Gospel made a good beginning by following the commandments. The rich man’s ending in life was placed in jeopardy because of his strong connection to his material goods.

The rich man was not willing to commit completely to following Jesus Christ. The whole person is committed to Jesus Christ at Baptism. All of life's efforts and possessions are to be managed in a God-pleasing manner.

The Church educates and instructs believers of the actions to take to experience eternal life. The Church nourishes and strengthens believers to ward off the evils that arise in life and put the soul in peril.

Attentive believers take each Gospel lesson to heart and apply the Gospel to daily life. Confession and Communion keep the believer united with Christ and on the path to eternal life.

Careful and prudent management of material wealth in God-pleasing ways facilitate a person traveling the path to the Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life. Jesus Christ shines the light on the path to follow and reaffirms reason to hope.

Regardless of the stage in life a believer finds him or herself, eternal life and experiencing the Heavenly Kingdom are possible. The present Gospel reading is a valuable lesson for sober thought and meaningful direction in life.

The Thirty Second Sunday after Pentecost. January 17/30, 2022. Venerable and God-bearing Father Anthony the Great. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic

Sermon of Saint Sava on the True Faith delivered at Monastery Zica, 1220



Brothers and friends and fathers and children called by God, lend your God-loving hearts to hearing the divine dogmas. And hearing these holy words place them, brothers, in your hearts and the conscience of your souls and before the eyes of your mind and understand them.

God, all merciful and lover of mankind, having immeasurable mercy for man, bowed the Heavens and descended to earth, and with His Divine Dispensation and voluntary bearing of many different sufferings to His Divine Body, enlightened the human race;

and He sent to the whole world the Holy Apostles, saying: „Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit“.

But since they themselves did not come to us, our fathers, hearing in truth their words, believed them. And the gracious God, Who has endless mercy and does not wish that any one of us die, by that same first commandment and same manner, according to the teaching and preaching of the Holy Apostles, elevates me to that Sainthood (Archbishopric), wanting through me to „fulfill that which is missing“ of our fathers; and through the Holy Spirit He commands me to announce this word regarding your salvation, which you, hearing it with love, keep it that we might be in communion with the order of the Fathers.

Build your deeds on the foundation of the True Faith

Therefore, brothers and children, putting all of your hope in God, I first pray that we, above all, hold to His True Faith. For, as the Apostle says, „for no other foundation can a man lay than what is laid,“ by the Holy Spirit through the Holy Apostles and God bearing Fathers, and that is – the True Faith, confirmed and preached at the holy Seven Ecumenical councils. And for this reason upon this foundation of the True Faith we need to build with gold and silver and precious stones, that is good deeds. For neither is there use in a correctness of life without the true and enlightened faith in God, nor can true confession (faith) without good deeds, bring us before the Lord, but we must have them both, that „the man of God be perfect“, that our life not falter because of the lacking (of one). For, as the Apostle says: „Faith which works by love“.

We believe....

We believe, therefore, in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, singing to the Thrice Divine, Source and Creator of everything caused, visible and invisible. (The Trinity) Which is of one essence, that is nature, in three Persons, that is we speak of Hypostasis and Persons, by which we do not imply fashion or difference of three Gods or three natures or essences, but we confess One God and one simple and bodiless nature and essence, and we designate the differences of the Persons the difference in Hypostasis. Bowing down to the Trinity, One in Three Hypostasis and the Unity of the One in Essence and One in Might and Without beginning. Only Her do we recognize as Existing in Eternity, with no beginning, Uncreated, Immortal, Indestructible, Unsufferable, All-creating and (all)mighty and (all)providential.

And the One in Trinity, not the Father nor the Holy Spirit, but the Son and God born of the Father, the Word (Logos), beyond time and undivided from Him the Parent Born, and not created, One in Essence Parent and Ever-existing with Him; the Word (Logos) who through (His) goodness brought all things from non-being to being, and in the last days came down from the Heavens for us and our salvation and dwelt in the Virgin's womb and united Himself with the spiritualized body, and a reasonable soul and mind received of essence of that same All Pure Virgin Mary (Theotokos). He, of one essence of Him God the Word (Logos), out of his great love for mankind deigned it, by the will of the Father and (Holy) Spirit, to save His creation. Descending from the Father's bosom, from which He did not separate Himself, (not even when He entered the womb of All Pure Virgin) and took upon Himself not an earlier conceived body spiritualized with a reasonable soul and mind, came (out of the Virgin) as God Incarnate. Being born inexpressibly and preserving the virginity of Her who gave Him birth unharmed, He suffered neither mingling nor change, but remained that which He was and became that which He was not. Taking upon Himself the form of a servant, in truth and not illusion He depicts us in all things, expect sin.

We know Him as perfect God and perfect Man, not another and another, but one and the same before the incarnation and after the incarnation, one complex Hypostasis; Him the One and same in two perfect natures and properties, and in two natures of will and action, both united by Hypostasis, unchanged. We confess Him, One, same will by desire and action divine (action) as God, and Him, One, same will and by desire and action human (action) as man. For He was not subject to natural needs, but was born according to (His) will, according to His will He was hungry, according to His will He was thirsty, according to His will He was tired, according to His will He was afraid, according to His will He died, in truth, and not illusion, He suffered all the natural and flawless sufferings of mankind. And He, Sinless, was crucified and tasted death, and is risen on the third day, His body not seeing decay, and His human essence unharmed and undead He resurrected and, taking it to Heaven, He sat at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again to judge the living and the dead. Just as He ascended with His body, the same way will He return and give unto everyone according to their deeds. For He says: „The dead who are in the tombs will arise and those who did good deeds“ with the true faith „will go eternal life, and those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.“

We bow down and respect....

With this, we bow down and respect and venerate the solemn icon of mankind's Incarnation of God the Word (Logos), the anointed Divinity, remaining unchanged, so that He who through faith is anointed considers to see the very God Who appeared in the flesh and dwelled among men.

We accept the Orthodox Tradition and the heretical innovations we curse

This is (my) God-loving ones, the dogma of the Orthodox Patristic Tradition. Following them, we also believe and confess thus, and all heretics and every heresy of theirs we curse.

We accept all the seven Ecumenical councils; the first which was in Nicea, 318 holy fathers; the second, in Constantinople, 150 holy fathers; the third, earlier, in Ephesus, 200 holy fathers; the fourth in Chalcedon, 630 holy fathers, the fifth, again in Constantinople, 164 holy fathers; the sixth, again in Constantinople, 170 holy fathers. And also that one, a little later in the Metropolis of Nicea, the seventh Council 350 holy fathers, against those who renounced the holy icons and do not teach them and do not bow down before them, impiously slandering Christians. We accept all the Holy Councils which were gathered by God's grace at various times and places for the establishment of the Orthodox evangelical teaching, which the Church accepts. And those whom the holy fathers renounce, we also renounce, and those they curse, we also curse.

For the devil has thought of many heresies at various times and periods, and many weeds of evil belief through his servants, the chief-heretics, he planted in the world for the spoilage and sickening of the true faith, which we curse, and those who invented the evil dogmas, and detest every dishonorable heresy. We, therefore, strive all the more towards every piety, taught to us by the divinely wise servants of God – the Prophets, Apostles and Saints, as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God, says, when He comes from the Father to the world, being incarnated and born a second time, of the All Pure Ever Virgin, and the dogmas of the dispensation of the Father and His beautifully fulfilled, since He was inexpressibly crucified on the Cross, and rose on the third day, and, after His Resurreciotn, remained here on earth for forty days, and since He willed to ascend to the Heavens to His Father, command His Disciples and Apostles, saying: „Go and teach all the ends of the earth, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep all the commandments I have given you“. And again: „Preach the Gospel to every creature. Who believes and is baptized, will be saved, and who does not believe,

will be judged.“ This is, therefore, True Faith: to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Pray to God, keeping all of His commandments

And so, we who are Christian have promised that we will pray to God at all times, (keeping the His commandments and always doing His will). For „faith without deeds is dead“, according to the words of James. Therefore, my beloved brothers and children, just as I said at the beginning, we (need) to keep (and preserve) both with fear and trembling. Keep (therefore) the word of God and the Holy Faith of Christ, and with a pure heart call on His All-pure Name and, not laxing in the holy prayers, fall down before Him, confess your sins and weep with tears before Him and singing to Him and singing in your hearts always, day and night, ceaselessly. For God, when people confess Him and pray to Him, assures man Himself and spiritually enters by faith into the hearts of listen well to His teaching. For, spiritual teaching is not a game, nor words of the thoughts of insane people, but it is the preached Holy Faith of God on which are founded the Holy Ranks in Christ our Lord, of whom the Prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit of God, and the Apostles taught, and the Martyrs confessed, and all the Saints preserved, and the Venerable Fathers zealously as the undivided cornerstone of the Church, of Christ who is the Wisdom and Power of the Father – (and having kept that) by the Holy Spirit and powerfully and mightily and firmly and surely in the faith – and Who assures many to this day and establishes them and assures all of His Divine Faith. He, the All-gracious Lover of man, reaches even to us with His rich mercy, correcting that which we are missing, wanting as the true Pastor to gather us, the misguided sheep, to (His) heavenly sheepfold. Reaching that sheepfold with the eyes of our soul and mind, we always pray to Him, surrendering to Him at every hour, and confessing to Him, as He Himself gives us to state or think of and preserve it unspoken. And, having done His will, we will receive from Him salvation in this age and the next, if we faithfully preserve His commandments, which the Lord Himself commanded us to keep and promised us a heavenly reward, saying: „Truly I tell you: Whoever keeps My word will never see death“.

The Gift of Christ is – that we never die

Yes, my beloved children, what is more reliable and righteous than these words to which Christ Himself testifies and confirms? What is better than this: to never taste of death? For, it only this not tasting of death is already far from sin, for through the

tasting of sin the taste of death entered into all of mankind to the time of Christ. For that reason did He taste of death, He who is sinless and immortal according to His first birth by the Father, but He tasted of it for us, and He suffered, so that through faith in Him we taste of immortality, as the Prophet said: „Taste and see that the Lord is good“. Therefore, He (the Lord) is very good and righteous and faithful to all of His words, and all of His deeds are in faith. For this reason, my beloved children, we who love Him should do deeds of faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord, receiving from Him Immortal Faith, such a gift that we never die!

Thus, if you preserve this, you will be blessed (by God) throughout the ages, and your hearts will be blessed, and your souls will be blessed and blessed will be you who have received the Faith of God and preserved it in purity. Looking upon the Immortal Gift of Christ, always do good deeds in Christ: a pure faith and pray often, having love and hope in Him, and a clear conscious before God and man, fast and vigil, laying on the ground, truth in all things, a bodily purity and an abstinence of the soul, preserving the mind of Holy Baptism – the Enlightenment of God, by which we renounced Satan and all his ministers. And always love repentance and confession of your sins and weeping over them, humility and patience, righteousness, teaching, correcting your lives, hatred for sin, and not drunkenness and not fornication, but, on the contrary, a pure life, pleasing in the eyes of God.

That it be good to you and your sons

For God is one from the beginning and in the endless centuries. And this is the first commandment said to those that love Him: “love the Lord God with your whole heart, your whole mind and your whole soul and all of your strength“. And may these words, which I command you today, be written on your hearts and souls, that you fear the Lord God Almighty and Him alone serve with fear and trembling and Him only offer glory and honor, and only Him give your fidelity to, and do not swear by His Name, but may your words – as the Apostle says – “yes be yes, and no be no“. And, in general, may no other god be mentioned other than He who created the heavens and the earth. To nothing „offer worship or serve from Heaven above or on the earth below and what is in the waters or beneath the ground“ other than your Lord God, in whom you were baptized and believe, and renounced yourselves of secret shame, and have become communicants of His „Good Faith“ and co-participants of His Immortality. Be with Him relentlessly for „before His eyes everything is revealed“ as the Apostle says, „our God is a fire which consumes“; and „visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, to those

who love Him and keep His commandments”. For He is “God of gods and Lord of lords, God who is great and mighty and awesome”. Yes, “keep His commandments and carry out before His eyes all the words which He has commanded you”, “that it be well for you and your sons after you, that they live eternally, if you do good and that which is well pleasing before your Lord God” to Whom be glory and without beginning to the ages without end. Amen.

The Prologue from Ochrid *St Nikolai of Zhicha*

1. SAINT ATHANASIUS THE GREAT, ARCHBISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA

Athanasius was born in Alexandria in the year 296 A.D., and from his early childhood had an inclination to the spiritual life. He was a deacon to Archbishop Alexander and accompanied him to the First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325 A.D.]. It was at this Council that Athanasius became renowned for his knowledge of, devotion to, and zeal for Orthodoxy. He contributed greatly to the destruction of the heresy of Arius and the strengthening of Orthodoxy. He wrote the Symbol of Faith [The Creed] which was adopted at the Council. Following the death of Alexander, Athanasius was elected Archbishop of Alexandria. He remained in his calling as Archbishop of Alexandria for forty years, although not for the entire time on the archepiscopal throne. With few exceptions, he was persecuted by heretics throughout his life. Of the emperors, he was persecuted the most by Constantius, Julian and Valens; of the bishops, by Eusebius of Nicomedia and many others; and of the heretics in general, by Arius and his followers. Athanasius was forced to hide from his persecutors at various times: once in a well, once in a grave, and sometimes in private homes or in the deserts. Twice he was forced to flee to Rome. Only for a while before his death did he live peacefully, as a good shepherd among his good flock, who truly loved him. Few are the saints who were so mercilessly slandered and so criminally persecuted as was St. Athanasius. His great soul patiently endured all for the love of Christ and, in the end, emerged victorious from this entire terrible and long-lasting struggle. For counsel, for comfort and for moral support, Athanasius often visited St. Anthony the Great, whom he respected as his spiritual father. A man who formulated the greatest truth, Athanasius had much to suffer for that truth--until the Lord gave him repose in His kingdom as His faithful servant, in the year 373 A.D.

2. SAINT MAXIM, ARCHBISHOP OF WALLACHIA

Maxim was the son of the Serbian Despot [Prince] Stefan the Blind and his wife, Despotica [Princess] Angelina. He was tonsured a monk in the Monastery of Manasija. Pressured by the Turks, he fled to Romania, where he was consecrated to the vacant throne of the Archbishop of Wallachia. He negotiated a truce between the warring commanders Radul and Bogdan and averted a war between them. In his later years, he returned to Krušedol, where he built a monastery and, after a lengthy ascetic life, reposed on January 18, 1546 A.D. His incorrupt and miracle-working relics repose, even now, in this monastery.

HYMN OF PRAISE

CHRIST AS THE MEASURE OF ALL THINGS

Through Athanasius, wisdom shown,
And the truth of God enlightened men.

That wisdom is not bitter, the people recognized,
But, to all who drink it to the bottom, it is sweet;

To all who suffer for it, it is dear.

Whoever in the world feels all hope extinguished,

Whoever walks through the world as over an old cemetery,

Whoever thinks about human life as about weak slavery,

Whoever thinks about the five earthly continents as about five threshing floors,

Whoever thinks about five oceans as about five puddles--

To him, let Christ be the measure by which eternity is measured;

Let him adhere to that measure, and be confirmed in faith.

Whoever recognizes this measure will never abandon it;

He will find no other measure by which to understand the mysteries of the world.

All other measures, in spite of exertion,

Do not reach to the Alpha or the Omega:

They are as deceiving as the moon that crawls over the water,
But appears to reach the bottom of the water.
Christ surpasses both ends of the world,
Where the drama ends and where it began.
Of all the mysteries, the greatest mystery is Him.
From His Nativity to His Crucifixion on the Cross,
From His Crucifixion on the Cross to His Resurrection--He is the
true measure of all God's creation.
Through Him, measuring suffering in the midst of worldly tumult,
The saints of God suffered--without pain.

REFLECTION

To the question, "Why did the Son of God appear on earth in a human body and not in another form of creation?" the brilliant St. Athanasius replied in this manner: "If they ask why did He not appear in some other, better form of creation--for example, as the sun or the moon, or the stars or fire, or the wind--but just as a man, let them know that the Lord did not come to show Himself, but to heal and teach sufferers. For to reveal Himself only to amaze the viewers would mean to come for a show. It was necessary for the Healer and the Teacher, not only to come, but to serve for the benefit of the suffering ones, and to reveal Himself in such a way that this revelation would be bearable for the sufferers. Not one single creature was in error in the eyes of God, except man alone: neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the sky, nor the stars, nor the water, nor the wind betrayed their ranks. On the contrary, knowing their Creator and their King--the Word--they all remained as they were created. Only human beings separated themselves from good and replaced truth with deceit; and the honor belonging to God (as well as the knowledge about Him) they transferred to devils and to men carved out of stone [idols]. What, therefore, is so unbelievable in this, that the Logos appeared as a man to save mankind?" Indeed, we also ask the unbelievers of our day: "In what form would you wish God to appear, if not as a man?"

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the Lord Jesus, burdened by slander and shame for the sake of our salvation:

1. Burdened by slander and shame from the Jewish scribes and elders;
2. Burdened by slander and shame from the many contemporary scribes and elders;
3. Burdened by slander and shame from every one of us who has been baptized in His name and who has not fulfilled His commandments.

HOMILY

on danger

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning" (Luke 12:35).

This is the commandment of Him Who knows the weaknesses of our being, and Who desires our good more than our father and mother do. This is the commandment of our man-loving Lord. When man is ungirded, does not his entire body droop? When he girds himself, does not his entire body become as erect as a candle? As a candle stands, so must our soul stand, erect before God. How will our souls stand erect before God if unrestrained physical earthly passions and lusts weigh them down? Behold, in the loins is the nest of the main physical passions. To gird one's loins means to tighten oneself with restraint and not to give in to passions at will. But to gird one's physical loins is not the goal, but the means that we utilize to easily gird our mind, our heart and our will. Physical restraint is the primary school of our Christian character; after it comes a higher school, in which we learn restraint of the mind, restraint of the heart and restraint of the will. If we gird our mind, then lustful thoughts will be unable to find a place in its narrowness. If we gird our heart, then lustful desires will be unable to find a place in it. If we gird our will, then the evil, beastly and demonic desires will be unable to find a place in it.

Brethren, by a narrow path can one enter into the Kingdom of God. Only in the narrowness of the mind, the heart and the will, can the candles of the virtues be lighted, the flames of which rise toward God. By the image of the lighted candles, we should understand Christian virtues.

O Lord, pure and sinless, the seat of all virtues, help us to gird ourselves with restraint and to walk the narrow path to Thee with the lighted candles that Thou hast brought into the world.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- **Friday – February 05th – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM**
- **33rd Sunday after Pentecost – (Sunday, February 06th) – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy**

Donations January 23, 2022

Offering - \$1,677.00 Candles - \$14.00 Dues - \$300.00

Recipient of the Gold Coin from the Cesnica was Suzanna Gjurich

↳

Building Fund

In Memory of Donna Koslin Wharton (Tete) – \$100 From Sharon Urban

*In Memory of Steve & Mary Stramanak - \$100 from Sharon Urban
Large Candles*

*In Memory of Julie Lambrinos from Kumovi Dan & Dyne Tomak
In Memory of Parents, Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Robert & Milica
Knepp*

In Memory of Ranka Marinkovich from Richard Kondas

In Memory of Ed Gartrell from Steve Purich

In Memory of Linda (Locher) Leckrone from Dorothy Podolak

SALE!!!!

The kolo is selling Nut, Poppyseed, Apricot and Lekvar - \$10/each

And Pumpkin Rolls - \$8/each – while supplies last

Please see Pat Niel

IMPORTANT DATES

****TODAY Sunday, January 30th****

St Sava Program

Program and Luncheon following Divine Liturgy!

Please plan to stay to support our children, the future of

Our St Nicholas Church!!!

****Friday, February 4th****

Fish Fry

****Sunday, February 20th****

Men's Club Slava Celebration

With a Serbian Steak Dinner