

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (02.05.2023.)

Luke 18:10-14

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. **(KJV)**

The current Gospel is proclaimed every year in God's Holy Church. Listeners are expected to learn from the reading each year. The Gospel is ever new and relevant with each reading.

Believers are at a different point in life with each Gospel reading. The challenge for hearers of the Gospel is to value the humility of the publican and make it a part of personal life.

It is very easy to become like the Pharisee and be judgmental of others. Focusing on the sins of others is a way to avoid the discomfort of confronting personal sin and taking corrective action.

Taking responsibility for personal sins and addressing them requires honesty in the heart, mind and soul. The desire to do better and be better in Christ necessitates honesty and acknowledgment of personal sinfulness.

The measure of a person's character is connected to honesty with the self.

God knows each person's sins and each person's thoughts, actions and intentions. The Pharisee and Publican are a lesson in contrasts in their relationship with God.

The ideal relationship with God is a relationship of love. God is love. God heals in love and enables the person to grow. Sin impedes growth and detracts from the beauty of God-created life.

Sin affects the heart, mind and soul. God's merciful forgiveness and healing power are necessary for corrective change. The Pharisee failed to acknowledge his own sins. The publican knew all too well his sins and sought God's healing mercy.

The publican viewed God as good and merciful. The publican took responsibility for his actions, He desired mercy and healing. The publican was not judgmental of others. He was only concerned with the state of his own soul.

The Pharisee saw no wrong in himself. The Pharisee saw wrong in others. Personal change was not a desire of the Pharisee. He was content with what he perceived as his own goodness.

Growth in Jesus Christ is always possible. Regardless of how good and faithful we are, we remain sinners. We are always in need of God's forgiveness and mercy. We are always in need of God's love and healing.

Perfection exists only in Christ. Humans constantly commit sins. The publican's behavior teaches that when we sin, we can turn to the Lord God for forgiveness and mercy.

If we focus only on our goodness, we deny ourselves the growth that is possible through repentance of sins. We fail to avail ourselves of the power of God's love and forgiveness when we are content in the way we are.

The publican knew his sinfulness was not pleasing to God. He felt within himself that his actions were not good. He turned to God in trust and in hope for mercy. He humbled himself and was not boastful.

The love of God is ever present. God's healing power, goodness and mercy are ever present and within reach of each person. Pray and humbleness of heart are the way to reach out to God.

The Psalmist said many centuries ago: "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."(Ps.50/51:17) The Psalmist's wisdom is lasting. The publican's example of humility is instructive.

The Pharisee was shortsighted in his vision. He did not see or acknowledge the greatness of God. He failed to credit God for any of the goodness he attributed to himself. The Pharisee credited himself with goodness. He did not credit God.

Goodness comes from and originates with God Any good done by a person is due to God at work in the person. It is from God that the person gets the ability to do good. (James 1:17)

The Church is acting at this time to prepare believers for the Lenten Journey. Believers are reminded of the value of humility, repentance and seeking God's forgiveness.

The Lenten Journey requires preparation of the heart, mind and soul. Bodily readiness has a place in the journey as well. The believer's goals and values are examined carefully when the Lenten Journey is underway and taken to heart.

Personal sinfulness comes into focus during Great Lent. Self-awareness and personal honesty are prominent in the Lenten Journey being beneficial. Believers are to ready the self in the days leading to Great Lent.

Life is a constant journey from birth to departure from this life, The Kingdom of God and righteousness are the primary intended goals of the serious believer..(Mt.6:33)

The Holy Mysteries and Diving services in God's Holy Church enable the richness of the life in Christ. Unity with Christ is possible. Eternal life awaits the faithful. The publican points the way to turn to the Lord God in faith and in love.

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. Holy Hieromartyr Clement, Bishop of Ancyra and those with him. January 23/February 5, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid St Nikolai of Zhicha

1. THE THREE HIERARCHS: SAINT BASIL THE GREAT, SAINT GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, AND SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Each of these saints has his own feast day: St. Basil the Great, January 1; St. Gregory the Theologian, January 25; and St. John Chrysostom, January 27. This combined feast day, January 30, was instituted in the eleventh century during the reign of Emperor Alexius Comnenus. Once, a debate arose among the people concerning who among the three was the greatest. Some extolled Basil because of his purity and courage; others extolled Gregory for his unequaled depth and lofty mind in theology; still others extolled Chrysostom because of his eloquence and clarity in expounding the Faith. Thus some were called Basilians, others Gregorians, and the third were called Johannites. This debate was settled by divine providence, to the benefit of the Church and to the even greater glory of the three saints. Bishop John of

Euchaita (June 14) had a vision in a dream: At first all three of these saints appeared to him separately in great glory and indescribable beauty, and after that, all three appeared together. They said to him: "As you see, we are one in God and there is nothing contradictory in us; neither is there a first or a second among us." The saints also advised Bishop John to write a common service for them and to order a common feast day of celebration. Following this wonderful vision, the debate was settled in this manner: January 30 would be designated as the common feast of these three hierarchs. The Greeks consider this feast not only an ecclesiastical feast, but also their greatest national school holiday.

2. THE HIEROMARTYR [PRIESTLY-MARTYR] HIPPOLYTUS, BISHOP OF ROME

Hippolytus suffered for the Faith during the reign of Claudius. When the virgin Chrysa was mercilessly tortured for Christ in Rome, St. Hippolytus interceded on her behalf before the torturers and denounced them. Because of this protest, Hippolytus also was brought to court and condemned and, after prolonged tortures, was sentenced to death. They bound his hands and feet and drowned him in the sea. Along with Hippolytus and Chrysa, twenty other martyrs also suffered. St. Hippolytus suffered in the year 269 A.D.

3. THE HOLY MARTYR THEOPHILUS THE NEW

As a commander of the Emperor Constantine and the Empress Irene, Theophilus was enslaved by the Hagarenes and was kept in prison for four years. When he refused all pressures of the Moslems to abandon the Christian Faith, Theophilus was beheaded with the sword, taking up his aode with the Lord in the year 784 A.D.

4. SAINT PETER, KING OF BULGARIA

Peter, the son of Simeon, was a great admirer of St. John of Rila. He gained independence from Constantinople for the Bulgarian Church, and preserved Orthodoxy in Bulgaria from the Bogomils. After an unsuccessful war with the Hungarians and Russians, Peter reposed in 967 A.D., in the fifty-sixth year of his life.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE THREE HIERARCHS: SAINT BASIL, SAINT GREGORY THE THEOLOGIAN, AND SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Fasting and Faith--Basil,
Theology--Gregory,
Acts of Charity--Chrysostom,
Golden mouths, mouths of honey!
All laborers of one work;
Three separately--three angels,
The three together, as God is one,
No one is chief, no one is secondary.

In eternity they all agree,
You invoke one, all three help;
You hymn one, all three hear;
You glorify one, all three rejoice.
Three men, one whole;
Three hierarchs, one work;
Three names, one glory;
To all three of them, Christ is the Head.

REFLECTION

Here is an example of how emperors seek counsel from the saints, how the saints avoid vanity and riches, and how they counsel emperors. The Orthodox King Peter of Bulgaria set off with his retinue for Rila Mountain, driven by the insatiable desire to see St. John of Rila and to benefit from his instruction. The king sent men ahead to inform the saint of his arrival, but the saint did not agree to meet with the king. The saddened king again sent some men with foodstuffs and an ample amount of gold, as well as a petition requesting the saint to write some counsel for him. John accepted the food but returned the gold, not even wanting to touch it; and he replied to the king: "If you desire the Heavenly Kingdom, be merciful like the Heavenly Father. Do not trust in injustice and do not be covetous; be meek, quiet and accessible to everyone. Do not accept praises from your noblemen. Let your purple robe radiate with virtues. May the remembrance of death never depart from your soul. Humble yourself before the feet of our Mother Church; bow your head before her chief hierarchs so that the King of kings, seeing your sincerity, may reward you with goodness such as never entered into the heart of man." Receiving that letter, the king kissed it, and he later read it frequently.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the Lord Jesus as the Friend of children:

1. As the Friend of the angels in heaven, who, like children, are innocent, obedient and without passions;
2. As the Friend of little children on earth, who easily and simply believe in God;
3. As the Friend of the saints, who by labor and grace are purified from sin and become innocent as children.

HOMILY

on how men must become like children in order to be sons of God

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

Thus speaks the Lord, and His word is holy and true. What advantage do children have over adults? They have three advantages: in faith, in obedience, and in forgiveness. The child asks his parent about everything, and no matter what his parent replies, the child believes his parent. The child is obedient to his parent and easily subordinates his will to the will of his parent. The

child is forgiving, and even though he provokes easily, he forgives quickly. Our Lord requires these three from all men, that is, faith, obedience and forgiveness. He desires that men believe in Him unconditionally, as a child believes in his parent; that they be unconditionally obedient to Him, as a child is to his parent, and that they be forgiving in relation to one another, not remembering evil and not rendering evil for evil.

Faith, obedience and forgiveness are the three main characteristics of a child's soul. Purity and joy are in addition to these. A child is not greedy, a child is not lustful, and a child is not vainglorious. The child's eye is unspoiled by vices, and his joy is unspoiled by worries.

O brethren, who can make us over again into children? No one, except the one Christ. He can make us over into children and help us to be born again by His example, by His teaching and by the power of His Holy Spirit.

O Lord Jesus, perfect in obedience and meekness, Eternal Child of the Heavenly Father, help us to become as infants by faith in Thee, by obedience toward Thee, and by forgiveness toward one another.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

❖ **SUNDAY (February 12th) – The Sunday of the Prodigal Son**
10:00 AM - Divine Liturgy

Donations January 29, 2023

Offering - \$ 3,133.00 Candles - \$22.00 Dues - \$50

Donations

In Memory of Andja & Ranka Marinkovich and all past Sunday School Teachers from Gary, Rose & Kristina Marinkovich - \$100

Large Candles

In Memory of Charles Bulich from Olga Bulich
In Memory of Mildred Tumbas from Milica Knepp
In Memory of Vinny Czubak from Jeannette Czubak
In Memory of Mike & Mildred Tumbas from Kathleen McDowell
In Memory of Damenja & Lazo Gjurich from Diane and Dan Tomak
In Memory of Amelia & Joseph Kondas from Richard Kondas

**Fish Fries begin Friday, February 24, 2023
And run through Friday, April 7, 2023**

Kolo News

**You may still order subs today for our sale next week.
Please see Donna Zimmerman**

On display in our church hall Today
Sunday, February 5th.

