

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

(09.04.2022.)

Matthew 19:16-26

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. ***(KJV)***

The present Gospel focuses on growth and change for the life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Growth in Christ involves following and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart, mind and soul are required to be open to change.

Acting on the interest in growth in Christ is necessary. The rich man in the present Gospel was only willing to adhere to the commandment to a certain degree. He had reached the limit of what he was willing to do.

How many believers feel they do enough for the church, for their family, their friends or their employers? Growth requires a willingness to change and put aside all that inhibits growth.

Jesus told the rich man to dispose of his possessions to enter into life. The rich man expressed an interest in eternal life but his attachment to his possessions held him back from the change required.

Believers exist in every century who deny themselves the fulness of the life in Christ. The unwillingness to change and give up inhibiting possessions in the current life prevents living fully in Christ.

Possessions can include material possessions but also other non-material aspects such as unwillingness to give up an office or position held to move forward. Certain attitudes can prevent growth in Christ and need to be set aside.

Eternal life is the intended goal of each Christian. Growth in Jesus Christ is to occur throughout life. The believer must be conscious and active in following Christ in order to grow.

The Holy Gospel, the Church's Divine services and teachings nourish and guide the believer from Holy Baptism until departure from this life. Attentive believers are active in following Christ in the Church.

Participating in the Holy Mysteries enable the believer to be transformed and remain united with Christ. Embracing change includes opening the heart, mind and soul to Christ and welcoming the newness Jesus Christ constantly provides.

The love, mercy and goodness of Christ await the believer opening the heart, mind and soul to newness in Christ. Eternal life is the ultimate goal. The path to eternal life is set forth at the time of Holy Baptism.

God reveals the steps to take from Baptism until departure from this life. God's revelations become known to the believer through participating in the life of the Church.

Constant repentance, fasting and prayer open the believer's heart, mind and soul to attentiveness to God's teachings and revelations. The attentive believer comes to know the steps God desires for the believer to take.

Just as Jesus told the rich man in the current Gospel, attentive believers will understand each day Jesus' expectations for eternal life. The decision rests with the believer whether to give up the inhibitors in life to gain eternal life.

The rich man went away sorrowful. The rich man's possessions ruled his heart, mind and soul to a greater degree than his desire for eternal life. This Gospel is a challenge for believers each year to examine the heart, mind and soul.

Hearing the present Gospel enables each believer is to look carefully at the heart, mind and soul. Each believer hearing the Gospel answers the question whether to give up possessions inhibiting growth to gain eternal life.

Jesus Christ makes clear eternal life is possible. God makes eternal life possible. With God, difficulties can be overcome that stand in the road of attaining eternal life.

By reaching into the depths of the heart, mind and soul, the believer truly desiring eternal life, will find a way to seek God's help to make the changes necessary.

Childbirth is a painful experience for the mother but giving birth brings joy. Giving up old ways of life can be painful for believers. The joy offered in Jesus Christ makes the change worth making.

The soul is worth more than the whole world. The Gospel of St. Mark states "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? " (Mk.8:36) Today is the day to embrace Jesus Christ and seek eternal life.

The Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Martyr Agathonicus; Holy Hieromartyr Gorazd of Prague. August 22/September 4, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid *St Nikolai of Zhicha*

1. THE HOLY MARTYRS AGATHONICUS, ZOTICUS AND OTHERS WITH THEM

St. Agathonicus was a citizen of Nicomedia and a Christian by faith. With great zeal he converted the Hellenes from idolatry and instructed them in the true Faith. At Emperor Maximian's orders, the regional governor cruelly persecuted the Christians. The deputy captured St. Zoticus in a place called Carpe. He crucified Zoticus's disciples and brought Zoticus himself to Nicomedia--where he also captured and bound St. Agathonicus, Princeps, Theoprepis (Bogoljepa), Acindynus, Severianus, Zeno and many others. Securely bound, they were all taken to Byzantium. As they traveled, Saints Zoticus, Theoprepis and Acindynus died of their many wounds and exhaustion. Severianus was slain near Chalcedon. Agathonicus and the others were taken to Silybria, in Thrace. There, after being

torture in the emperor's presence, they were beheaded, and entered into eternal life and the joy of their Lord.

2. THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR EULALIA

The virgin Eulalia, born of Christian parents in the town of Barcelona, lived during a time of terrible persecution against Christians in Spain. Completely dedicated to Christ as her Bridegroom, completely immersed in Holy Scripture, Eulalia ceaselessly disciplined herself in voluntary asceticism of the body and spirit. When the torturer Dacian--a merciless killer of Christians throughout Spain--came to Barcelona, Eulalia secretly left from her parents at night, came before the torturer, and, in the presence of many people, rebuked him for slaughtering innocent people. She also ridiculed the lifeless idols and openly confessed her faith in Christ the Living Lord. The enraged Dacian ordered that Eulalia be disrobed and beaten with rods. The holy virgin showed that she did not feel pain from being tortured for her Christ. The torturer then bound her to a wooden cross and ordered that her body be burned with torches. Then the torturer asked her: "Where is your Christ, now, to save you?" Eulalia answered: "He is here with me, but you are unable to see Him because of your impurity." Under savage torture, Eulalia gave her soul to God. When she reposed, the people saw a white dove ascend from her mouth. Snow instantly fell from the sky and covered the naked body of the martyr like a white garment. On the third day, St. Felix came and sadly wept before Eulalia's still-hanging body, and a smile formed on her lifeless lips. Her parents and other Christians honorably buried the body of this holy virgin. Eulalia suffered and died for her Lord, and entered into eternal joy, at the beginning of the fourth century.

3. THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR ANTHUSA AND OTHERS WITH HER

Anthusa was the daughter of wealthy but pagan parents from Seleucia in Syria. Learning of Christ, Anthusa believed in Him with all her heart and secretly went to Bishop Athanasius, who baptized her. Angels of God appeared to her at her baptism. Soon afterward, Anthusa set out for the wilderness to live a life of asceticism, for she was afraid to return to her parents. She labored ascetically in the wilderness for twenty-three years. She gave up her soul while in prayer, kneeling on a stone under which, according to her last testament, she wished to be buried. Bishop Athanasius and two of Anthusa's servants, Charismus and Neophytus, were slain some time later because of their faith in Christ. These events occurred in the

time of Emperor Valerian, in about 257 A.D. They all reposed honorably and were crowned with heavenly wreaths of victory.

THE HOLY FEMALE MARTYR EULALIA

God's white dove,
And martyr of Christ--
Eulalia desired torture,
To purify her spirit by torment.
What is the body? Weak potter's clay;
And when the soul bursts out of it,
Dust returns to its dust,
While the soul flies to the angelic world.
Eulalia bore Christ
And without sighing, endured tortures,
And in the midst of torment she prayed to God
That the torture she might withstand.
And the dove did withstand,
And the martyr did conquer.
Her body, wounded,
With white snow was covered;
Her soul flew off like a dove,
Bound for her Creator.
On her lifeless face,
With white snow, covered,
Was the smile of a victor,
And the smile of an avenger!
With a smile she was illumined,
And, a new life, proclaimed.
By the prayers of Eulalia,
May God have mercy on us!

REFLECTION

When a man once truly repents, he needs to avoid thinking about the sins he committed, so that he will not sin again. St. Anthony counsels: "Be careful that your mind be not defiled with the remembrance of former sins--that the remembrance of those sins not be renewed in you." He also says: "Do not establish your previously committed sins in your soul by thinking about them, so that they not be repeated in you. Be assured that they were forgiven you from the time that you gave yourself to God and to repentance. In that, do not doubt." It is said of St. Ammon that he attained such perfection that, in his abundance of godliness, he no longer recognized that evil even existed. When they asked him what is that "narrow and difficult path" (Matthew 7:14), he replied: "It is the restraining of one's thoughts, and severing of one's desires, in order to fulfill the will of God." Whoever restrains sinful thoughts does not think of his own sin or the sins of others, or of anything corruptible or earthly. The mind of such a man is continually in heaven, where there is no evil. Thus, sin gradually ceases to be in him--not even in his thoughts.

CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the wondrous help David received from God (1 Samuel 19 [also known as 1 Kings 19]):

1. How David played the harp before Saul;
2. How an evil spirit possessed Saul, and Saul hurled a spear at David, intending to kill him;
3. How Saul, even though he was very close to his target, did not hit David.

HOMILY

About the prophecy of the miracles of Christ

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leaps as a hart and the tongue of the dumb sing" (Isaiah 35: 5-6).

Come, brethren, let us be amazed at the power of our Living God, Who opened the eyes of mortal men to see what will come to pass, even in the far future. And even more, to see these future events in the minutest details, as though Isaiah himself were an apostle of Christ, and walked with the Lord, witnessing miracle after miracle: how Christ gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, healing to the lame, and voice and speech to the deaf and dumb. When John the Baptist, in prison, sent his disciples to ask Christ: *Are You He who is to come or do we look for*

another? (Matthew 11:3), the Lord Christ answered them in the words of His prophet Isaiah: *Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up* (Matthew 11: 4-5).

See how wonderfully the Lord planned our salvation! That which was prophesied about Him through His Prophet Isaiah, is what He fulfilled. Once the Prophet Isaiah spoke words inspired by the Holy Spirit, and later Christ spoke the words of His prophet. The prophet quoted Him, and now He [Jesus Christ] quotes the prophet. This was to show that, whether Christ speaks His own words or He speaks the words of the prophet, He always speaks only His own words. It was also to show that even then it was He who spoke (and not the prophet), and that it is now He who speaks (and not anyone else). It was also to justify His prophet as His faithful servant, so that no one would be able to say that the prophet spoke falsely. Thus the prophets served to the glory of Christ the Lord; and Christ the Lord glorified His prophets, His true servants.

O Lord Jesus Christ, glorified by Your servants, and the Glorifier of Your servants, help us also, so that by word, deed and thought, we may be able to serve the majestic glory of Your Name.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ ***Thursday - 09.08.'22. Holy Martyrs Adrian and his wife Natalia – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy***
- ❖ ***Friday – PARACLESIS - THE OFFICE OF SUPPLICATION TO SAINT NECTARIOS -05:00 PM – Confession***
- ❖ ***13th Sunday after Pentecost– September 11th – The Beheading of Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John - 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy***

Donations August 28, 2022

Offering - \$1,675.00 Candles - \$41.00

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

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Next Sunday, September 11th we will have a beginning of the school year prayer during Divine Liturgy. Following will be a very important meeting for all students, parents, and anyone interested in helping this school year. Please make plans to stay and be involved in the spiritual lives of our future!

PLEASE Sign up to work in the Lobby!!!



Friday September 16th 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM
Saturday, September 17th Noon to 9:30 PM

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