

Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church

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Rev. Presbyter Dragan Vukovic

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The Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost

(11.06.2022.)

Luke 8:5-15

A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. **(KJV)**

Believers are blessed to hear the word of God at each Divine Liturgy.

God's Holy Church proclaims the word of God consistently through the centuries and in all parts of the world.

The word of God is available in written and recorded form for individuals interested in further study and development in Christ. Each person experiences the word of God differently.

The Gospel describes different responses by those hearing the word of God. Some hear the word but it does not take root in their personal lives. In others the word of God takes root but eventually dies or is choked off by worldly cares.

The word of God takes firm root in some believers and remains throughout life. According to the Gospel these individuals bring forth fruit with patience.

Holding firm to the word of God requires valuing the word of God.

Ascribing value to the word of God comes from within the believer. The Church teaches the word of God and the value. The believer's acceptance of this value and making it a part of daily life rests with the believer.

According to the Gospel read on Pascha each year, Christ is the word and the word became flesh and dwelt among us .(Jn.,1;17) The way a believer lives in Christ determines the fruits of his or her life.

Jesus said many years ago these enlightening words: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." (Lk.11:28) During the course of each day and throughout life, believers are challenged to hear and keep the word of God.

Thank God for the accessibility of the word of God. Thank God for the martyrs and faithful through the centuries having protected and lived the word in God's Holy Church.

Deep in the heart, mind and soul, believers determine their love of the word of God and their interest in in keeping it. Worldly cares and temptations strike at the believer in attempts to dilute the focus on keeping the word of God.

Home, work and community environments do not always lend themselves to believers holding to the word of God. Only the most focused of believers can ward off the distractions and hostilities to the word arising during the course of the day.

Societal values can run counter to the word of God. Often society promotes alternatives to the word that are perilous to the soul. Discernment is necessary to avoid the dangers that creep into the home, the workplace and community.

Love of God springs from the heart, mind and soul. Love of God is learned and strengthened through nourishment by God's word. Embracing the word of God transforms the believer with the passing of time.

Consistent effort is necessary to cling to and learn from the word of God. A willingness to sacrifice time and interests of lesser value brings greater benefit with the word of God.

Exercising patience over the long-term proves the wisdom of the Scriptures as fruit develops and is manifested. Personal life changes when the word of God governs daily actions.

God's Holy Church provides the necessary nourishment through the word of God. Believers are required to make the effort to embrace the word and make the word a part of daily life.

The Christian life entails effort, sacrifice and resolute focus. Perils to the soul exist throughout life. Adhering to the word of God enables believers to begin again and again when having lost focus or slacked in effort.

Joy exists in the word of God and is derived from the word of God. Joy abounds in life when the word of God is central to life. Believers learn of Christian joy through living in Christ, abiding in Christ and loving Christ.

Living in Christ entails not being corrupted by the world. Living in Christ requires the ability to see the falsehoods existing in the world and the perils to the soul.

The word of God gives focus to life for believers and direction for daily life. Perils and temptations of the world are overcome when believers arm themselves with the word of God.

Be grateful and appreciate God's Holy Church. Be thankful for the presence of the word of God as part of daily life. Be resolute and joyful in having the word of God as guide to the Heavenly Kingdom and eternal life.

The Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Greatmartyr Arethas and Martyrs with him. October 24/November 6, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic

The Prologue from Ochrid St Nikolai of Zhicha

1. THE HOLY GREAT-MARTYR DEMETRIUS

This glorious and wonderworking saint was born in Thessalonica of noble and devout parents. Implored of God by childless parents, Demetrius was their only son, and so was raised and educated with great care. Demetrius's father was a commander in Thessalonica. When his father died, Emperor Maximian appointed Demetrius as commander in his place. As he appointed him, Maximian, an opponent of Christ, particularly recommended that he persecute and exterminate the Christians in Thessalonica. Demetrius not only disobeyed the emperor but openly confessed and preached the Lord Jesus Christ in the city of Thessalonica. When the emperor heard of this he became furious with Demetrius. Then, when he was returning from battle against the Sarmatians, Maximian stopped at Thessalonica to investigate the matter. The emperor summoned Demetrius and questioned him about his faith. Demetrius openly acknowledged his Christian Faith to the emperor and also denounced the emperor's idolatry. Maximian cast Demetrius into prison. Knowing what was awaiting him, Demetrius gave all his goods to his faithful servant Lupus to distribute to the poor, and joyfully awaited his imminent suffering for Christ the Lord. An angel of God appeared to him in prison, saying: "Peace be to you, O sufferer of Christ; be brave and be strong!" After several days, the emperor sent soldiers to the prison to kill Demetrius. The soldiers found the saint of God at prayer and ran him through with lances. Christians secretly took his body and honorably buried it. Healing myrrh flowed from the body of the martyr of Christ, curing many of the sick. Soon, a small church was built over his relics.

An Illyrian nobleman, Leontius, was afflicted with an incurable illness. He hastened, with prayer, to the relics of St. Demetrius and was completely healed. In thanksgiving, Leontius erected a much larger church on the site of the old church. The saint appeared to him on two occasions. When Emperor Justinian wanted to translate the relics of the saint from Thessalonica to Constantinople, flaming sparks sprang from the tomb and a voice was heard: "Stop, and do not touch!" And thus, the relics of St. Demetrius have remained for all time in Thessalonica. As the protector of Thessalonica, St. Demetrius has appeared many times, and on many occasions has saved Thessalonica from great calamity. His miracles are without number. The Russians

considered St. Demetrius to be the protector of Siberia, which was conquered and annexed to Russia on October 26, 1581 A.D.

2. THE VENERABLE MARTYR IOASAPH

Ioasaph was a disciple of St. Niphon, Patriarch of Constantinople, and labored in asceticism on the Holy Mountain. He had so great a love for Christ that all of his ascetic works seemed inadequate, and from love he desired to suffer for his Lord. For that reason he went to Constantinople, where he openly confessed to the Turks his faith in the Holy Trinity and the Son of God. The enraged Turks beheaded him on October 26, 1536 A.D.

3. THE COMMERATION OF THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

In the year 740 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Leo the Isaurian, there was a terrifying and prolonged earthquake in Constantinople. The people considered this a punishment from God for their sins, and prayed with great repentance to the Most-holy Theotokos and St. Demetrius, until God showed mercy and the earthquake ceased.

HYMN OF PRAISE

THE HOLY GREAT-MARTYR DEMETRIUS

Thessalonica glorifies its wonderful saint--
St. Demetrius, servant of the Most-high God.
Demetrius, the commander,
Servant of the Creator and Lord.

St. Paul bedewed Thessalonica with tears,
Demetrius watered it with his blood.
Demetrius, the commander,
Servant of the Creator and Lord.

The tears of the apostle and the blood of the martyr
Are the glory, salvation and pride of Thessalonica.
Demetrius, the commander,
Servant of the Creator and Lord.

Let us also glorify Christ's soldier,
The myrrh-gushing saint and courageous martyr.
Demetrius, the commander,
Servant of the Creator and Lord.

REFLECTION

A miracle of St. Demetrius of Thessalonica: Demetrius was a commander of Thessalonica during his life and remained so after his repose. People have felt his presence in Thessalonica, especially in times of great calamities. He protects the city, wards off misfortunes, repels invaders, and helps all who invoke his name. Here is a wonderful example of his unusual aid to people in need. Once, the barbarians attacked Thessalonica and were unable to overtake it. Infuriated at this, they pillaged the countryside and bound and carried off two beautiful maidens whom they gave as a gift to their prince. These maidens knew how to embroider well. When the prince saw their handiwork, he said to them: "I hear that there is a great god in your land, Demetrius, and that he works great miracles. Embroider his face on this linen." The maidens told him that St. Demetrius was not a god but rather God's servant and the helper of Christians. At first, they refused to embroider the face of the saint, but when the prince threatened them with death, they carried out the command and completed the task by St. Demetrius's Day. On the eve of the feast, they looked at their embroidery and wept sorrowfully, as they had to spend the feast day in slavery and had to give that embroidered image of their beloved saint to an impious barbarian. Both maidens prayed to St. Demetrius to forgive them. Then St. Demetrius appeared to them and took them both away, as an angel had once taken the Prophet Habakkuk. He brought them to Thessalonica and set them in his church. A solemn all-night vigil was being celebrated, and many people were there. When they learned of the miraculous rescue of these Christian maidens, all glorified God and St. Demetrius, His great servant and commander.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplate the miraculous deliverance of Peter from prison (Acts 12):

1. How Peter was sleeping in the prison bound with two chains;
2. How the faithful prayed to God for Peter;
3. How a radiant angel appeared in the prison, freed the shackled Peter, and led him out.

HOMILY

on the heart ready for God

My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready (Psalm 57:7)

Brethren, blessed is he who is able to speak like this to his Lord! Blessed is he whose heart is completely ready to follow the will of God. The readiness of the heart of man lies in this: to joyfully follow the will of God and not be confused by one's own thoughts and desires. At first, the repentant King David had followed his own sinful thoughts and desires, and was like a boat on a stormy sea. However, when he realized that the storm was going to drown him, he turned

to God with great repentance and tears, and turned the boat of his life entirely over to God. *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!* he cried out with great peace of soul, for he knew that he had given his boat into the hands of the Most-skilled Helmsman. The storm still raged and the winds and waves still assaulted him, but he was not afraid, convinced that nothing could smash his boat, and that his boat would sail safely to a calm harbor. A "ready heart" means a heart cleansed of pride and humbled before the majestic power and wisdom of God. A "ready heart" means a heart emptied of all worldly desires and illusions, and filled with nothing but aspirations toward God and love for God. A "ready heart" means a heart that is healed of all restlessness, cares and fears, and is quieted and encouraged by the presence of God's grace. *I will sing and give praise in my glory* (Psalm 57:7), continues the Psalmist. This shows that his heart is truly ready--he is not proud of his royal glory but ascribes it to God. He humbled himself before God as nothing, and now his sole pleasure is to magnify and glorify God. His personal glory only gives him a reason for glorifying His All-glorious God.

O my brethren, let us endeavor that our hearts be ready soon before God: ready to hear the word of God, ready to follow the will of God, ready to glorify the Living God.

O Lord God, our immortal Creator, help us to ready our hearts, that they may be vessels of Thy life-giving grace.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Services this Week

- ❖ *Tuesday – 11.08. '22. – Holy Glorious Great-martyr Demetrius the Myrrh-gusher of Thessalonica– 09:30 AM Divine Liturgy*
- ❖ *22nd Sunday after Pentecost– November 13th – 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy*

Donations October 30, 2022

Offering - \$ 835.00 Candles - \$49.00

Building Fund

In Memory of Beverly Stipanovich from Eli Cvijanovich - \$100

Donation

In Memory of Grand Parents from Dianna Dunnington - \$100

Large Candles

In Memory of Julie Lambrinos from Dan & Dyne Tomak

In Memory of Steve & Stella Baich from Kathy & Gerry Szmyd

In Memory of Connie Bartis from Rick Kondas

In Memory of Father, Mike Tumbas from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Linda Zedlar Griffiths from Milica Knepp

In Memory of Christine and Charles from Olga Bulich

NEXT FISH FRY

FRIDAY DECEMBER 9, 2022

Please see Donna Zimmerman or Suzette if you can help!

NUT ROLLS

FOR SALE - \$10

Anyone interested in running for and/or remaining on the St Nicholas Church Council for 2023 must submit their name and intent in writing to a member of the nominating committee

(Carole McAllister, Joseph Golden and Helene Gleason) You may also leave this information in the Candle Room to the attention of the Committee.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!!!!

<https://stnicholasjohnstown.org>

Thanks Brady (Malichi) Doyle for the Great update!