



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2016 – THE SIN OF COVETOUSNESS

**EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians
[6:11-18]**

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

EXPLANATION:

Here, St Paul writes to those people in the Roman Province of Galatia, in Asia Minor, who have already fallen into the trap of the Jewish legalisers (Paul's opponents) who claim that Christians must also follow the laws of the Old Covenant and be circumcised. Paul's concern was that those who have accepted circumcision were now enticing and compelling their brethren to do likewise, not because for the **"sake of the Cross"** (that is, for Christ's sake), but because they wanted to **"boast in the flesh"** (That is, to look good in the eyes of others) and to gain "converts". Hence, Paul attempts to dissuade them from following the teachings of his opponents and tells them in his letter that such people do not actually care for the Galatians' well-being, but rather their sole interest is to boast that one can be saved only by following the Mosaic Law which includes circumcision. But, even though they accept circumcision, they do not obey and keep all of the Law's commandments. This is evidence of their hypocrisy. **(6:11-13)** Paul then sets himself as a counter-example to **"those who are letting themselves be circumcised"**. In contradiction to them, he is not trying to win the Galatians over to "his side" for personal glory or boasting, since for him that lies only in the **"Cross of Our Lord, Jesus Christ"**. Because he has been crucified with Christ, he has died to the law which constituted his "world" before Christ. And in order to stress this reality Paul says crucifixion in his case works both ways – both he and the "world" have been crucified to each other. **(6:14)** Therefore, neither **circumcision** nor **uncircumcision** has any value. Circumcision has been replaced by a **"new creation"**, that is "a new Christian person", a new kind of reality that does not fit within the categories of the Old Law, a new way of life in Christ Jesus that now requires – regeneration through Baptism; the renewal of the complete person in Christ; the circumcision of the heart; obedience in Christ and growth in perfection; being justified by grace, God's righteousness which becomes ours; freedom from the power of sin, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. All these lead to righteousness, not circumcision. **(6:15)** The **"Israel of God"**, refers to the Church, both Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Paul's gospel. **(6:16)** The **"marks of Jesus"** refer to the physical sufferings Paul endured during his Apostolic mission. His intention in this verse is to

admonish the Galatians against **“troubling”** him by continuing to question the validity of His apostleship, as they had done repeatedly in the past, for merely looking at him, they can see that he bears sure evidence of his apostleship. (6:17-18)

GOSPEL **The Reading is from St Luke [12:16-21]**

Then He spoke a parable to them saying: *“The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’ ”* But God said to him, *‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’* So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Then He said to His disciples, *“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.”*

EXPLANATION:

In this parable, Jesus distinguishes between material riches which suffer corruption and spiritual riches which abide eternally. The rich man is a **fool**, despite his material success, because he vainly puts all his trust in his possessions rather than God. To be **“rich toward God”** is to have a life of close communion with Him through faith and works. The rich man had prepared for a future life of leisure, but suddenly all was taken away by premature death. He made four mistakes – the same ones many of us make: (1) he tried to satisfy his soul only with material things; (2) he deceived himself into believing that he really owned all these possessions and did not consider that they were loaned to him from God and that he would have to give account of this surplus; (3) he completely ignored his obligations to his fellowman, not realizing what a blessing he might have been to others with all his treasures; and (4) he lived only for this life and made no provision for eternity. His God was his possessions. Covetousness is one of the worst species of idolatry. Before long, your possessions begin to possess you and you have no time for God. The

tragedy was not in the rich man's death, for he would have had to die regardless. The tragedy was, having to go before he found that the real aim of Christian life is communion and union with Christ. Although he was successful, God insists that he was foolish because he was pre-occupied with lesser things – that is, finding pleasure rather than finding purpose in his life; building his business rather than thinking about improving the condition of his soul; amassing great wealth for himself rather than assisting those in need. Despite his worldly success this man had lived only for himself. He had forgotten his neighbour. He had forgotten God. He had forgotten his real purpose in life. In all his efforts to get rich, he became terribly poor spiritually. He was successful by worldly standards, but what do we mean by success? Only God can proclaim who is successful or unsuccessful. And He tells us that the truly successful person is one who is rich in faith and love toward God and man and not to who has great wealth and fortune. The wealth that counts in God's eyes is accumulated by a soul that has learned to pray; by a conscience that is clear; by a life that is dedicated to Him; by a soul that has received God's forgiveness; by a person who believes that all we own is given to us upon trust by God to be used not only for ourselves but also for those in need. Regrettably, those who have ample goods tend to be induced into a false sense of security. They do not need God; they do not need prayer. In fact, their "ample goods" make it difficult for them to contemplate death. Notice also Christ's words, **"they will require"**. Like some stern impersonal officers demanding tribute, the fearsome angels will also ask for your soul, and you will not want to give it up because you love this life and claim the things of this life as your own. But they do not demand the soul of a righteous man because he himself, commits his soul into God's hands with joy and gladness. Unfortunately, man stores up things without knowing for whom he gathers them. How can he not be called a fool who does not know that the length of a man's life rests with God alone and that no man can set the limits of his own life. Let us therefore lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven so that we may not hear those frightful words, **"Fool! This night your soul will be required of you...."**