



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

59 CARR ST, WEST PERTH WA 6005 PARISH PRIEST: FATHER EMMANUEL STAMATIOU

MOB: 0419 961 313 EMAIL: stamatem@iinet.net.au

Please look at our website to find this and other parish resources: www.evangelismos.com.au

SUNDAY 27 AUGUST 2017

“RICHES AND THE KINGDOM”

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians [15:1-11] Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. The last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

EXPLANATION: One of the false teachings being disseminated in Corinth was that there is no physical resurrection of the dead. St Paul takes great pains to refute this heresy. **(15:1)** Paul “**delivered**” an Apostolic tradition of Christ’s Resurrection which is unchanging and sufficient for salvation. He **received** it by direct experience with the risen Lord and confirmed by his interactions with the original apostles and the whole church. To “receive” designates the passing on of Holy Tradition. **(15:2-3)** To those who say that Christ did not really die on the Cross, but merely passed out, to be revived by the coolness of the tomb in which He was laid, there is evidence of the blood and water which gushed from His side when He was pierced with the lance; a separation which takes place only after death. **(5:4)** St Paul then lists those who would testify to the Truth of the Resurrection, from the first witnesses (St Peter, the Apostles, 500 brethren) and last of all by St Paul who was “**born out of time**”, that is, who saw the risen Christ later than all the others by the sudden intervention by which he was torn from opposition to become an apostle. **(15:5-8)** St Paul feels unworthy by his calling because of the time in his life when he had zealously persecuted Christians. But after he was visited by Christ on the road to Damascus, he was transformed into an even more zealous apostle of the Gospel. **(15:9-11)** Although he persecuted Christians, he went on to become “Equal to the Apostles”, because he embraced Christ with a truly repentant heart and was forgiven. He then went on to devote his whole life to Christ and to spread God’s word throughout the ancient world.

GOSPEL **The Reading is from St Matthew [19:16-26]** Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to Him, “Which ones?” Jesus said,

“You shall not murder, You should not commit adultery, You should not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honour your father and your mother and You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

EXPLANATION: The rich young man in today’s Gospel lesson came to Jesus seeking to learn about eternal life. He approached Christ as if Christ was a mere man, a **“Good Teacher”** of the written law, not as God. That is why the Lord answers him accordingly, **“Why do you call me good? There is none good but One, that is God.”** This means, if you call me good thinking that I am merely one of the teachers, you speak wrongly, for no man is essentially good; both because man is changeable and easily turned away from good, and because, by comparison with God’s goodness, human goodness is counted as wickedness. The Lord then directs the young man to the commandments of the Mosaic Law which lead to goodness. **(19:16-19)** The rich man replies, **“I have kept all God’s commandments from my youth, what do I still lack?”** Knowing that his besetting sin was love of money, Jesus instructs him to seek perfection. In other words, if you want to be **perfect**, rid yourself of the thorns of wealth which are

choking you and follow my example. Sacrifice all for eternal life; for the treasure in Heaven. The Kingdom of God does not belong to sluggards, but to those who want to be perfect. What the young man failed to understand is that formal observance of the Law does not equal fulfilment of all the commandments of God. Indeed, saying that one has **kept** the letter of the Law can create a false satisfaction about virtue. Salvation does not depend upon eternal things, whether they may be many or few, great or small, but on the virtues of the soul – faith, hope and love – the reward of which is salvation. Good deeds, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, vigils do not constitute the aim of Christian life, although they serve as an indispensable means of reaching this end. Only good deeds done for Christ's sake brings us the fruit of the Holy Spirit. All that is not done for Christ's sake, even though it be good, brings neither reward in the future life, nor the grace of God in this life. But since there are some who give alms but who lead a life full of every kind of passion, Christ adds, **“and come and follow Me”**. (19:20-22) Jesus then describes the difficulty of salvation for those who are attached to riches. Why? Because they are so pre-occupied with accumulation of wealth and material possessions that they forget about God. They become immersed in the passions and succumb to lives of leisure and overindulgence. They do not seek spiritual knowledge and wisdom and live in the darkness of ignorance and eventually die in their sins and are eternally separated from God. Although it may be impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, **“all things are possible with God”**. So if a rich man turns from greed and excess, then by God's power he will prosper spiritually and by acting in collaboration with Him, he will eventually “let go” of the god of material possessions and turn to God and be saved. (19:25-26)