



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

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THE PARABLE OF LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

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** [16:19-31] There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who laid at his gate, desiring to be fed from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us." Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment." Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent." But he said to them, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead."

EXPLANATION: In this Parable, the beggar is named. The rich man is not. God knows those poor outcasts who patiently endure hardship, but the rich who are known and highly esteemed by other people for their wealth and power, the Lord says, "I never knew you" (Matt 7:23); "Neither will I make mention of their name." (Ps 15/16:4) What was the rich man's sin? Not that he was rich. His sin was lovelessness. He saw Lazarus often, perhaps every day, yet ignored him. God placed him at the rich man's doorstep deliberately in order to save the rich man. But he lacked love and compassion. He saw him in hunger, in suffering, yet did nothing to help him. Even the dogs were more merciful. They licked his sores. His sin was his failure to show mercy on the beggar and to use his wealth for no one but himself. But it wasn't just Lazarus whom the rich man ignored. It was also Christ Who identifies Himself with every suffering Lazarus, "I was hungry and you fed me not." One of the great dangers of affluence is its enormous power to distract us from the love

of God and love of neighbour. It tends to harden human hearts against the needs of others. It stands up self-righteously and literally condemns the poor and homeless. Wealth and goods do not belong to us. God loans them to us so that we may have enough to distribute to the poor and needy. We are responsible to Him for all we have. Poverty is not of itself righteousness, but patient endurance and acceptance of God's will without complaint. This is what carried Lazarus's soul by angels to **Abraham's bosom** (heaven). Although the rich man did not notice Lazarus during his lifetime, he now asks for help from the very one he ignored. But death is the great turning point in this parable. Jesus shocks his hearers by claiming that after condemnation or judgment no help can be expected from the righteous. If the rich man had shown some sign of repentance or had tried to do something to rectify a lifetime of selfishness before it was too late, this beggar could have interceded for him as the time of his death drew near. He had not made a friend of the "**mammon of unrighteousness**", that is, he failed to use his wealth to minister to one of its victims. Now a "**great gulf**" separates them. That is, God has fixed a great chasm between sinners and the righteous which no one can cross. It is impossible to go from the place of punishment to the place of the righteous. God has placed the two states in close proximity so sinners might see their loss for choosing to separate themselves from God. In this parable we see that death does not destroy consciousness, nor identity, nor change of personality, nor memory, nor destiny. All are carried through into the afterlife and into eternity. There are many poor people in hell, just as there are many rich people in heaven. We will see loved ones wherever we are placed but we will not be able to help them. The pain of seeing one's loved ones tormented in hell would be so unbearable that it would make paradise hell. However, what is impossible for man is not impossible for God. It is possible for the burning love that a righteous person has for God to overcome in Paradise all earthly sorrow as we know it. Also our prayers and memorial services for the dead are an important invocation.