



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

### PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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### SUNDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2018 - RICHES OF ETERNAL LIFE

#### EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians

[3:23-29, 4:1-5]

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians, and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

**EXPLANATION:** St Paul writes that the Law has been a custodian or **tutor** to bring us to Christ, but no man is made righteous on the basis of the Law. Righteousness is granted on the basis of faith in Christ. Once the faith has come, there is no going back. **(3:24-25)** Those who accept faith in Jesus Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, became **sons of God** through **Baptism**. **(3:26-27)** Through Baptism we share one human nature in Christ. Therefore valuing people on opinions and ethnicity (Jew or Gentile); pride and social status (slave and free); and gender (male or female) has no place in the Church. All are one in nature and so all are one in dignity. **(3:28)** All are part of the messianic community – **“Abraham’s offspring”** to whom the promise had been made. And since **“heirship”** is bound to this promise and not to the Law, the Galatians are full heirs of Abraham and of the promise of blessing made to him and his offspring. **(3:29)** But as minors (that is, children in their spiritual understanding) they require **guardians** and **administrators** who provide the special discipline and protection required for their spiritual growth. **(4:1-2)** So also with us, when we were children (minors), we were enslaved under the **“elements of the world”**. That is, because **“we”** includes Paul, then elements of the world must point to the Mosaic Law. **(4:3)** **And God sent his Son, Who was born under the Law, to redeem those under the Law** and to fulfil his promise to Abraham and all his offspring. So in adoption we became everything God is, except in nature. We become members of His family by grace – a new birth, a new life – born again. **(4:4-5)**

**GOSPEL** **The Reading is from St Luke [18:18-27]** Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, **“Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”** So Jesus said to him, **“Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God. You know the commandment, ‘Do not commit adultery’, ‘Do not murder’, ‘Do not steal’, ‘Do not bear false witness’, ‘Honour your father and mother’.”** And he said, **“All these**

things I have kept from my youth.” So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, ***“You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me.”*** But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, ***“How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For 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.”*** And those who heard it said, ***“Who then can be saved?”*** But He said, ***“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”***

**EXPLANATION:** The rich young man is a lover of money, and he approaches Jesus eager to learn how he, along with his wealth, might inherit eternal life. He thought that Jesus could show him some way in which he could live forever enjoying his material possessions. But when the Lord told him that non-possession is what bestows eternal life he went away sorrowful. Although he boasted that he kept all the Commandments, Jesus reminded him of the First Commandment of God – “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.” The young ruler worshipped the “God of Mammon” – the god of money. Only this **“one thing”** stood in the way of his reach for the kingdom, but that “one thing” was enough to make him lose it. Jesus was not condemning all possessions. There is no record that Jesus ever told Martha and Mary to sell their home in Bethany. Jesus saw that this young man had allowed his possessions to come between him and God. Therefore, as a Good Physician, He prescribed the appropriate remedy – **“Go and sell all that you have and come follow Me.”** That is, if your possessions cause you to sin, then no matter how painful, cut them off. But he was held fast by the love of money, a passion that was stronger than his love for eternal life. Jesus extended the same invitation to the rich young man as He did to the Apostles –

**“Come follow Me”**. If he had followed Jesus, we would be honouring his memory today as an apostle, but as it is, we don’t even know his name. This one thing that he still lacked was that he placed his love of possessions above his love for God. He believed that God belonged in the synagogue and had no business in the world of finance. The same applies in our lives today. We try and departmentalize God by saying that we shouldn’t mix religion with politics or business – each belongs in its own realm. But God knocks on every door of our life. If we keep all doors open to Him he will come in and give us Himself, Salvation, everything. Jesus did not say that it would be impossible for those with wealth to enter the kingdom of heaven, but that it would be difficult. That is, it is difficult for a rich man to part with his possessions and be saved. So much so that it becomes almost impossible. However, a rich man who keeps riches for himself is different to a steward who, as a trustee, holds wealth for the benefit of others. What Jesus is therefore saying is that “the rich man who is possessed by riches and is a slave to them and is held fast by them, and has no time for God, shall not be saved. But he who has riches, that is, who is master of riches, owning them without being owned by them, shall be saved with difficulty? That difficulty is because of human weakness. For it is impossible for us not to misuse what we have. Only with great difficulty do we escape the devil’s traps. But with God’s help, it is possible to be saved. If we use our wealth to help those in need we will be saved by those “friends” who will intercede for us for God’s mercy. Thus the impossible becomes possible. This rule also applies to the poor. Though his belongings are few, man’s attachment to his possessions is even greater when he owns little. And if it is the case that a poor man is attached to his possessions to the same degree as a rich man, then, at a minimum, the loss of the kingdom is the same for each. But those who have given up everything for the sake of the kingdom will receive not only tangible rewards in the life to come but eternal life.