



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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THE PARABLE OF LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

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

[1:11-19] But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.

EXPLANATION: The remark that this gospel is neither “**according to man**” nor “**from man**”, serves to rebut the opponents’ accusations that it has no divine authority but is merely a teaching advocated by

one group of Christians without official status. **(1:11)** Paul explains to the Galatians that not only was God the ultimate source of the gospel, but also Christ Himself served as the channel by which it was conveyed to Paul; there was no human intermediary. Apostolic tradition is grounded in divine **revelation** from Jesus Christ. Just as the Twelve received the gospel directly from Christ, so did Paul. He entered their unity in consensus and mutual submission. **(1:12)** Although he persecuted the Christians and tried to destroy the church because of his Pharisaic zeal in Judaism, he explains that people are not called by God in accordance by former conduct, but by God's grace. **(1:13-14)** Paul cannot determine the reason why God decided to reveal His Son in him. It was God's will that Paul preach to the Gentiles, and that is all Paul needed to know. The decision had been made long ago while he was still **"in his mother's womb"**. He was **"set apart"** for the purpose even before he was born. God's sudden and unexpected move to appoint Paul an apostle to the church he was persecuting was a unilateral and incomprehensible action on God's part. **(1:15-16)** Paul insists that after his call by God, through grace, he did not consult with any human authorities (**"flesh and blood"**), regarding the gospel, not even the apostles in Jerusalem. **(1:17)** As a true apostle, he submitted himself to the church and her apostles rather than elevating himself. He understood that he must teach the same gospel as the other apostles. **(1:18)**

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 bearers 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.