



## 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](mailto:stamatem@iinet.net.au)

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### SUNDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2019 – THE GOOD SAMARITAN

#### **EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians [2:16-20]**

**Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not. For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**

**EXPLANATION:** This is the only New Testament letter which St Paul addressed to the group of Churches in Galatia, in an attempt to make them understand that man is justified (that is, made righteous), not merely by works of the Law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the faith of Christ – His belief, His trust, His obedience that justifies us, not the Law or simply doing good works. The view of the Jews was that one becomes righteous by fulfilling the requirements of the Law. St Paul tells them to be justified they must imitate Christ’s faith which is seen in His entire life on earth, and not just in His more spectacular good works. God introduced the works of the Law to protect mankind until the time when our union with the Son of God became possible. The purpose of divine sonship is for us to become like God

and to enter heaven. Whereas Israel was under the Old Covenant, wherein righteousness and salvation came through faith as revealed in Law, the Christian Church is under a New Covenant. That is, salvation comes through faith in Christ Who fulfils the law, and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us through Baptism, and leads us to the knowledge of God the Father. Today, the Protestants of the Reformation period experienced a rediscovery of “faith in Christ”. Their slogan of salvation became “solafides” (Latin) meaning justification was by “faith alone”. That is, salvation depended on accepting Christ as your Saviour and human works of merit, and not upon the mercy of God. Orthodoxy emphasizes that it is first God’s mercy, not our faith, which saves us. Through God’s mercy we are justified by faith and empowered by God for good works of righteousness which bring glory to Him. For Orthodox Christians, faith is living, dynamic, continuous – never static or merely point in time. Faith is not something a Christian exercises only at one critical moment, expecting it to cover all the rest of his life. True faith is not just a decision, it’s a way of life. This is why the modern evangelical Protestant question, “Are you saved?” gives pause to an Orthodox believer. For him the answer can only be – “I have been saved, being joined to Christ in Baptism; I am being saved, growing in Christ through the sacramental life of the Church; I will be saved by the mercy of God at the Last Judgment. Nowhere does the Bible say that we are justified by faith “alone”. On the contrary, “faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead”. (James 2:17) **(2:16)** St Paul explains that once the Jew is “**in Christ**”, he discovers that such faith is not only necessary, but also sufficient for righteousness. He then sees that the Law is, after all, not necessary at all. But Paul foresees that the Jews will say that “in seeking to be made righteous in Christ, we will become lawless like the “**Gentile sinners**” who do not have the Judaic Law and Christ will have a defacto function for us as an agent of sin. But Paul says, “**by no means**”, for in Christ you are all sons of God through faith. It was the absolute authority of the Law that was “**torn down**” in Christ. It was our guardian until Christ, but now that faith has come, we no longer need it. For if Paul were to attempt now to restore the law, he would prove himself a “**transgressor**”. That is, having destroyed the “works of the law” (that is, proving their ineffectiveness for salvation), he would be a transgressor if he tries to reinstate the Jewish Law. **(2:17-18)** There is no contradiction between law and Christ’s gospel. The Law is holy and good, but

it is now obsolete because it is fulfilled in the gospel in Christ Himself. We voluntarily **“die to the law”** and become alive to the law of the Spirit, through Baptism and union with Christ. **(2:19)** To be **“crucified with Christ”** means to mortify our sinful passions and desires. Then one begins a new life in Christ and no longer lives under the dominion of sinful passions. **“Christ lives in him”** and man achieves the aim of Christian life – union with Christ. **(2:20)**

**GOSPEL** The Reading is from St Luke [10:25-37] And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” So he answered and said, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.”* And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ Then Jesus answered and said: *“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ So which of these three do you think was neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?”* And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, *“Go and do likewise.”*

**EXPLANATION:** **“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”** This is a momentous question for every person. Jesus’s answer is to love God above all else, and to love one’s neighbour. In this parable, Jesus teaches us that our **neighbour** is anyone in immediate need, even a supposed enemy. Symbolically, the **Good Samaritan** is Christ Himself. The **wounded man** is humanity set upon by demons and the **inn** is the Church. Love for neighbour

proves our love for God. The action of the Samaritan is contrasted with the inattention of the priest and Levite. Their behaviour was inexcusable. They were probably among those Jews who felt that they were right in ministering only to their own kind. But Jesus makes it clear that “neighbour” had no such formal restricted meaning as “one’s own people”, in racial, ethnic or religious terms. There is no one to whom the obligation to minister out of love does not apply. The Lord defines “neighbour” not only as the human object of one’s loving care, but also as the person who out of love deals compassionately with someone in need. When the Lord says, **“Go and do likewise”**, he is telling the lawyer to be a “neighbour” to anyone he encounters, especially anyone who needs his mercy and compassion, without regard for whom he is, without judging whether he deserves such help. If we love God with all our being, every human being becomes our neighbour. What Jesus is saying to the Jews of His day is, “If a despised Samaritan, whose very name is a curse word, whom you do not even consider a neighbour, and who has an inferior faith compared to yours, if he will not hesitate to go and rescue a Jew in trouble, how much more ought you who are God’s chosen people, you who have experienced the love of God, you who have the true religion; how much more should you be willing to translate your religion into works of love?” Jesus spoke through this parable not only to the Jews of old, but also to us today. That is, most of us are not like the Good Samaritan; most of us are like the priest and Levite. We are too busy with ourselves to respond to the needs of others. We find a thousand excuses not to get involved. We pass by on the other side. The sin of the priest and the Levite was the sin of omission. They did nothing when they could have done something. By doing nothing they left the wounded man to die. Jesus reminds us that the supreme test of religion was right there on the roadside and they failed it. The wounded are all around us. They are not just the physically wounded, but also those wounded by misery, by unemployment, by racism, by homelessness. There you have your neighbour. He may not always be lying on the side of the road. He may be walking, driving, or even running, but he is wounded nonetheless. He needs someone to be a neighbour to him and comfort him. Having told the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus asked the lawyer, **“Which of these do you think was neighbour?”** And he said, **“The one who showed mercy on him.”** There you have the true neighbour. Any man. Anywhere. In need. **(10:25-37)**