



**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 15 DECEMBER 2019**

**“WORLDLY ENTANGLEMENTS, POOR EXCUSES”**

**EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy [1:8-18]**

**Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher [c]of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.**

**Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.**

**This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.**

**EXPLANATION:** All humanity is called by God to deliver him from sin and death toward his salvation. This holy calling is offered freely to man by God's grace.

Salvation is not achieved as a reward for effort as all effort by man is feeble and falls way short of what is required to secure his salvation.

Knowing this, man is compelled to enter into a personal relationship with God, so that he unceasingly cries out to Christ to have mercy on him and to heal and save his soul. This realisation gives man the understanding that without God, salvation is impossible. The path leading to man's salvation was won by Christ on the Cross. We therefore must enter into communion with Christ through His Holy Church and practising the Sacraments.

A repentant, humble spirit enables the light of Christ to penetrate and transform the human person. It is therefore the inspiration of the Holy Spirit which works through man to change him and enlighten him to the path of salvation. This change or transformation of man is initiated by grace through the Holy Spirit to do good works. The good works of man therefore are a response by man to God's invitation. Which is the opposite of what most people popularly believe and that is that man is saved through his own effort and good deeds.

To endure the difficult path leading to salvation man must endure to the end with great patience "holding fast to the pattern of the sound

words which you have heard from me (St Paul) in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

We therefore must pray unceasingly, study and meditate the Word of God in scripture and apply it in all aspects of our life; we must live with faith and hope and with love, compassion and forgiveness for one another at all times.

**GOSPEL The Reading is from St Luke [14:16-24]**

***Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited. 'Come for all things are now ready.' But they all with accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.' For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper."***

**EXPLANATION:**

This parable summarizes the history of salvation. **A certain man** (God, the Father) **made a great supper** (the divine economy of the Incarnation which finds its fullest expression in the Eucharist and its fullness in the world to come) **(14:16)**, **sent His servant** (the Son of God who assumed the form of a servant and became man) at

**supper** (the time when iniquity had reached its peak in the world), **to say to them that were called** (the children of Israel who were called through the law and the prophets) **“come for all things are now ready” (14:17)** (the coming of the Messiah, the coming of Salvation). **But with one accord they began to make excuses** (the Jews refused to accept Jesus as their Saviour and were found unworthy of the supper). **(14:18)** So, the invited guests were to be replaced by the **poor**, the **maimed**, the **lame**, the **blind** (the Jewish outcasts) in the **streets and lanes** of the city and those on the **highways and hedges** (the Gentiles who are outside the Hebrew nation) and **compel them** to accept this messianic banquet (God’s plan with salvation). That is, to warn them of the dangers of not accepting God’s invitation, which will lead to eternal condemnation. God’s desire to fill His **house**, His kingdom of heaven, will not be frustrated. **(14:19-23)** For those who have rejected God’s grace will have no part of His kingdom. That is, **none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper. (14:24)** The warning refers to the Last Judgment. In many ways we are also guilty of the same rejection as the Jews. We are all invited to the kingdom which God has prepared for us before the foundation of the world. But we are not worthy of this “supper”; some of us because of useless philosophical musings, others because of material things, and yet others because of pleasures of the flesh. We put bodily health and social interests before spiritual health; worldly learning before the knowledge of God; earthly treasures before the riches of God; future material security before preparation for eternal life; luxury and self-indulgences before care of others. And we, like the Jews of old, make excuses and fashion our righteousness to suit our priorities. We can arrange our affairs so that we can respond to the Lord’s graciousness, but instead we contemptuously disregard the generosity of the host, who loves us and cares for us. The invitation and the response illustrates man’s neglect of what is of infinitely greater value to him – salvation and eternal life with God, than his earthly perishable concerns.