



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2020 – THE GOOD SAMARITAN

EPISTLE: **The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians [2:4-10]** But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

EXPLANATION: Here we have a revelation of the inner heart of Our God. Despite our wretchedness, our inner coldness which rebels against His love, God still loves us. We may have been sinners living according to the passions of the flesh, **“But God”, Who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us**, even when we were spiritually dead through sin, made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with Him and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places. He rules by mercy and love. The beginning of His rule is redemption to eternal life. We had no way to escape the bondage of the devil or to rise out of spiritual death into the life of God; but God had. No matter how sinful we are, how unworthy or inferior we consider ourselves, God’s forgiving love can hardly wait to bestow upon the penitent sinner the immeasurable riches of His grace. The “wages of sin is death”, but God’s

mercy is greater than any sin. He is rich in mercy, fabulously overflowing with compassion. Here we see the generosity of our God, the boundless burning love He has for us. Though we were dead to Him, He saved us by grace so that in the eternal ages to come He might further show the supposing riches of His grace in kindness towards us. **(2:4-7)** Though our salvation is of course the result of our **“faith”** – our repentant response to God and our discipleship to Jesus, it is not our own heroic accomplishment. Our rescue is not of **“yourselves”** – not the result of any inner triumph, not the manifestation of any goodness found in ourselves. St Paul declares that we are saved by **“grace”**, as the undeserved gift of God. We emerge from our baptismal initiation as the blameless sons of God, united to Christ, sharing His glory – all this despite our not having done any great feat worthy of blessing. Rather, we approached the font as condemned sinners, **“by nature children of wrath”**, yet we emerged as united to Christ, seated in the heavenlies, for above all rule, authority, power and dominion. **(2:8)** Thus, we have no grounds to **“boast”**, exalting ourselves one over the other, puffing ourselves up in the presence of God. Humility, the foundation of all Orthodox spirituality, is thus built into our Faith, as flowing from the baptismal experience itself. For from being self-made, we are the **“workmanship”** and handiwork of God. He has recreated us as His new creation in Christ Jesus. He fashioned us afresh, making us anew. And no man can take credit for his own creation, so none of us can boast of our new life, status or glory. It is entirely the work of God. God created us, not for our own pleasure, not to pursue our own ends and destinies, but to glorify Him. **(2:9-10)** That is, **“for good works”**. Not that good works are inseparable from the Christian life, and no one can be saved without them. Not, however, that the good works are the ground and cause of our salvation – for St Paul has just said that **our salvation “is not works”**. But rather, good works are what the Christian life is all about. God has prearranged that **“we should walk in them”**. This means that before this age, from all eternity, God had planned that we should be resplendent with the light of kindness and love – that His people should be **“conformed to the image of His Son”** – being like Him, **“holy and blameless”** and to be **“shining as lights in the world”** now. Good works flow out of authentic faith. Those who receive grace through faith also do good works. We are not saved by good works, but for good works. **“Good works without**

faith is dead”, writes St James, just as faith without good works is dead. Thus, the Christian activity cultivates a habit of doing good works for the glory of God, as a way of life and not just doing good works to earn ‘browny points’ with God in Heaven.

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)**