

HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



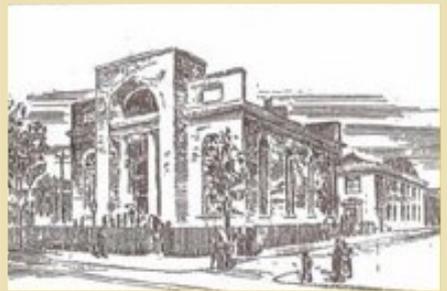
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CHURCH BULLETIN

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The 16th Sunday after Pentecost

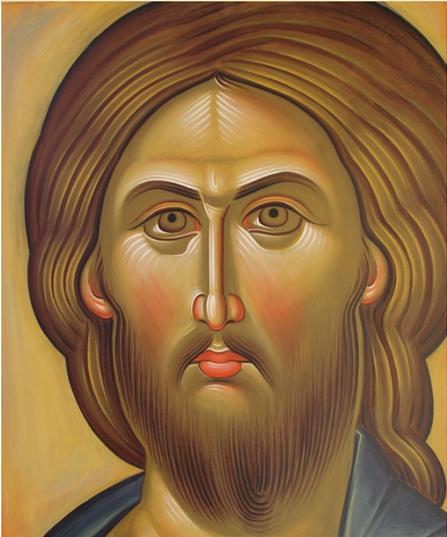
Gospel Reading Matthew 25: 14-30



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The Lord said this parable: "For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two

talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.'



Apostle Reading 2 Corinthians 6: 1-10

Brethren, As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness,

holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet we are well known; as dying, and yet we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

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Synaxarion. Sunday February 7, 2021:
Holy Hierarch Parthenius, Bishop of Lapsacus;
Holy Venerable Lukas of Hellas

Investing Our Talents and Lives for the Kingdom

We have probably all had moments in our lives when we couldn't see very well. Maybe the power went out at night at home, our eyes took a while to adjust after walking out of movie theater, we lost our glasses, or we were headed east or west at just the right time to be blinded by the light of the sun. Unfortunately, we have also had moments when we have been blind in other ways when our actions, words, and thoughts went against God's purposes for our lives. In fact, it's an ongoing struggle to have a clear take on how what we do each day impacts our souls, as well as our neighbors in whom we encounter the Lord.



Of course, the man knew a portion of the truth. He knew that Jesus was the Son of David, the Messiah, Who could miraculously restore his sight. He had enough faith, enough trust in Christ, to ask for that. His plea for mercy sounds like an early version of the Jesus Prayer. But the man did not know that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God. Like the rest of the Jews, he was probably waiting for a Messiah who would be a great political and religious leader, not a Savior Who is both God and man. Fortunately for him and the rest of us, Christ is not a stern master who has mercy only on those with perfect understanding. He heard the man's humble plea and restored his sight; then the man gave thanks to God and began to follow the Lord.

St. Paul reminded the Ephesians that they had come out of the darkness of paganism and immorality by putting on Christ in baptism and the life of His body, the Church. Instead of returning to the shadowy ways of the world, he called them to turn on the lights, see the truth about themselves, and live accordingly. "Awake from sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light," he tells them. It's not a time to be in a drunken stupor or to be lulled into complacency in any other way, but instead to be alert and focused so that we won't be lulled back into the darkness.

Our Savior, in His earthly ministry, certainly healed many blind people. We read in today's gospel text of a blind beggar who was so eager to see that he would not stop yelling out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" as the Lord passed by. Even though others told the man to be quiet and not to cause a scene, he continued to plead for healing. He succeeded in getting Christ's attention, and He asked the man a simple question: "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man responded, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Christ said, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." Immediately he could see again and began to follow the Lord and to glorify God.

Unlike the Gentiles we mentioned earlier, this fellow was Jewish and waiting for a Messiah to fulfill God's promises to Israel. But he was not able to see the Savior as He passed by. His eyes were shut to the Lord and to all the beauty of the creation. He lived in darkness. He was poor and wretched, a beggar, who could do nothing but call out for help from the Son of David, a common name for "the anointed one" whom the Jews expected. And the man's sufferings had made quite clear to him what he wanted: to be able to see, for he was tired of living in darkness. When the blind man had his chance, he took it—refusing to shut up when he heard that Christ was passing his way.

Jesus Christ came to bring us all into the light of His life, regardless of whether we are Gentiles or Jews and no matter how we have lived or what we have done. Just as a blind person could only beg and pray for a miracle in that time and place, we cannot force or earn our way into the blessed life of the Kingdom. We all need His mercy. But like both the blind man and the Ephesians, we have to do our part to become receptive to the light of Christ in our lives.

A person who keeps his eyes closed will never see the day or the beauty of the world. Likewise, it is impossible for those who insist on filling their lives with darkness to receive the light of Christ. If we are asleep, we are not awake. If we insist on living in the shadows, we will never see clearly.

The good news is that we have already open our eyes to the light, for we have put on Christ in the waters of baptism, been sealed with the Holy Spirit in chrismation, and nourished with the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Eucharist. Our eyes have been opened to behold the glory of the Lord. We have entered into His house, the Church, and confessed Him in the words of the Creed and in our hearts. Indeed, we know that we are able at any moment of the day to show the humble faith of the blind beggar through the words of the Jesus Prayer.

Nonetheless, our spiritual vision is still obscured by a measure of darkness. We still look at other people with self-righteous judgment, envy, lust, and other bad attitudes. We make hateful, profane, and other unedifying comments that make faithfulness harder for ourselves and other people. We drift off to spiritual sleep thinking that we will find fulfillment in pleasure, possessions, and the praise of others. We are lured powerfully back to the darkness in many ways. So we continue to need therapy to help us keep our eyes open to the brilliant light of Christ, to the salvation that He has brought to the world.

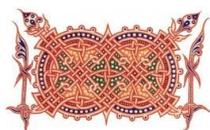
That's why it's good that we have seasons like Advent to wake us up from our slumbers, to switch on the lights and tell us it's time to wake up. All of us need to gain strength in resisting our self-centered desires by fasting or some other form of self-denial. All of us need to place greater focus on prayer. All of us need to confess our sins and turn away from them through repentance. All of us need to give alms and become more generous to the needy with our time and resources. All of us need to love and forgive our enemies. In these ways, we all need to open our lives more fully to the light of Christ.

At the same time, we also need to do everything that we can to shut out the darkness that so easily overtakes us. Most of us probably do not have to look very closely at our lives to identify habits, weaknesses, relationships, or social settings that can dim the spiritual light pretty quickly. We have to be prudent and persistent in discerning how to respond to those temptations, but it's not our intelligence or will power that is our hope. It's the mercy of the Lord, the same One who responded to the plea of that blind beggar. So when we are tempted to wallow in the darkness, we need to follow his example of calling out to Christ persistently with humility, asking for His forgiveness and healing. That fellow would not shut up even when his pleas disturbed others, and we must learn not to abandon our spiritual disciplines, mindfulness, and prayers even when our thoughts, feelings, and friends want to lead us away from the light.

Sometimes we feel like it will kill us to resist certain temptations. Of course, that's not true, but it is often how we feel. We all need to cultivate the faith that Christ comes to heal and strengthen us, not to frustrate and destroy us. The disciplines of fasting are not about legalism or causing inconvenience. Instead, they are tools for our healing, ways for us to turn away from the darkness and to walk in the light, into a life where we are not the slaves of sin but embrace joyfully the glorious freedom of the children of God.

No matter where we are in our journey to the Kingdom, we can all welcome the light of Christ more fully into our lives in the coming weeks. No matter our measure of spiritual health or disease, we can open ourselves more fully to the mercy and healing of the Lord. He made a blind beggar see and turned idol-worshipping pagans into saints. And He will do the same for us, if we will only stay focused on Him and turn away from the many distractions that blind us to His truth. Let's do everything that we can to walk in the light of the Lord.

Fr. Philip LeMasters



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from February 7 to February 14, 2021

Sunday February 7 (16st Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

11:00 am - Sunday School

11:30 am - Memorial
service for the Dragomir,
Kraiter and Porubin
Families

12:00 pm - Coffee hour

Sunday February 14th (17th Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

11:00 pm - Sunday School

12:00 pm - Coffee hour



On the Parable of the Talents

Today's Gospel of the talents is perhaps well-known to us - but like any other Gospel, each time that we read it, new points strike us.

Firstly, we may notice that in this Gospel the Lord gives each of His servants a different number of talents. We are not equal to one another - we are different from one another. This does not mean that

the Lord prefers one person to another. Simply it means that the Lord knows what is best for each one of us, and He gives, as the Gospel says, 'to every man according unto several ability'. In other words, the Lord never gives us something to do which is beyond our ability, whatever we may demand of ourselves, He asks of us to cultivate only the abilities that we do have and that He knows that we have. Thus, He asks one who is clever with his hands to use them to make beneficial things out of cement, or wood or metal or some other material. He does not ask him to plan huge buildings. He who has to plan huge buildings, the architect, has been given gifts in mathematics and physics and drawing, and he himself may be quite unable to use his hands to make anything. In a similar way, I once met a famous composer who could not sing, and a famous singer who could not compose. The Lord gives each of us abilities and we are called to use them to do something for God. We are different. Our equality comes only from using our different abilities to an equal extent. Our equality is not in the values of this world, but spiritually, before the face of God, in the extent to which we use our various God-given gifts.

Secondly, this parable speaks of the man who was given



only one talent which he went out and buried, failing to multiply it. When called to account, as we all shall be at the end of the world, he excuses himself for his laziness, answering the Lord: 'I knew that thou art a hard man'. This is the answer of the selfish man, who has done nothing with his God-given talents, who has done nothing for his neighbour, but has kept his talent for himself, burying it. Unlike his fellow-

servants, he has achieved nothing, on account of his selfishness.

Thirdly, this answer is also the answer of the sinful man, who always justifies himself, who always blames others for his failures. Self-justification is one of the worst sins, it is an aspect of pride, for it discloses the human heart which is so selfish, so locked up in itself, that it is incapable of taking blame, of recognising its own sin, of being humble and therefore willing to improve.

It is this sin which is most harshly judged, for which is promised casting out unto outer darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth. This day, therefore, we should ask ourselves what we are doing with our God-given lives and our God-given gifts. Are we bottling them up, complaining that others are hard with us, or are we using them, in their different ways, for the building-up of the Kingdom of God?

Amen.

Fr Andrew Phillips

