

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church



Rev. Matthew P. Binkewicz, Pastor

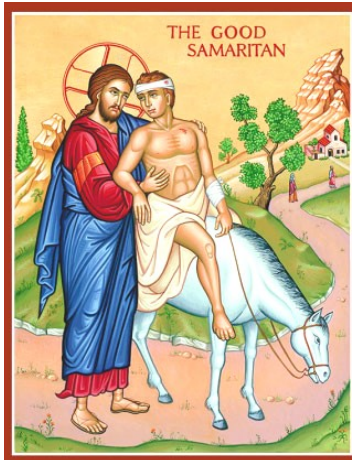
Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be Forever!



Volume 8 Issue 385

21st Sunday after Pentecost—Parable of the Good Samaritan

November 10, 2019



It is tempting to use religion to help us feel better about ourselves. Too often, we want to make God in our own image and let ourselves off the hook from anything that challenges us to do something different from what we want to do. It can be very appealing to try to use God for purposes other than the healing of our souls.

That is the attitude that Jesus Christ rejected in today's gospel reading. After describing how the Old Testament law required loving God "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself," the lawyer wanted to justify himself by narrowing down the types of people he had to love. That is why he asked "And who is my neighbor?" He wanted to limit what God required of him. That way, he could assume that he was a righteous man.

The Lord's parable does not, however, place any limits on what it means to love our neighbor. He tells us about a man who was robbed, severely beaten, and then left on the side of the road to die. Obviously, anyone who saw him in that condition would have an obligation to help him. All the more
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**** 21st Sunday after Pentecost ****

Martyrs Erastus and Companions

Epistle: Galatians 2: 16-20

Gospel: Luke 10: 25-37-

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity - Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

We are dedicated to living out Christ's commandment to, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

How should we interpret dreams? By Fr. Gregory Diachenko

Even among the pagans there was a difference of opinion about dreams. One pagan philosopher, Protagoros, stated: "Each dream has its own meaning, its own significance, and it is useful in life to heed [them]." Another philosopher, Xenophon, explained that all dreams are vain and deceptive, and that whoever pays attention to and arranges his affairs based upon them, is going astray.

One must seek truth within. One need not pay attention to all dreams,

and second, one should not necessarily disregard all dreams as vain and empty of meaning.

First, we said that one need not pay attention to all dreams. Through Moses, God Himself admonished the people through Moses not to use dreams for fortunetelling "neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times" (Leviticus 19: 26). Sirach explains "The hopes of a man void of understanding are vain and false: and dreams lift up fools. They regard

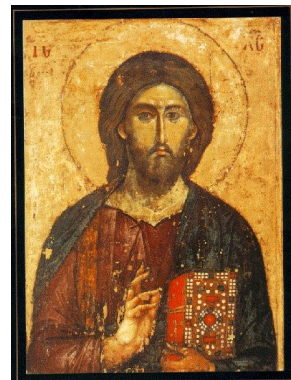
dreams like one that chases a shadow, and follows after the wind. (Ecclesiasticus 34: 1-2).

Most dreams are simply the natural result of an active imagination. Man dreams of whatever is of great interest to him, of what he passionately wants or does not want. St. Gregory tells of a certain man who foolishly believed in dreams, and who was told in a dream that he would live a long life. He saved a vast amount of money, to pro-
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We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor, please call Fr. Matthew at 607-280-1586

Glory be to Jesus Christ.
Glory be Forever.





Troparion to St. George

As the deliverer
of captives
and defender
of the poor,
healer of the infirm
and champion of kings,
victorious great
martyr George
intercede with Christ
our God
for our souls
salvation.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are worshipping with us today and invite you down to the church hall for our social hour.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

We ask that you keep the following in your prayers: Esther, Clement John, Mother Onufria, Olga, Lillian, Meg, Larissa, Stephen, Louise, Marcia, George, Peg, Christopher, Jackie, Karoline, Evan, Ryan, Kathleen, Sandy, Andrea, Samuel, Anatoly, Linda, Alexey, Chuck, Eric, Abraham, Susan, Bill, Jenny, Sally Lou, Bob, the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, and those persecuted for their faith in Christ.

Words of wisdom from the Elders

Bishop Theophan the Recluse used to say that praying only with words written by another is like trying to talk in a foreign language using only textbook dialogues. Like many other Church Fathers, he said that we must look for our own words in order to pray. I suppose that this is truly possible for us, if we dismiss artificially "invented" prayers of our own, only in

moments of desperate need, real anguish, either for ourselves or for others. In such moments, we do not "recite" prayers, we simply cry out to God, "Lord please come to him and comfort him." The audacity of prayer is born only in the audacity of love. St. Macarios said, "Love gives birth to prayer." This phrase, "Love gives birth to prayer" contains the mystery and meaning of prayer.

We can recite endless litanies, we can endlessly work our prayer rope, but unless we have love, unless we have learned to grieve for others, we have not even begun to pray. We can go through all our life without having begun to pray. This is why St. Antony the Great said, "Let us learn to love sorry in order to find God."

(Edited from the book, Light in the Darkness, by Sergei Fudel, p. 50)



How should we interpret dreams, cont'd from p.1

vide resources for a long and happy life. However, he suddenly fell ill and soon died. Thus, he was unable to use his treasure, and at the same time, was unable to bring any good works with him into eternity. It follows that there are many vain and deceptive dreams which are void of meaning, dreams to which we should pay no attention.

However, second, there are dreams which are of significance for us, and which we should heed. One example is that dreamed by Joseph, one of the twelve sons of the Patriarch Jacob. Joseph dreamed that he and his father and brothers were collecting the harvest in the wheat field. Joseph's shock of wheat stood up straight, while those of his father and brethren surrounded him and bowed down before him. Some time later, that came to pass: Joseph, sold by his brothers into [slavery in] Egypt, became Egypt's ruler, and his father and brothers, who had moved to Egypt, had to bow down before him and treat him with respect.

Some recommendations on how to regard dreams

1) If your dreams inspire you to do good and keep you from evil, you should consider them to be the finger of God, pointing out the way, indicating the path to heaven and directing you away from the road to hell. God speaks once, and if man does not perceive it, He speaks twice, "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, in slumbering upon the bed; then he opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction..." to keep man from his purpose and separate him from his pride. "He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword ..." Job 33, 14-18).

St. Barsanuphius teaches that when you see the image of the Cross in a dream, know that the dream is truly from God, but strive to receive an interpretation of its meaning from the saints, and not rely on your own ideas (Barsanuphius and John, Instructions on the Spiritual Life, p. 368).

2) If you are not sure if a dream is

from God, or if you have no intelligent basis to think that it is, especially if it deals with unimportant matters, there is no need to pay heed to such dreams or to base your actions upon them. Be careful, lest, by paying attention to every one of your dreams, you become superstitious and fall prey to sin.

3) Finally, if a dream tempts one to sin, it is the result of our corrupt, disturbed imagination, our fantasy, or it comes from the one from whom may God through His grace keep us, from the devil.

When in doubt, ask your priest to assist you in understanding the dream and its possible meaning.



is that the case for the religious leaders who were going down that same road. They surely knew that the Old Testament law required them to care for a fellow Jew in a life-threatening situation. Like the lawyer, however, they must have come up with some excuse not to treat him as a neighbor. We do not know exactly what they were thinking, but they somehow justified passing by on the other side without helping him at all.

Ironically, a Samaritan is the one who treated the unfortunate man as a neighbor. The Samaritan did not limit his concern to his own people. He did not restrict the demands of love in any way. Even though he knew that the Jews despised and had nothing to do with Samaritans, he responded with boundless compassion to the fellow's plight. He was not calculating how little he could do and still think of himself a decent person. No, he spontaneously sacrificed his time, energy, and resources to bring a man who was a stranger and a foreigner back to health. Even the lawyer got the point of the story, for he saw that the one who treated the man as a neighbor was "The one who showed mercy to him."

The Lord used the story of the Good Samaritan to teach us about what it means to share in His life. Purely out of compassionate, boundless love, Christ came to heal us from the self-imposed pain and misery that our sins have worked on our souls. He came to conquer our slavery to the fear of death, which is the wages of sin. Like the Samaritan, He was despised and rejected.

In the parable, the religious leaders were of no help to the man who was robbed, beaten, and left to die. They passed by and left him in the condition in which they found him. Likewise, the legalistic, hypocritical religious leaders who rejected the Messiah were of no spiritual benefit to those who needed healing from the ravages of sin. Laws can be interpreted and applied however someone sees fit, but they lack the power to heal anyone, much less to raise the dead. At their best, they tell us what to do, but still lack the power to enable us to obey them.

Christ has brought salvation to the world, not by merely giving us a code of conduct, but by making us participants in His divine life by grace. By becoming fully human even as He remains fully divine, He has restored and fulfilled the basic human vocation to become like God in holiness. Only the God-Man could do that. If

we are truly in communion with Him, then His boundless love must become characteristic of our lives.

Among other things, that means gaining the strength to love our neighbors as ourselves by showing them mercy. Doing that even for those we love most in life is often difficult because our self-centeredness makes it hard to give anyone the same consideration we give ourselves. When it comes to particular people we do not like or to members of groups we perceive as threats or enemies, learning to love them as the Savior has loved us may seem impossibly hard.

In order to be able to do that, we must seek healing and strength for a life in communion with Christ through the ministries of His Body, the Church. People who are recovering from severe injuries must cooperate with their physicians and therapists in order to become well. They must take their medicine and dedicate them-

selves to exercises, stretches, and other disciplines in order to regain health and function. We must approach the Christian life in a similar way in order to grow in our ability to manifest the Savior's compassionate love to our neighbors.

It is, of course, much easier to view the Church as simply a social club, a place of beauty, or where we go to feel better about ourselves. To think that way, however, makes us like the lawyer who tried to limit the requirement of loving his neighbors in order to justify himself. If we limit the significance of the Church to serving our desires, then we are trying to use God to get

what we want. To do so is to fall into a dangerous form of self-centeredness that is blind to the true meaning of the Savior's compassion. He makes us members of His Body in order to share His life with us, in order to perfect us in love in His image and likeness. He has come to heal us, but we must cooperate with His therapy if we are to grow in spiritual strength.

All the holy sacraments of the Church strengthen us for a life of ever-greater union with Christ, which will bear fruit in how we treat the people we encounter every day. Even as He offered Himself fully on the Cross for our salvation, there is no limit to the offering that He calls us to make of our lives for the sake of others. Those who have received His mercy will extend that same mercy to their neighbors, no matter who they are. The Lord's words at the end of the gospel reading apply directly to us: "Go and do likewise."



The Saints of North America (part 18)

Less than a year after the celebration of the tenth anniversary of Fr. John's priestly service he was granted by the highest Church authority one of the most honorable priestly orders, which deservedly crowned his genuine exploits in the Diocese of North America and the Aleutians. By order of the Holy Synod on May 6, 1906, Fr. John was elevated to the dignity of Archpriest.

Thus, there began a qualitatively new period in Fr. John's service: having become one of the most respected archpriests of the Diocese thanks to his outstanding pastoral work in his parish and in diocesan administrative activities, Fr. John, at the initiative of Bishop Tikhon who valued him highly, became more and more deeply involved in resolving the most pressing issues of diocesan administration. In May 1906, Fr. John was appointed dean of the New York area of the Eastern States, and in February 1907, he was destined to be one of the most energetic participants of the first North American Orthodox Council in Mayfield, which dealt with the rapidly increasing conversions within the Diocese of North America and the Aleutians in the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America, which was the basis on which the Orthodox Church in America was later founded.

During the period 1903-1907, the Chicago-Streator parish, built by his labors, was transformed into one of the most self-sufficient and flourishing diocesan parishes. But however successful the external circumstances of Fr. John's service in North America may have seemed, his deep, fervent homesickness for his beloved Russia, which he had only seen once for a leave of several months in recent years, and the necessity of providing his three elder children with an undergraduate education in Russia, compelled Fr. John to think about the possibility of continuing his priestly ministry in his native Russian land.

A rather significant circumstance furthering Fr. John's submission of an application for transfer back to Russia was the insistent request of his elderly and seriously ailing father-in-law, who was a clergyman of the Diocese of Saint Petersburg, and who dreamt of handing over his parish to the guidance of such a deserving priest as Fr. John had shown himself to be. In accordance with his application, Fr. John received, on May 20, 1907, a release from

his service in the Diocese of North America and the Aleutians, whereupon he began preparing himself for his move back to Russia.

The week before their departure, however, Fr. John and his family had to bear some sudden startling news from Russia: Matushka Alexandra's beloved parent had succumbed in advance of their return. In July 1907, leaving the Chicago-Streator parish which was so dear to his heart, and where he had given twelve years of missionary service, Fr. John set out for the unknown future that awaited him in his motherland, where he would spend the rest of his priestly service from thenceforth.

Fr. John's return to Russia in the summer of 1907 signified for him not only the beginning of his service in the Diocese of Saint Petersburg — familiar to him from his student years — but it challenged him with the need to apply the pastoral skills he had earlier acquired in America in the field of theological education. By order of the Saint Petersburg Church Consistory, in August 1907 Fr. John was assigned to the clergy of Holy Transfiguration Cathedral in Narva, and beginning August 15, 1907, he began to perform his duties as a teacher of Law in the male and the female gymnasiums in Narva.

By order of the chief of the Saint Petersburg Area Educational Department, effective October 20, 1907, Fr. John was confirmed in his service in the male gymnasium as a teacher of

Orthodox Theology and was a hired teacher of the same subject in the female gymnasium of Narva, which became the main sphere of his Church service for the next nine years of his life.

The common way of life in small, provincial Narva, where the Russian Orthodox inhabitants consisted of scarcely half the population, brought back to Fr. John in some measure the atmosphere familiar to him in America, where he performed his pastoral service in a social environment permeated with heterodox influences. However, the circumstances of his work as a teacher of God's Law in two secondary schools where the Russian cultural element and Orthodox religious ethos indisputably dominated, permitted Fr. John to feel that he was breathing an atmosphere of Russian Orthodox life reminiscent of his childhood.

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