

The Thirty Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 18:18-27

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God (KJV)

The Holy Gospel is proclaimed with regularity in God's Holy Church throughout the world. This proclamation is consistent with the Lord Jesus Christ's commission to His holy disciples. (Mt.28:19-20)

Serious and attentive believers incorporate Jesus Christ's teachings into personal daily life. The Christian life is intended to be process of life-long learning and change. Repentance makes beginning anew in Jesus Christ possible.

The believer is united with Jesus Christ at Holy Baptism and is expected to grow in Christ throughout life. As a person matures in life, this maturity is to include maturity in Christ reflected in daily life.

Increased knowledge about Jesus Christ and adherence to the ways of Jesus Christ have a place all the days of earthly life. The current Gospel addresses the expectations for eternal life.

Eternal life is the goal for all believers adopted at baptism. The rich person in the current Gospel led a life of adherence to the commandments. However, the rich man's love for God was not primary.

The rich man loved his personal possessions first and foremost. When personal possessions hold first place in life rather than God, personal relationships, actions and behavior are affected.

The Lord Jesus Christ told the rich person if he wanted eternal life to dispose of his possessions, to lay up treasures in heaven and follow Christ. Jesus' message made the rich man very sorrowful.

Material possessions can be barriers to entering into eternal life. Being fixated on material possessions will affect the treatment of others in the home, the family, the workplace and the community.

Christians are to love God and neighbor. When God and neighbor are loved, all else is in proper order. (Mk 12:30-31) When God and neighbor are loved, this love is reflected in the management and care of personal possessions.

Serious believers with love and compassion share personal wealth freely and willingly with the needy. Modesty and necessity govern personal possessions among the serious in faith.

Greed has no place in the Christian life. Maintaining material possessions as barriers in personal relationships is not consistent with the current Gospel. We hear often about disputes in families over the distribution of deceased parents' estates.

The Lord Jesus Christ placed love first in personal relationships. Mk.12:30-31
Too often we hear of parents working to accumulate large amounts of personal wealth and failing to have time to love each other or their children.

Too often interest in profits drive company managers to the extent that safety of employees is sacrificed and put in peril. Company gains are held superior in certain corporations over employee safety.

Individuals are created in the image and likeness of God. (Gen.1:26)
Relationships are to honor the presence of God in each person. Jesus said:
“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Mt.25:40)

The hunger in the soul directs the believer to eternal life. Satisfying the hunger in the soul leads the believer to draw closer to Jesus Christ and to seek the path to eternal life.

The Holy Gospel read at each Divine Liturgy brightens the path for attentive believers. Repentance is necessary throughout life for the believer to shed thoughts and behavior that are barriers and impediments to eternal life.

Maturity in Christ requires change throughout life of putting erroneous past ways behind and stretching forward to the high calling of Jesus Christ. Let us heed the lessons in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

In Hebrews we read: “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...” (Heb 12:1-2)

The Lord Jesus Christ made clear in the present Gospel that with God, the possibility of being saved exists. Jesus said “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” (Lk.18:27)

Faith and trust in the Lord are necessary to give up old ways and possessions that previously were held dear. Being perfected in Christ means changing into the likeness of Christ.

The Holy Apostle Paul told the Corinthians: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” (1 Cor. 13:11)

Let us heed the Lord Jesus Christ's words in the Gospel of St. Matthew:
“Be ye therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is **perfect**.” (Mt.5:48)
From the Scriptures we know, “with God, all things are possible.” (Mk 9:23, (Mk. 10:27)

The Thirty Fourth Sunday after Pentecost. St. Athanasius the Great. St. Maximus, Archbishop of Serbia, January 18/31, 2021. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic