



15th Sunday of Luke

The Reading is from Luke 19:1-10

At that time, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaios; he was a chief collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaios, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

And Zacchaios stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."

Resurrectional Apolytikion in 1st Tone

The stone had been secured with a seal by the Judeans, * and a guard of soldiers was watching Your immaculate body. * You rose on the third day, O Lord * and Savior, grant-ing life unto the world. * For this reason were the powers of heaven crying out to You, O Life-giver: * Glory to Your resurrection, O Christ; * glory to Your Kingdom; * glory to Your dispensation, only One who loves mankind.

Seasonal Kontakion in the First Tone

Your birth sanctified a Virgin's womb and properly blessed the hands of Symeon. Having now come and saved us O Christ our God, give peace to Your commonwealth in troubled times and strengthen those in authority, whom You love, as only the loving One.

Discussion

Anyone ever climb a tree? Is it safe or an easy thing to do?

We get asked by our Protestant brethren if “we are saved”.

Salvation is a process and a struggle.

The Orthodox answer is that we:

Have been saved (baptism),

Are being saved (repentance, confession, mysteries of the Church, good acts),

Will be saved (faith, love for Our Lord)

In the Christian life salvation comes to us by degrees, because salvation is us being changed. We change by degrees. Nobody changes all at once. You might make a decision at a critical moment in your life as Zacchaeus did, but you don't change all at once. You change with struggle.

Remember what repentance means. Not easy, it's a struggle.

Of course, to read the Scriptures and understand them, you must understand the content of what they say, the factual dogmatic content, the circumstances in which the things were said, instructions that are given and all the rest. All this is very important.

But also, another thing that is so important when you read the Scriptures: There must be some *emotional impact in your soul*, like Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was changed in a day or rather, he had the resolve to change. He made a decision and *spent the rest of his life living it*.

If we ever wanted a sign of the difference that it should make in the life of a human being to encounter Christ, this is it. Though it may be hard to see, Zacchaeus' story is the story of us all. The Savior has appeared in our world, born and baptized for our salvation. He enters not only our world and our humanity in general but wants to commune personally with everyone created in His image and likeness, even though we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) As He says elsewhere, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.” (Rev. 3:20) He comes to fulfill the purposes for which He created food and fellowship to begin with, namely, to share Himself with us, to make us participants in His eternal, blessed, and holy life that conquers all forms of human corruption and even death itself. That is His intention for each and every human being.

One way of applying these lessons to our lives is to ask in what ways we need to open ourselves to fuller communion with Christ, to a deeper and healthier relationship with Him. Since how we treat our neighbors is also how we treat the Lord, we should ask with whom we need to make things right according to justice and then do even more for them. (Matt. 25:33ff.) If we have denied our spouses, children, and other family members the fullness of our love, we must make up for that also. We should consider what we have taken by selfishness from our neighbors, whether money, time, attention, or something else, and give it back in abundance.

Like Zacchaeus, we should look for opportunities to help the poor as much as possible, regardless of whether their poverty is one of friendship, encouragement, or the resources necessary to buy food, clothing, and shelter.

Zacchaeus means “pure and innocent one” in Hebrew. He was Bishop of Jerusalem and is commemorated on 23 August.

What a blessing it is to glorify God by serving His Creation!

Lord, bless this to our wisdom, understanding and application!